

IN SEARCH OF A NEW MODEL ON AN EDUCATIVE ADOLESCENTS' RITES
OF PASSAGE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADOLESCENTS' RITES OF PASSAGE
OF GIKUYU IN KENYA AND THE VERMONT WILDERNESS SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES

Protasia C.N.Gathendoh

PIM 64

A Capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Intercultural
Service Leadership and Management at the School for International Training in Brattleboro,
Vermont, USA

Capstone Seminar: November 5 - November 10, 2006

Advisor: Dr. Karen Blanchard

Copyright notice

*The author hereby grants to The School For International Training permission to reproduce either electronically or in print form this document in whole or in part **for library archival purposes only***

The author hereby does X does not _____ grant to the School For International Training permission to electronically reproduce and transmit this document to students, alumni, staff, and faculty of World learning Community

© Copyright

Protasia C.N. Gathendoh

November 2006

All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT;

This is in acknowledgement of the help received by the principal researcher from the people who allowed the researcher(s) access to information or contributed significantly to the success of the study:

I would like to thank the members of the Vermont Wilderness School, particularly Selena Galen, Amy Hyatt, Mark Morey and Saul who accepted to participate in the study.

I am also indebted in a significant way to all those who assisted in the study e.g. those who helped in collecting and administering the questionnaires, acting as liaison persons, and in data analysis.

My special thanks go to Timothy Gathendoh my husband and Martin Kanyingi our first son who accepted to administer the study; and Alice Njeri Maichibu for typing the questionnaires in Kenya on my behalf.

I would also like to thank Joyce Reilly, Sissi Loftin, Janet Brocklehurst, Carol Otto and Daydon Harvey who provided peer encouragement and edited parts of my work.

I thank Lisa Merton and Alan Dater of Marlboro Productions, for providing paid service to transcribe the interview audiotapes.

Special vote of thanks to Professor Karen Blanchard my advisor for demonstrated patience and mentoring spirit for all the duration of this study.

I am equally thankful to my elders Daniel Kanyingi and Regina Njeri for leading the way in the focus groups and all the others who participated in the study in Kenya in whatever way.

To all, I send out Peace and all Blessings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement.....	iv
Table of contents.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Terms and phrases used in the study.....	vii
Introduction	1
Literature Review	14
Research Methodology.....	25
Data Presentation and Analysis.....	34
Discussion and Conclusion.....	45
Final words and blessings.....	51
Bibliography.....	53
Appendices.....	
Informed Consent Form.....	A
Research Questions and Questionnaires Guidelines.....	B1 & B2
Collated Responses from HGK.....	C
Combined Responses.....	D

ABSTRACT

In this study, the researcher drew the attention of the Gikuyu tribe members and other interested parties to review or re-examine the Gikuyu community's traditional practices with a particular focus on Irua, the Historically Gikuyu of Kenya (HGK) adolescents' rites of passage.

The study compared the Gikuyu art of informal instruction with the art of mentoring and rites of passage practiced by the Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) of Vermont in the US as an adapted model from the traditions of American Indians.

Therefore my research question is:

What new (or future) rite of passage might be created for Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the adolescents rite of passage adapted from Native American and developed and practiced in Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) and those historically practiced by the Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK)?

The sub questions are:

- a) What is the significance of the rites of passage in practice to the people involved?
- b) How are the programs and activities organized, implemented and managed?
- c) How are issues or concerns that affect the adolescents' rites addressed?
- d) What strategies have been used to address them?
- e) What achievements have resulted through adolescents' rites?
- f) What are some of the challenges of practicing adolescents' rites?
- g) What futures have the programs for both the Gikuyu and Vermont communities?

The study used qualitative research approach to acquisition data working, from an assumption that language is the main tool of imparting knowledge, skills, and value of interpersonal communications in human development. Based on this assumption the study was informed by the constructivism theory of human development, and suggested alternative way of dealing with gaps in cultural tradition as practiced by the current generations.

Terms and phrases used in this study

Anake	General name given to boy initiates after circumcision and before they get married
Airitu	General name given to girls after circumcision and before first pregnancy or marriage, which ever occurs soon after the rites of passage
Anake a forty:	The age grade of cohorts formed by the men and women who were circumcised in the 1940s. Gikuyu group called Anake-a- Forty (the warriors of 1940) stated that the lost lands could be regained only through war
American Indians:	Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives. There are 561 federal recognized tribal governments in the United States. Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) responsibility is the administration and management of 55.7 million acres of land held in trust by the United States for Developing forestlands, leasing assets on these lands, directing agricultural programs, protecting water and land rights, developing and maintaining infrastructure and economic development are all part of the agency's responsibility. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs provides education services to approximately 48,000 Indian students
Folklores	Traditionally, folktales and riddles combined with myths to provide young people with a strong sense of Gikuyu values. Grandmothers were excellent storytellers
GEMA	Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association: An inter tribal network formed to unite the tribes living in the Mount Kenya region of Kenya during and after growth of Mau Mau freedom fighters. Source, F. D. Cornfield, The Origins of Mau Mau, Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1959-1960. (Nairobi: 1960), pp. 301-308
Gikuyu:	The Kĩkũyũ tribe; (otherwise spelled Gĩkũyũ) ethnic group is Kenya's most populous ethnic group. They total 7.4 million, equal to about 22% of Kenya's total population
Harambee	The Swahili word “harambee” means, “let us pull together.” Schools were funded through what is referred to as the ‘Harambee’. The schools’ emphasis was on instilling the spirit of nationalism among Africans, as well as education, economic, and political development. (Buchmann, 2001, p.97).
Home schooling	Defined simply as the “education” of school-aged children at home rather than at a school
HGK:	Historical knowledge of adolescent rite of passage of the Gikuyu tribe of Kenya.
Irua	The Gikuyu name for this customary of rite of passage from childhood to adulthood

Mambura	‘Rituals or divine services,’ take place during initiation ceremonies. Gikuyu history is publicly enacted so as to provide a sense of community solidarity. Each ‘irua’ group is given its own special name. After several days of instruction, boys and girls are taken together to a compound for their circumcision.
Matuuro	The day before the operation, there is a ceremonial dance known as ‘matuuro’. Numerous friends and relatives gather for singing and dancing throughout the night. A special feast is made for the parents of the children. The next day the physical operations occur. Both boys and girls are expected to endure circumcision without crying or showing signs of weakness.
Mau Mau	An acronym for "Mzungu Aende Ulaya — Mwafrika Apate Uhuru". This Swahili phrase translates in English to, "Let the white man go back abroad so the African can get his independence.
Riika	Gikuyu name for the age grade of cohorts formed by the men and women after circumcision
Rites of Passage:	In previous generations, society defined expectations and constructed events to promote individual development, a functional family organization, and cultural continuity. A rite of passage is a ritual that marks a change in a person's social or sexual status. Rites of passage are often ceremonies surrounding events such as childbirth, menarche or other milestones within puberty, coming of age, weddings, menopause, and death.
Rites and rituals	A ritual is a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value, which is prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community. A ritual may be performed at regular intervals, or on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities. It may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community; in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, or before specific people.
TBAs’	Traditional Birth Attendants meet a vital community need by supporting women throughout pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period
Tribal creation story:	The Gikuyu attribute their ultimate origins to sacred intervention by their god, “Ngai” who sometimes resides on Mount Kenya that, for the Gikuyu, is a sacred place. According to legend, Ngai carried the first man, Gikuyu, to the top of Mount Kenya. Ngai showed him the rich land spread out below the mountain. Gikuyu was told that his sons and daughters would inherit the land and multiply. Gikuyu was given a wife named Mumbi, meaning "Creator" or "Molder," and together they had nine daughters.
Traditions in Kenya:	Clans, age-sets and age grades formed the basis of government in the vast majority of Kenyan communities. Government in most traditional Kenyan societies was by councils of elders. Chiefs or kings, however, ruled some communities,
USA	United States of America is a union of 51 states forming federation and organized into a federal governmental power. The 51 states have separate government and also

units of functioning of local government counties and cities. Also with independently organized but subject to some federal laws, are 561 federal recognized governments

- Vermont State Has an estimated population of 623,050, which is an increase of 1,817, or 0.3%, from the prior year and an increase of 14,223, or 2.3%, since the year 2000. Vermont's population is: 96.2% White among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Vermont ranks 2nd in its proportion of Whites according to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2005,
- VEs' Village Elders: Traditionally, small communities have always had "the village elder(s)": a person or persons who, through experience and intelligence acquired wisdom.
- VWS The Vermont Wilderness School. This school was founded 1999 in Vermont. US and it's mentoring philosophy is based on a natural blueprint for learning, revealed through teachings of native cultures throughout the world.
- Waldorf Schools Waldorf education was developed by Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) It addresses the needs of the growing child and maturing adolescent; to transform education into an art that educates the whole child—the heart and the hands, as well as the head. For more information, please go the [Waldorf Education page](#).

Introduction

Rites and rituals in human society have a place in defining phases of human growth and maturation processes. In the electronic wikipedia dictionary, a ritual is described as ‘a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value, which is prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community’. (Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual)

Over time, each community developed continued traditions with similarities and defined differences in rituals and values and meaning. Some of these rituals and traditions have been institutionalized processes to mark the way adolescents should live, and confer status for transitions into adulthood.

One idea of modern ways of rituals that are used to confer status was first documented by Arnold van Gennep (1960) a Belgian anthropologist, who reviewed regeneration as the law of life and described rites of passage as a threefold process with phases of separation, segregation, and integration. In his book that was translated into different languages including English, he wrote that:

“Rites, studied and analyzed in the larger setting of the cultures they pertained to, could illuminate our knowledge of the culture as well as provide understanding of more general processes of cultural evolution. Birth, puberty, marriage, and death are, in all cultures, marked by ceremonies that may differ in detail but are universal in function. If there has to be a new self, the old self must ritually die” Arnold van Gennep, (1960).

In the communities where these rite are practiced, the rites candidates would be separated in status from those left behind, leaving familiar companions, surroundings and home, perhaps encountering actual or symbolic aggression in being wrenched away or carried off.

Second, they enter a "between" period devoid of distinguishing marks of status and expressions of their old identity, such as names or clothing. In the case of passage to adulthood,

adolescents may together undergo a degree of discipline and share a mutual sense of hardship, bonding them together.

Contributing to how this process is applicable for the Gikuyu tribe, Wachege (1992) an African theologian in research work on liberation theology, writes that the Gikuyu rite of passage for adolescents involved segregation or seclusion period which curtailed freedom of the candidates and was the beginning of a third phase of reorientation toward integration through their future status and life obligations. The process may differ in some ways but he expounded that:

“This may involve learning the traditions of their society or the skills of some particular profession or trade. Only after this period of learning and endurance is complete do they undergo the third phase of reincorporation into society. However, they do so with their new status and identity, perhaps involving a new name or title, forms of dress or style of language and, almost certainly, new patterns of behavior with appropriate duties and responsibilities.” Wachege (1992)

Change In Lifestyles Brings Challenge To The Traditions Of Rites Of Passage:

In this study a comparison is made between existing rituals practiced by two groups: one in Kenya in East Africa, another in Vermont, in the US. Change in lifestyles brings change to the rhythms of traditions. In different parts of the world wherever tribal groups are committed to maintaining their rites of passage especially for adolescents they face continued challenge in practicing living traditions. The main reason is that there are gradual influences of modern lifestyles and these in turn become ongoing conflicts because communities are actively impacted by the old ways (traditions) and the new ways (modern lifestyles). While they are determined to maintain traditions in education, instruction and teaching the children, they desire that the children attend modern ways of education too that are very different from educative processes of the traditional ways. The result of this is tension between traditions and modern lifestyle

influences. The changes that occur are at times planned and implemented consciously and other times the changes occur unconsciously. For example, the Gikuyu have Irua, which is the name for circumcision as a rite of passage for the adolescents and it signified the commencement of the induction into the Council of Elders that was the governing body of the tribe in the past. However some of the details have changed with the changing of lifestyle. One purpose of this study is to provide insights about adolescents' rites of passage considering the change in education and lifestyles.

In previous generations society defined expectations and constructed events to promote individual development, a functional family organization, and cultural continuity. Culturally defined and accepted rites of passage that were previously observed in families provided for the social needs for adolescents. This research reviewed the wisdom of the traditional expectations and constructions on an assumption that constructivism is the label given to a set of theories about learning which somehow is between cognitive and humanistic views. Huitt, W. (2003), wrote in Education Psychology Interactive that:

“The constructivistic approach to teaching and learning is based on a combination of a subset of research within cognitive psychology and a subset of research within social psychology, just as behavior modification techniques are based on operant conditioning theory within behavioral psychology. The basic premise is that an individual learner must actively "build" knowledge and skills (e.g., Bruner, 1990) and that information exists within these built constructs rather than in the external environment.

John Dewey (1933/1998) is often cited as the philosophical founder of this approach; Ausubel (1968), Bruner (1990), and Piaget (1972) are considered the chief theorists among the cognitive constructionists, while Vygotsky (1978) is the major theorist among the social constructionists. Activity theory and situated learning are two examples of modern work based on the work of Vygotsky and some of his followers”.

(<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/construct.html>)

From constructivism we can distinguish between cognitive constructivism and social constructivism. Cognitive constructivism is about how the individual learner understands things, in terms of developmental stages and learning styles. The researcher preferred to use the theory

of human development from the Social constructivist's point of view that emphasizes how meanings and understandings grow out of social encounters such as the family organization in Kenya referred to later in this study.

In his theoretical framework of social development, Vygotsky writes that 'social interaction plays a fundamental role in the redevelopment of cognition' (1978). In the case of the Gikuyu tribe, the researcher in this study assumed that is the case where the community promote individual development so that the competences of such an individual become investments in the promotion of cultural continuity. Vygotsky goes on to state:

"Every function in a child's cultural development... appears twice: first, on social level, and later, on the individual level: first between people (inter psychological) and then inside the child (intra psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All these higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals."(1958 p57).

However because of the changes in lifestyle, adolescents' rituals are organized to meet their expectations and to provide the minimum form of affirmation as rites of passage according to the social context. Why would the changed lifestyles affect how the rituals are organized? In response to the curious mind, perhaps the link may be in constructivism based on 'theory of conversational approach' that looks at the on-going learner-teacher interaction. Laurillard's model (2002) 'Rethinking University Teaching' particularly is 'about the process of negotiation of views of the subject that takes place between them in such a way as to modify the learner's perceptions'. From this model Laurillard developed a set of criteria for judgments of teaching and learning systems, particularly those based on educational technology. In the case of preparation of the adolescents of the Gikuyu tribe Wachege (1992) wrote that: 'This may involve learning the traditions of their society or the skills of some particular profession or trade'. This learning lead Thomas and Harris-Augestein, (1977) in their book 'Learning to Learn: the Personal Construction and Exchange of Meaning' to derive the basis for the learning

conversation from an analysis of the construct system of the learner. Following the thinking of these researchers, two links informed this study.

One link to constructivism may be traced to the writings of John Dewey (1938), who emphasized the place of experience in education. Dewey's philosophical pragmatism, concern with interaction, reflection and experience, and interest in community and democracy, were brought together to form a highly suggestive educative form. This explains the basis of what Wachege (1992) has written that it was very important for the adolescents to demonstrate that they had observed and learned to do certain arts and crafts production work, and acquired skills 'Only after this period of learning and endurance is complete do they undergo the third phase of re incorporation into society'.

Another connection starts from the work of Piaget (1969) 'the Psychology of the Child'. His view of how children's minds work and develop has been enormously influential, particularly in educational theory. His particular insight was the role of maturation (simply growing up) in children's increasing capacity to understand their world on 'Judgment and reasoning in the child' that demonstrated empirically that 'children's minds were not empty, but actively processed the material with which they were presented, and postulated the mechanisms of accommodation and assimilation'. The two, 'Assimilation' and 'Accommodation' are the complementary processes of Adaptation described by Piaget, through which awareness of the outside world is internalized and have a role as the key to this processing. The terms are also used to describe forms of knowledge in Kolb (1984) in elaboration of 'the Cycle of Experiential Learning'.

Cycle of Experiential Learning:

- a) Concrete Experience, Abstract Conceptualization and
- b) Reflective Observation, Active Experimentation

a) Concrete Experience corresponds to "knowledge by acquaintance", direct practical experience (or "Apprehension" in Kolb's terms), as opposed to "knowledge about" something, which is theoretical, but perhaps more comprehensive, (hence "Comprehension") and represented by Abstract Conceptualization.

b) Reflective Observation concentrates on what the experience means to the observer, (it is transformed by "Intension") or its connotations, while Active Experimentation transforms the theory of Abstract Conceptualization by testing it in practice (by "Extension") and relates to its denotations.

<http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/experience>.

Review of these theories in the study contributed to the objective of the inquiry to understand linkages that bring about quality in value and meaning of social interactions that make learning for children a lived reality. The quality of life is assumed to be a construct from observed behaviour, demonstrated activity and explained value. From this experience an inner way of looking at life and the world around is formed. This formation is retained in memory as attitudes, skills and knowledge. In summary, factors of sensing the world, gaining mastery in skills and knowledge are considered important in this study as means of how to deal with change that has primarily interfered with the mission of the family.

Another Purpose of this study is to promote the mission of the family, group, community, and tribe in the obligation to promote psychosocial aspects of adolescents' development.

Historical Perspective: The Gikuyu Adolescents' Rite of Circumcision:

About sixty years ago, studies about Irua were carried out in Kenya by an anthropologist, Ralphe Bunche (1941) and published in an American journal where circumcision (Irua) is described as rites of passage for female and male initiation:

“The Gikuyu tribal process of initiation in its historical context involves several procedures:(1) an extended though loosely organized and sporadic course of education with regard to the phenomena of nature; (2) practical instruction in matter of sex; (3) inculcation of numerous social and individual virtues, including respect for tribal elders, customs and authority;(4) the surgical operation of the genitals which is the external evidence of the passage from childhood to adulthood, and which if endured with fortitude, is symbolic of the end of childhood.” Journal of Negro History, Vol.26 No 1 Jan. 1941 pp46-65

As pointed out in the previous pages, change of lifestyles has taken place in the way the Gikuyu people live. The tribal process of initiation as referred above, has been partly interrupted and partly the tribe has modified the traditions.

To address planned and forced changes in the early 1920s, the Gikuyu formulated the 'Gikuyu Karing'a'a 'Harambee' educative model with taught skills in Gikuyu language in primary schools. This organized way of instruction provided space, time and provided motivation to continue with informal education after school and in the villages. Teachers had the opportunity to introduce conversations, discussion and debates about traditions such as circumcision, to teach meaning and value of music and conduct demonstrated traditional dance and to talk about wisdom that unfolds through use of folklores. These are some of the ways through which children learn and were valuable practices that colonizers and the Christian religion considered primitive or unimportant.

Some of the young adults who benefited from these instructions and teachings formed tribal-based resistance movements organized on the basis of age-grade. Their efforts resulted in tribal movement formed by Anake a forty, the age grade of cohorts formed by the men and women who were circumcised in the 1940s. They chose to demonstrate their responsibility for the tribe through active fighting against colonial oppression and suppression.

While the demands for human rights continued, the colonizers' views and oppressive educational systems were gradually institutionalized from the early 1930s' gaining momentum when the Mau Mau war broke out from 1948 to 1960.

About the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, a Kenyan Autobiography by Carol E. Neubauber (1983) titled 'One Voice Speaking for the Many,' has the following details:

'Hereditary lines trace ancestral origins and names reflect ties to the past generation as well as those yet to come. From the very beginning the child

understands that he is not alone and that he is an integral member of a distinct group with traditional responsibilities and expectations' Journal of Modern African Studies, 21, 1 (113-131)

At that time the Gikuyu schools were deregistered and teaching tribal languages in public schools prohibited. The Mau Mau war began because negotiations without violence between Kenyans and the colonial government did not work. The education system was a good example because there were separate plans for the European, for the Asian and for the African children in the school system. More details are presented by Mwiria Kilemi (1991) in an article titled 'Education for Subordination: African Education in Colonial Kenya', who discusses and describes the 'unequal allocation of education revenue, selective and punitive public examinations and a racially biased school curriculum'. There were no plans for social and economic justice for all the Kenyan tribes, and therefore the Gikuyu tribe spearheaded the decision for Kenyans to fight the colonialists and the settlers. The settlers' aim was to grab resources forcing the Kenyan people to work as laborers and servants. The war ended and Kenya attained independence in 1963. The political leadership adapted the education system that has continued to marginalize first languages and cultural traditions as well as other valued learning. The following quote reinforces the above statement.

When Kenya acquired independence in 1963, the new government's priority was expansion of education (Buchmann, 2001, p.97).

Being a nation comprised of many ethnic groups, and having experienced the indignity of discrimination, Kenyans sought to promote national unity. Other major goals included mutual social responsibility, life-long learning, and education for technological and industrial development (Koech, 1999, p.21).

Personal Testimony of this Researcher's Encounters, Experiences, Observations and Participation as Practical Illustration.

I was born in 1946 in the midst of cultural and political conflicts. Between 1950 and 1960 when I was between 5 and 10 years old, it was required that we attend Christian instructions for religious rituals meant to confer spiritual, moral and social values. During the first two years of

primary or elementary education, the tribal languages were introduced and used as the medium of instruction.

Afterward English language would be, and still is, the main medium of instruction disconnecting the school learning from the vernacular languages and dialects.

At the same time, I learned informally about valuable ways of the living culture in language through reciting Christian prayers, songs and stories with other family members in the evenings as we waited for the main meal to be cooked. These were teachable moments as my mother would start with a verbal reconnection to the long, long time ago before two famous age grades: 'Tene tene mbere ya Ndemi na Mathaathi'... in English it means: Long, long time before Ndemi and Mathaathi. Mostly any storyteller of Gikuyu stories would start the narratives of the heroes, the hardworking and diligent men, women, youth and even about dutiful children connecting the listeners to imagination of context and time frame.

As children of the Gikuyu tribe, we learn about the extended family from inferences about the character based on how community evaluates virtues or lack of good models of the lifestyle of the person. This is very similar to constructivism based on theory with an example of Laurillard's model (2002) of 'conversational approach in social development of a child that looks at the on-going learner-teacher interaction'.

I know more about my maternal grandmother even though she passed away in 1952. My mother told us about the stories her own mother (my grandmother) told of some important events that my grandmother went through as a young woman. I loved those stories of risks, determination and courage because I am named after my mother's mother and also because the older women in the village who knew her would comment how much like her I had become.

Another interactive component of interpersonal language communication is between grandparents and grandchildren. Assimilation and Accommodation are the complementary processes that according to theory of 'the psychology of the Child' of Adaptation described by

Piaget, J. and Inhelder B., (1969), are the key through which ‘awareness of the outside world is internalized and have a role as key to this processing’. Our first son learnt from his paternal grandmother names of the family tree and generational names that represent teaching of identity and valuable depth of naming children. An elaborated detail as written by Muriuki (1976) explains about ‘hereditary lines traced by name and land ownership’. Since the age of two years he would introduce himself as ‘Kanyingi wa (son of) Gathendoh, wa (son of) Kanyingi wa (son of) Gathendu wa (son of) Kahiro wa (son of) Mukuna’. The first sons carry on nyumba (family) lineages but every girl child has a clan name tracing this system to the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. Nowadays some families have opted for different names for girls but as a principle each girl child can retrace her lineage by search of namesake of her elders and ancestors.

A brief explanation of child naming linking to the Gikuyu creation story:

‘My son knows about his identity and has carried on this tradition where he has provided his 7-year-old daughter with information about me because she is named after me and also about my grandmother because I am named after my grandmother. So she refers to her name by all her (namesakes) as Silvia (her Christian name) Nyambura, Nyamweru wa (child of) Kanyingi (her father). Name Nyambura is our tribal name shared by the three generations because we are named after one of the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi. Nyamweru is my grandmother’s special name. Her father, my great-grandfather and my granddaughters’ great great-grandfather gave it to her. This loop can be retraced back to my son and his known ancestors’ of six generations by their names. This is collective self-reference and it is very powerful connector to family and clan links of our tribal identity’.

(An adapted copy of oral history, shared in intercultural grandparents’ ritual: CONTACT Summer Institute 2002)

Jomo Kenyatta, who was a great defender of cultural rights and later became Kenya’s First President, explained in details that Nyumba (family), Mbari (sub-clan), Muhiriga (clan) and Riika (age grade) are primary social institutions of the Gikuyu tribe and that membership is for life. (1965).

These institutions are resources for welfare, and social support in time of celebrations and lamentations. Popularly, Irua (circumcision) of boys and girls and contracts of marriage would

be well attended. People will take offence if they are not invited to marriage rituals, or to the negotiations of intended union of families of the man and woman getting married. The collective motivation makes it easy to mobilize for contribution in the form of time, gifts of food, firewood and water, as well as cooking and serving the guests. Today, the Gikuyu people organize beyond these inputs and contribute money to support burial ritual and rites. All these were done in the spirit of community and formed solidarity.

These forms of collective motivation and community unity are some of the social indicators of Gikuyu membership. Consequently, they formed the basic social fabric in support of initiation rites of passage for adolescents

The Gikuyu's Determined Resistance to pressure by External forces to abandon 'Traditional Rites of Circumcision' for Adolescents: Sharing with you my Personal Experiences and Encounters.

During my childhood years -1948 to 1960- as mentioned in previous pages, was also the time of the Mau Mau war during which there were various communal activities that were not explained to us because we were children. For example, there were adult cultural ceremonies going on secretly such as oaths that were administered to support the fighters against political pressure. There was tension between the choice to be loyal to the British government or join the Mau Mau movement.

Even in the face of all these challenges, one mbari or (sub-clan) in our village chose to include important details pertaining to a real Gikuyu Irua (circumcision) for one of the families that form the sub-clan. The historical version and details of this custom is as noted by Jomo Kenyatta (1965) which he calls 'Name of the custom and details of initiation process for boys and girls'

Preparation included planning about shared tasks by the Nyumba or Mbari, sub clan consisting of three generations namely; parents, grandparents, first cousins and second cousins who were all involved. Then the men and women of the riika rimwe (age grade) with the father

and mother coordinated this family event. For weeks before the event there were gatherings at the homestead with dance and ululations. These are referred to as Mambura (sacred rituals) and Matuumo (skits/reflections).

I remember the event because we, the Christians were prohibited from even going to listen or observe what went on, however we went to the gathering for a short time and returned home before parents noticed we were out. This vigilant attitude was supposed to protect us from the unchristian tribal information in music and dance because during preparations for (circumcision) Irua the Gikuyu revoke or lift as it were the barriers of taboo in language and often resort to obscene language about growing up sexually.

The following year 1960 it was my turn and in the company of 4 other girls. I participated in the Irua and only partial fulfillment of the traditional obligation for two reasons:

First as practicing Christians our families were restricted by the external voices of missionaries and the colonizers. The missionaries condemned our rituals as sinful while the colonizers prohibited tribal gatherings as a way of social and political control. All events and details of instructions pertaining to Irua (circumcision) were proscribed.

The second reason was that although practicing Christians, we were also part of a nation fighting to maintain political resistance so, symbolically families organized the Irua (circumcisions) to conform to the blood bonding aroused by the Mau Mau freedom movement. About a week before the set date we set out to gather loads of dry banana leaves from our neighbours' farms. These were to form our sleeping mattresses while our parents went to the market at the shopping center and bought a white cotton wrap for each one of us. The banana leaves and white wrapper were the only items I took with me to the home where we stayed.

The big day was not eventful because there were no visible rituals or dance or ululations for us at sunrise, it was a silent walk when we were escorted to the community natural spring. We were seated on the grass with our sponsors in the expected positions, the circumciser

performed the cut and we walked back to the village. We stayed together, were fed and our wounds healed well. On the seventh day we walked to the river in daylight, washed our wraps and bathed and returned to our individual family homes. There would have been a reception with dance and ululations but once more it was a quiet and unexciting affair.

Part Of Traditional Power That Is Consultations In Decision Making With And On Behalf Of Children:

I am a mother of one daughter and to chose not to take her for Irua, the cut of the genitalia even the minimum that was being carried out, was not an easy decision. My husband and I talked about our own reasons for not organizing for Irua. However I know that parents are not the authority in this matter. So we chose to present the issue to my mother- in- law because our daughter is named after her in accordance to the tradition and grandmothers have authority in the cultural rituals especially and mostly about adolescents' rite of passage for girls. My mother- in- law commented that in her village and across the ridges; not all older women and their families were insisting about Irua for girls. At the time (1984) I was fully aware of my own biological mother's stand about the issue. She insisted that girls named after her will undergo the Irua rite according to the tribal practices.

Current Partial Tribal Connection of Irua Adolescents' Rites of Passage:

I have included some of the causes of the pressure to maintain traditions as an obligation, while at the same time, there are voices opposed to continued practice of rites of passage for the adolescents as historically identified. Today, it is notable that the traditional practice lacks characteristics of duration, place, community participation, safety and space to ensure its continuity and sustenance. To provide for these gaps, it is necessary to remodel the traditional practices or develop a new one.

For example: I am a mother of three sons aged 29, 32 and 36 respectively. I remember I asked guidance from my mother about what we needed to do for the Irua for our first son. After

consulting with my father it was explained how important it was for my sons to receive their grandfather's blessing before shedding blood. So, we presented a male goat representing mambura, animal sacrifice and my father blessed my son.

We organized as a family, for each of our sons and paid for surgical services in a public health facility. This is what many families of the Gikuyu tribe do nowadays. The boys healed fast and well within 6 days and returned to school.

Reflecting on these experiences, I believe that a connection to historical cultural stories and values is being lost with the loss of the extended circumcision Irua rituals.

Based on the above, my research question is:

What new (or future) rite of passage might be created for Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the adolescents rite of passage adapted from Native American and developed and practices in Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) and those historically practiced by the Historically Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK)?

The sub questions are:

- a) What is the significance of the rites of passage in practice to the people involved?
- b) How are the program and activities are organized, implemented and managed.
- c) How the issues or concerns that affect the adolescents' rites addressed?
- d) What strategies have been used to address them?
- e) What achievements have resulted through adolescents' rites?
- f) What are some of the challenges of practicing adolescents' rites?
- g) What futures have the programs for both the Gikuyu and Vermont communities?

Literature Review

The literature review covers issues relating to strengths of adolescents rites of passage including circumcision Irua of the Historically Gikuyu in Kenya and limitations brought about by change. We compared reviews of, and conducted interviews about the VWS model and how communities own these experiences of interest or as an obligation. In consideration of how important adolescents rites are, including Irua of the HGK, the literature review included interests

about basic communal obligations in relationship to the concept of maintaining traditions that are considered important in the life of the community.

In Kenya for example, besides cultural and traditional forms of shared knowledge, the modern religions of Christianity and Islam have formal and informal instructions for boys and girls about rites and rituals that are introduced when the children are 6 to 12 years of age.

The Islamic religion has a constituency of 5 to 30% of the population in Kenya according to website for tourism, Kenyalogy Guide 2000-2006. The communities take responsibility of instruction and organize Madrasa, which are religious schools of instructions according to the Holy Book of the Koran for the Muslims in Kenya.

Christianity has a constituency of 20 to 40% of the Kenyan population with many denominations, but there are similarities in major denominations that have instructions, rituals and rites that are in accordance with the traditions and teachings of the Holy Bible. These are two examples of the obligation-based instructions in organized courses that emphasize values and beliefs and control of behaviours, maintaining dress code and other forms of conformity to the new way of life. Thus:

Conversion works were developed in parallel with health and education, resulting in the fact that Christian religion expanded in a similar extent to schools and medical care. Due to the English influence, Christian Kenyans are mostly protestant, between 30 and 40% of the population, whereas 20-30% of Kenyans are Catholic. In addition there are other minority groups, such as Adventists, Quakers and Jehovah's witnesses. Christian beliefs are sometimes complemented with traditional rites.

However, traditional beliefs still direct the tribes' social structures, their habits, rites and dances. Circumcision of children or youngsters is a usual practice. Female equivalent is now reduced, but is still strongly rooted in some tribes' beliefs.

Today, the Islamic community in Kenya comprises 5-30% of the population, mainly at the Swahili Indian Ocean coast, but also in the north and northeast regions inhabited by Somalis, where mosques coexist with churches. Most Kenyan Muslims are Sunnis.

The Shiite minority is represented mainly by Kenyans of Pakistani origin whose grandparents arrived to the coast during the change of the century to work in the construction of the Nairobi-Mombasa railway, the great communication

artery around which Kenya was formed. The moderate Ismailis branch, led by The Aga Khan, also has some adepts.

<http://www.kenyalogy.com/eng/info/pobla2.html>

Likewise we, the Gikuyu have desired to keep traditional practices including Irua adolescents' rite and we can modify them to suit the demands of modern day. The historical strength was that each rite prepared the adolescents for the very stage of development with legitimate goal of growing up.

Reviewing other programs especially in Kenya revealed that there are communities that are advocating for, and have adapted alternatives to girls' model of adolescents' rites. Different models are developed opting for symbolic emphasis for facultative obligation without the physical cut of the genitalia for the girls. The facultative model is described as:

Granting a privilege or permission or power to do or not to do something. "A facultative enactment" means enabling as in providing legal resolution "enabling power"

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/facultative>

The first model is sponsored by the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO), a national women's organisation in collaboration with the communities of the Meru and the Tharaka tribes in the eastern region and some parts of the Gikuyu tribal communities in the central region. These communities have adapted an adolescents' rite of passage for girls only. Instructions are based on (circumcision of words) Ntanira na Mugambo, through organized discussions about reproductive health, beauty and vitality and gender relations among others themes.

As an observation, the limitation of a girls' need-based model as a reference to this study is that it is focused on the needs of the girls as separate and does not include instruction for boys in the respective communities.

The second one is a program sponsored by World Vision International in partnership with communities of the Sabaot and Pokot tribes of the Rift Valley in Kenya. This model is a schedule of instructions and teachings for the 12-month-duration of schools' academic year. It is

punctuated with community rituals and ceremonies in support of facultative rituals for girls without the genital cut but maintain the male circumcision for the boys. The model is set on planned active engagement for duration of about one year. Community events mark the process that provides opportunity for interaction across generations and between boys and girls as part of daily life.

The Presbyterian Church in Central Province of Kenya is a sponsor to a third model from Christian teaching. It includes teachings about reproductive health punctuated with moral teachings about use of leisure time, development of self-discipline and virtues of honesty, respect, chastity, obedience and sexual abstinence among other issues. These discussions are mainly for the benefit of the boys during the male circumcision rituals and ceremony. The limitation of this model is that apparently the duration provided for instructions for boys is 6 days and girls are included only in the last two days.

Furthermore, I participated in a project where the International Labour Organization (ILO) in partnership with the Kenyan Government sponsored a program in the 1970's aimed at promoting an interactive health education model that recognized the central role of Village Elders (VE) and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA's). The objective was collaboration with traditional authority vested in the Elders and the Birth Attendants to protect girls and to reduce harm where communities continue the genital cut as part of the adolescents' rites of passage for girls.

A comparison of the four alternative models practiced in Kenya had captivated the interest of the researcher leading to another facultative model with a more structured mentoring education model offered by Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) in the USA.

The researcher's interest to learn had been rewarded because she has brought to the study what she had learned about formal and informal programs of instruction including the art of mentoring that some communities are developing and practicing, and particularly about VWS

mentoring education model in the USA. Some details are available on their website about the philosophy, objectives, and programs of the school. Briefly the main goal is to train instructors, mentors and the adults who are the social links for the growing children, specifically:

Our programs are grounded in a mentoring philosophy based on our natural blueprint for learning, revealed through teachings of native cultures throughout the world. We offer long-term mentoring programs for children and adults including the Oyase Community School and our Apprenticeship Program. We host and co-host regional adult workshops, a monthly life skills empowerment program for girls and young women ages 9-16, our monthly tracking club, as well as a spring and fall Rendezvous for teens who participate in long-term nature-based mentoring programs.
(<http://www.vermontwildernessschool.org/pages/about.html>)

Observation and participatory methods were helpful. Reading documents clarified links to the existing tribal practices. The study used concept grounded in history of human family as important in many ways that other past histories have done. The origins of mentoring and who a mentor is can be traced back to the wisdom gained as in the Greek civilization. On this Nickols (2002) wrote that:

Mentor is the name of the person to whom Odysseus (a.k.a. Ulysses) entrusted the care of his son, Telemachus, when he set out on those famous wanderings of his that we now call an "odyssey" and which took him, among other places, to the Trojan Wars. Mentor was Odysseus' wise and trusted counselor as well as tutor to Telemachus." Myth has it that the goddess Athena would assume Mentor's form for the purpose of giving counsel to Odysseus but, for many centuries now, the goddess has been unavailable for comment to confirm or disconfirm this rumor. At any rate, 'Mentor's name -- with a lower-case "m" -- has passed into our language as a shorthand term for wise and trusted counselor and teacher.' Fred Nickols (2002).

The researcher observed that most of the children at Vermont Wilderness School attended weekly sessions and also worked with their parents or other adults in home school programs. The VWS programs were built on regular weekly year long and as many as 4 to 5 years of working relationships with peers, parents and other older and senior citizens.

As a Peace Fellow during the on campus phase from August 2004 to May 2005, this researcher participated in cultural days with elementary, high school and wilderness school

programs. Besides being a Student Advocate, part of her practical objective during the internship from August 2005 to May 2006 was to learn how the mentoring program were organized. Consequently, she attended separate events of the school's weekly sessions in winter 2005 and spring 2006. In the winter sessions, the researcher observed that the children formed a morning circle for prayers and to offer gratitude through sharing of their stories. In the process she learned that this tradition of thankfulness is one of the attitudes and prayer rituals at the start of each day in the traditions of some of the American Indians.

The researcher observed that some of the children including the very young ones proceeded to gather wood and tinder to build fire on a snow-covered field. One of the older children demonstrated the art of starting fire by using a wood drill method. To the researcher this was evidence that some of the older children had received instructions and acquired the traditional skill of starting fire as retained by many tribal communities in different parts of the World.

Thankfulness about abundance in nature and creative use of natural resources were two attitudes and skills of survival and living in the natural habitat. The VWS children learned by demonstrations and through active project participation.

The researcher did also observe the art of conflict management where the instructors held a circle meeting with parents for decision-making purpose. During this occasion the parents had to process their fears and concerns about how to entrust the children to the care of the instructors because the school had planned for one night camping in the woods. It was in the spring 2006 and the weather was likely to be stormy with possibility of thunder and lightning. During this observation, the researcher formed the opinion that, this mentoring demonstration was about teaching the participants the process of conflict management and trust building. This process explains why during the training process, the parents and the instructors discussed one planned experience and addressed risk involved in the wilderness adventures.

The wisdom gained by Egyptians for example Kurt Hahn a German educator and passionate naturalist describes the wisdom gained by Egyptians, ‘they’ explored their surroundings, making the first recorded traces of planned adventure’ (1969) He further explains and clarifies that the most important task of innovative education is to ensure the survival of some qualities that set an individual on an adventure. He suggests that in order for such an education to occur, some or all of the following are essential:

‘There has to be an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit of mastery, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion’ (Kurt Hahn, 1969).

Further more selected methods recognize the use of language as a major traditional medium of instructions in ongoing community empowerment. One event was organized to honour the late Norman Powell (1914-2005) an Elder who had been involved in the wilderness school programs for 20 years. He shared and instructed others on skills learned when he was growing up in Kenya and when he was a scout leader in South Africa. He provided teachings and knowledge of wilderness and nature. And the programs in the US New England region adopted him as grandfather. He passed away in November 2005 and in March 2006 a memorial ceremony was organized to spread his ashes in a National Park in the State of New Jersey. Many of the people who attended the memorial service had worked with him and others came as affiliate members from different programs founded in different states of New York, Maine, Mohawk Nation Akwasasnee of New York, California, Seattle Washington, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont.

Elder Chief Jake and Judy Swamp of the Mohawk Nation led the ceremonial rituals. There were prayers and sacred songs in recognition of the rhythms of life in the physical body, of the spiritual presence after death and the relationship with ancestors.

The Akamba people of Eastern Kenya initiated the late Norman Powell into their knowledge of the natural world and gave him the name Ingwe when he was an adolescent. Ingwe

died at the age of 91 in 2005 and the Akamba people say that a person is never dead, *as long as their name is honored and remembered.*

It is important to note that after the rites of passage and rituals of initiation many tribal communities give new names. One such example is the name Ingwe that means the leopard. It is the animal name given to the late Norman Powel when he was initiated into the traditions of the Akamba of Kenya.

The VWS as well as other schools have based their teachings on traditions learned and retained by founders such as Ingwe, the late Norman Powel and Tom Brown. Ingwe learnt the art of mentoring while growing up in free interaction with village children in Kenya. He had written books and produced CD about the wisdom and the skills he trained others about. An example is about home-based course he named Kamana.

‘The Kamana Naturalist Training Program is a four level independent study program that covers the naturalist background needed to engage in the wilderness arts, including tracking, bird language, survival and native living skills, traditional verbalism, and naturalist mentoring.’
(<http://store.wildernessawareness.org/>)

Some of his products include poems: ‘Echoes of Kenya & Other Poems’, and stories ‘Spirit of the leopard, and other stories’.

Tom Brown Jr., learnt from an Apache Elder. An advantage for VWS is that the orally acquired wisdom of skills and knowledge resources are now documented and accessible in books so that learning is enhanced in three ways of hearing, practicing and reading in order to assimilate the lessons learned through comprehension and practice.

About Tom Brown and his influence it is written:

Tom Brown, Jr is America's most acclaimed outdoorsman, and a renowned tracker, teacher, and author. When Tom was only seven, Stalking Wolf (Grandfather), an Apache elder, shaman and scout, began coyote teaching Tom in the skills of tracking, wilderness survival, and awareness. After Stalking Wolf's final walk, Tom spent the next ten years wandering the wilderness throughout the America's with no manufactured tools—in most cases not even a knife—perfecting these Grandfathers skills and teaching.

(<http://www.natureoutlet.com/HistoryAndFounders.html>)

The weaving of traditions and adaptation methods I have cited are practices from a basis of theory construction and verification of the core social processes categorized as four lessons learned:

Lesson One: The Art of Generating Data for this study.

The comparison aimed at generating information, about how traditional tribal and adapted cultural practices have evolved leading to effective search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, the questioning lead to discovering what gives ‘life’ and shapes the potential of a maturing youth as a human organism when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological of the mind, and human terms.

Glaser and Strauss (1967), sociologists and leaders in educational social research, have provided important information about the value and meaning of evolving human dynamics in their grounded theory as a philosophy in qualitative research and they have stated that:

‘Grounded theory focuses on the task of theory construction and verification. This is the inductive nature of qualitative research considered essential for generating a theory. It searches to identify the core social processes within a given social situation. Glaser and Strauss (1967).

The first lesson of the study was the use of inductive nature of qualitative research and the result of the search are lessons learned and recognition of oral teaching, demonstrated practical skills, group and individual meetings, attitudes of reflective thinking and valued spiritual meaning of relationships. These are the core social processes of adolescents’ rites of passage.

Lesson Two: Learning About Appropriate Ways of Recreating Living Culture.

Part of learning that was valuable and helpful was identifying details of appropriate ways in recreating living culture of awareness. In the study participants and researchers and

communities clarified reasons for organized interactive rituals that a person undergoes alone and with others, using resources in natural world. These include active ongoing traditions of maintenance and relevancy, disciplined interest and practice. Wendell Berry (1977 poet, essayist, and conservationist, has contributed about this way of thinking, where he states that:

One of the goals of qualitative research is "to show how the practical divorced from the discipline of value tends to be defined by the immediate interests of the practitioner and so becomes destructive of value, practical and otherwise."
Wendell Berry (1977)

In this case, the lessons learned from HGK tradition's rites of passage included valuable discipline and practice of rituals, symbols and faith in the present and historical times from a social cultural perspective.

Lesson Three: Experiencing the Keenly Presented Rituals of Growing up Sexually:

The third lesson learnt was finding regard for meaning and value of symbolically naming of the invisible process that connected past and present's social cultural reality. Historically, as observed in previous pages, rituals of the adolescents' rites of passage are planned relationally peer-to-peer and intergenerational of children with parents, uncles, aunts and grandparents. Therefore information was gathered from participants' experiences of the keenly presented rituals. These were planned to give deeper sense of recognition of all biological relations and informal instructions most likely interpreted from what is expected by the community. Participants also contributed to the study their personal experiences of the physically visible and the inward expansion of self-understanding, performance of roles, self-responsibility to discipline and integrity. All these essentially formed valuable sense of belonging.

Lesson Four: The Recognition of Language as the major Traditional Medium of Instructions that Translates as Tool for Social Controls.

This study generated more understanding by way of review of documents and research work done to increase insight about prohibitions and taboos that block explorative growth during the age of curiosity from 5 to 12 years. These are the times in the life of a growing person where

imagination is useful as inventive ways of understanding the physical geographies of the human body and functions of the genitals.

The universality of these attitudes and their importance is summarized and defined in Wikipedia dictionary that:

‘The enterprise of civil society depends on educating young people to become responsible, thoughtful and enterprising citizens. This is an intricate, challenging task requiring deep understanding of ethical principles, moral values, political theory, aesthetics, and economics; not to mention an understanding of who children are, in themselves and in society.’ Wikipedia online dictionary

Of interest particularly included responses from writers of the historical Gikuyu traditions that are proponents of the general ‘knitting of community fabric’ referred by Jomo Kenyatta (1938). He explained details about life age of curiosity, invention and creativity from 5 to about 12 years and after circumcision 13 to 19years. I also included more universal works of other cultures in Africa and elsewhere as J. Money and P.A. Walker, (1971), pediatric psychologists in their psychosexual developmental research, write that the phenomenon of using language to maintain status not with standing change is more universal in many communities and not about the Gikuyu tribe alone. They say that:

‘Even with the knowledge of blood relations, taboo terms act as barriers or dividers, separating men from women and adults from children.’ This informs on probability of deficiency about important instructions appropriate for adolescents rites of passage because taboo as an attitude had no provision to address issues about growing up sexually. Or that provisions can be made with sanctions from relevant authority.

(Archives of Sexual Behavior: Psychosexual Development (Vol.1, No.1, 1971)

Thus, it was important for this study to make a contribution as to whether there has been change of the physical world and therefore to the lifestyles that impact on the dynamics of living traditions or not. To identify the shifting factors of human environment as the actual changes those have occurred with the changing of the lifestyles. To provide information about how this change has affected the obligation of the traditions of adolescents rites of the Gikuyu community

in the duration of over 60 years since 1938 when Kenyatta's book 'Facing Mount Kenya' was published.

To gain ways of recording the change and make that knowledge available this study explored what aspects of Irua (circumcision) traditions and practices are useful in rebuilding adolescents' rites of passage as one of the important tribal principles shaping cultural heritage for present generations today.

Research Methodology

(a) Study location or Site

Though everything in this study is not applicable in Kenya, the need for an educative model rite of passage for adolescents cannot be ignored because of the similarities of lived experiences of adolescents globally. The researcher chose to work with two communities, one based in Kenya where she comes from and the other from the US where the researcher is studying.

Selection of Vermont State community for this study was largely influenced by the existence of Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) founded in 1999. The school's mission is grounded on a 'mentoring philosophy that is based on a natural blue print for learning exposed to the learners through teachings of native cultures throughout the world.

The selection of the Gikuyu community as a location to gather data for this study was also influenced by several factors highlighted elsewhere in this research document. Top on the influences is the fact that this researcher is born in the Gikuyu community, grew up there and received her basic education there. During the growing up period, i.e. between birth and now, the researcher had first hand social exposures, experiences and encounters including the rite of circumcision.

Indeed, the rite of passage marked a deep sense of affiliation and has influenced her commitment to work toward a model for adolescents in keeping with the demands of the modern

social life of the Gikuyu people. This explains why the focus of this study is on the rites of passage for the Gikuyu adolescents who will be eventually the beneficiary of the new model.

The Study of the traditions practiced by the Vermont Wilderness school that are adapted from the American Indians, and the Gikuyu's living history and social life practices clearly showed some similarities. A study of these similarities was expected to equip this researcher with information and other facts needed to help plan and develop a new model of educative rites of passage for the Gikuyu adolescents.

(b) The Study Target Communities Or Population

The target communities of this study comprised Vermont and Gikuyu communities respectively. The needed data was collected from adolescents, young adults, and old people considered possessing the data required by this study. The data could have been an accumulation of information and knowledge gained through participation in traditional or historical events or from personal social events, encounters and personal experience during growing up period, working or in parenting periods. Also through observation of modern and traditional social events, being told or hearing the informed, knowledgeable and experienced people tell the interested people their narratives.

(c) Study Sample Size.

According to social science researchers, Rossman, Taylor and Bogman (1998) on 'choosing Sample size', state that:

- Large samples are usually reliable. However, smaller ones can equally yield significant results.
- Large samples are extremely cumbersome to code. They are also expensive and time consuming especially in a study like this one which is academic nature, is self-sponsored and equally timed.

It is mainly on consideration of the above reasons that this researcher opted to work with a small sample of respondents numbering 14 (10 from Gikuyu and 4 from Vermont communities respectively). That number is supplemented with other sources of data such as books, journal s and articles that did provide sizeable amount of data required by this research project.

(d) Procedures of Selecting Research Respondents.

There are several sampling methods usually used in research studies. The following is a sample of those in common use:

Non –Probability samples with options as follows:

- (a) Convenience sample
- (b) Purposeful or Judgment sample
- (c) Quota sampling

Probability samples with six choices as follows:

- (a) Purposeful or judgment sample
- (b) Convenience sampling
- (c) Random sampling
- (d) Systematic sampling
- (e) Stratified sampling
- (f) Cluster sampling

Factors that Influenced the Selection of the sampling method for this Study

- (i) Purposeful sampling offered more benefits to this research project. For example, it allowed hand picking of respondents considered to possess required information or insight and knowledge in respect of the issues and topic of study
- (ii) The technique does not demand for statistical inference or limitation of sampling error
- (iii) It is less expensive

(v) Its degree of accuracy is also high since most data or information is given by the experienced people who themselves had undergone incidences or encounter being researched by this study.

(vi) It is preferred by many social researchers not competent in the application of statistics in research project. Besides, qualitative research is essentially descriptive

(vii) The written research results contain questions from the data to illustrate and substantiate the presentation.

(viii) Social science researchers are also of strong view that written word is very important in qualitative approach, especially in recording data and disseminating the research findings.

Data Collection Instruments:

There are several methods that can be used by qualitative research to collect needed data. Some of the commonly used are: Observation (both participant and non-participant), case studies, case histories, questionnaires, content analysis, individual and group interviews using structured or unstructured schedule and focus group discussion among other methods. The choice depends on the data needed for the study.

In consideration of all the above stated instruments, this researcher opted to use a strategy that combined some of the above stated instruments considered to be capable of soliciting data needed by this research. For example observation, interviews and focused groups.

Procedure of Selecting Research Respondents:

This research used case study as the qualitative method to analyze the deep and underlying challenges likely to be faced by communities, groups and adolescents in order to understand thoroughly the participatory processes of rituals. Accordingly, the researcher used narrative interview tradition as main research tool.

The study used the qualitative approach method of data collection. It followed the case study genre that seeks ‘to understand the larger phenomenon through close examination of a

specific case and therefore focus on the particular aspect of the study population (in this case the rites of passage) as documented by researchers in social psychology such as Rossman & Rallis, (1998). In this case, my study was informed by documented process of Historical Gikuyu of Kenya (HGK) with a focus on comparing adolescents' rite of passage Irua, (circumcision) with the adapted model of adolescents' rites of Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) in the State of Vermont, USA. Thus, the study is anticipated to serve as a resource to help shed light to those seeking an alternative model on adolescents' rites of passage at community level and intercultural and across cultures levels as well. Kennedy, a sociologist on human rights states, that:

‘Though case studies are context dependent, reasoning by analogy allows the application of lessons learned to another population or set of circumstances believed or assumed to be sufficiently similar to the study sample that findings apply there as well’ Kennedy, (1979)

Research participants included 1 principal researcher, 2 research assistants, and 4 respondents drawn from sample population of VWS. For the HGK there were 10 participants and because it was important to get the oral historical piece from elders, focus group method was used. This included older community members identified and requested to participate in two small groups.

The Vermont Wilderness School was part of study:

My interest and curiosity began when I was invited to attend an intercultural school study of African cultures with children at Putney Central Elementary School in Vermont. After listening to the 2 & 3 grade children talk about what they are curious about and interested in other cultures, I started to ask questions whether American children learn about cultures in USA including the Native Indians cultures? When is the teaching done and where is it done? So, I was informed about the Vermont Wilderness School VWS and also that one of our teaching professors, Ralph Meima, is an active member of the VWS board, so I scheduled several

meetings with the professor as an opportunity to ask direct questions about home schooling and about the mentoring program offered by VWS in particular.

I continued to read more information about the school from the website as well as about the practice of wilderness learning programs in different regions of the USA.

I made important contacts with families and staff involved in the ongoing participation in the adolescents rituals that mark in very significant ways, their transition from childhood to teenage and youth phases in human development. I used in-depth interviewing, observed events, and reviewed relevant documents.

Initially, I had hoped to focus mainly on the adaptation of the adolescents' rites in VWS. However with further observation, consultation with my academic advisor and review of literature, I included others who have participated in the Historically Gikuyu of Kenya HGK, and this inclusion is important for the comparison aspect of the study. This affected how the research instruments were administered especially because the questionnaires were set in English language, however this only affected the proposal slightly. As intended it was more inclusive and involved participants from different positions in the VWS project in the study as well as an adolescent who has undergone the rite himself. This provided more actual experiences and made the study more holistic by incorporating the varied perspectives.

The four people from VWS selected were aged 21 to 54 years. They were interviewed and the interviews tape-recorded. They included one member of the Board of Directors, a member of staff, one of the co- founding members of VWS and one adolescent. They have a wide-range of experience in nature and wilderness education. Some are involved in regional movement about nature and wilderness programs. The adolescent interviewed also volunteered in different nature and wilderness camps' programs since he graduated from VWS four years ago.

The other 10 participants were from HGK who participated in the Irua adolescents' rites of circumcision themselves or had listened to others narrating about their experiences. There was a case of a 22 old young woman who has not been presented for Irua. The age range of the 10 participants was from 22 to 92 years, and they all live in Kenya. There is a variation of numbers in comparison to VWS because of the nature in oral traditions that are not documented in books but are repositories of stories shared by older generations. Therefore I also included additional source for the HGK gathering from a group of 6 older people who were more comfortable in discussion groups than working in individual interview. The approach was visibly cost effective in the use of time and logistic in facilitation of the meetings. The focus group method was a useful tool in linking this study beyond what is written as well as moving conversations beyond the taboo barrier which at times manifested itself in silence surrounding interactive language about growing up sexually outside the planned provisions of Irua for the Gikuyu people in Kenya.

I reviewed documents that helped me in making follow-up questions. All these were instrumental in understanding adolescents' rites of passage of the HGK in Kenya and VWS in Vermont, USA. The interviews, group meetings and discussion, observations of events, individual experiences and documents were given data that I used and classified as important part of the study.

Due to time constraints, I chose participants who are able to make decisions on their own whether to be involved in the study or not. So I did not need to seek extra permission.

I informed directly and through the discussion with two research assistants; all respondents about the purpose of my study, with a brief write-up of the details as is in the informed consent form. The research assistants presented this consent write up to questionnaire respondents as they administered the questionnaire to those who consented to respond to the

request. The method worked effectively well. I used email form of communication and consultations with the two assistants in Kenya.

I contacted the participants from VWS by telephone and requested interviews, set dates and identified place(s) and also their permission to tape-record. During the interview, I explained once more the focus of the study and then requested each one to sign the informed consent form. All of the people who participated in the interviews did so willingly. The interviews were scheduled for an hour or an hour and half only.

The two research assistants were guided by specific considerations such as age and literacy levels of respondents in Kenya and applied skills helpful in administering the questionnaires to persons including those who did not speak English.

Interviews were transcribed in different ways: the verbatim of the taped records (VWS), and the typed response to questionnaires administered and written by individuals (HGK). There was also typed form of notes taken by research assistants during the discussions in the focus groups. All participants were accorded an opportunity to review their transcribed data and assisted in proofing their responses.

For this study to be meaningful, it was important to generate links to similar trends of how the changed lifestyles may have motivated other communities to respond in advocating for cultural appropriateness of adolescents rites in Kenya

To generate a broader base, the study accessed information and examined how other communities in Kenya have opted to support the facultative model without loss of the obligation and therefore are providing the opportunities for communities to achieve their objectives

As a Kenyan, I know that over the years, Kenyan society has openly supported models of adaptability to modern changes, in cases where traditions are harmful yet the communities continue the practices. An example of this is the dialogue and discussion from the medical and health point of view regarding the of Irua for girls'. The health workers collaborated with

Traditional Birth Attendants and circumcisers and prevailed upon their practical skills in order to reduce such harmful practices as the cut for the girls where such communities continue these practices, including HGK tribe communities.

Another awareness gained through this study is that the Gikuyu communities, who are the potential primary users of the skills, knowledge and programs that are the expected outcomes of this study, are affiliated with Christian traditions. We therefore accessed information of other models and organizations that are engaged in rites and rituals for adolescents from the religious teachings. Part of the information was gathered during the interviews and part from accessing articles from journals through the Internet and also from library books and other reading sources. We engaged existing Christian groups that are involved in organizing rites for circumcisions for boys and girls or using a Christian teaching model. We included such information about existing alternatives models likely to have influence and impact through instructions on human virtues and moral consequential teachings.

The study included an observation of adaptation practices to meet the demand for adolescents' rites of passage for communities and current generations. Attention was on program planning practices of rites of passage at the Vermont Wilderness School. This observation was achieved through interactive contacts with families who have made home schooling program a choice for their children. This was in order to understand the mentoring educative model that is part of the alternatives to public school educational curriculum.

Literature and documents about concepts of mentoring and informal ways of instruction at Vermont Wilderness were reviewed. These were resources that assisted me in developing a clear understanding of how this alternative to the public school learning system provides similar but slightly different use of other systems of tribal identity and geographical connections. I also learned how it fashioned a functioning community organization created with specific needs to supplement and support home schooling children and adolescents. The study included in-depth

interviews with founding members of VWS and other persons and I was able to gather their experiences and narratives that led to an understanding of how the VWS school functions. The awareness which this experience generated in me is about the inclusive ways and adaptability such a program generates, and that may become useful a resource and tool to enrich the dynamic way of gathering knowledge and skillful wisdom of learning from natural cultural traditions of the American Indian by the presence and mentoring by tribal teachers.

Data Presentation and Analysis.

Mainly the principal researcher, assisted in the exercise by some research assistants who had an educational background in social science research process, collected data for this study as planned.

The collection of secondary data was carried out to obtain information relevant to the needs of this study. This strategy involved review of literature relevant to the needs of this study, namely: books, journals and articles.

The study also obtained some data from the principal researcher's personal experiences regarding traditional rites of passage as practiced by both Vermont and the Gikuyu communities respectively. The researcher's experience emerged as a consequence of participating in various rites of passage forums organized by both Gikuyu and the Vermont communities and supplemented by observation, and encounters during growing up, working and parenting periods.

The answers obtained from the above sources were classified, processed and interpreted using the structured interview quotations and finally in the descriptive written forms.

To be certain that the data collection instruments were clear and capable of gathering the required data, the researcher initially went to the field, and using a small group of potential instruments' respondents, administered the structured interviews schedule questions. Some

questions and statements were found to be unclear to the respondents. The questions therefore were restructured to suit the requirements of the sample population.

There were also a few potential respondents aged 80 years and above who were not literate. They could not read or write. They communicated in their local language or dialect. It was at these points that an oversight was identified that had occurred by omission rather than deliberate. The fact is that the principal researcher had not prepared the questionnaires in the local Gikuyu language. The research assistants therefore translated the questionnaires into Gikuyu language and the interview administration proceeded smoothly there after.

For The Readers' Review, The Research Question Is:

What new or future rite of passage might be created for the Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the rites of passage developed and practiced over the years by both the Vermont Wilderness School and the Gikuyu communities?

The above question was obviously broad and could only be affectively answered by breaking the question to specific sub questions intended to obtain specific information or clarification (s). Aware of this reality, this principle researcher developed sub questions that were administered to the sample respondents to respond to. The following pages deal with the administered sub questions and the responses given to each of them.

Before beginning the interview each of them reviewed the consent form and signed freely accepting to participate in the study. The following participated in the study:

The Vermont Wilderness School:

The 4 Participants:

- Mark is 40 years old and he is one of the founder members of the VWS organization.
- Selina is aged 52 years; she is one of the parents who formed the group for the first group of children who started at VWS 8 years ago. Currently she is a volunteer member of the School Board.
- Amy is 34 years old instructor and she is very enthusiastic about how the needs of the growing children have shaped development of programs at the VWS

- Saul is 21 years and at the age of 13, was among the group of adolescents who joined VWS at the very beginning and he says that some of their experience shaped how parents and instructors modified programs over the five years that he learned there.

The four participants started by clarifying each in different ways that the VWS rite of passage can be meaningful where other social interactions take place.

When I listened to the taped interviews and then read the transcripts, I realized that in some ways they were describing about the experiential learning cycle as described by (Kolb 1984) as follows:

a) Where children learn in interactive ways of modern education as provided by the parents in home school program(s). The everyday world in which members of this community move, their taken-for-granted field of social action, is about women, men and children with concrete determined sense of purpose. A direct assessment seemed to be about desire to know what takes place before making a decision to join or send a child to VWS. Selena remembers;

‘I was struggling with a son and I wanted him there because I was afraid of homeschooling. So, eventually he and I went to an open house at VWS, we saw what the (kids) children were doing and what the teachers or instructors were doing and we liked what we saw. I signed him in and he started at the seventh grade and attended the program for five years.’ (Selena is now 52 years old, long after her son graduated is an active volunteer member of the school board).

Directly related to parents and the child or children making choices is the continued participation of this learning in social *forms* (Huitt 2003) where children are likely to benefit by increasing capacity to *understand their world*, (Vygotsky 1978) with a focus suggesting that the learner even if *simply growing up* (Piaget 1969) is much more actively involved in a *joint enterprise with the teacher in creating ‘constructing’ new meanings*. (Laurillard 2002).

The symbol systems which define these experiences are given in the nature of things and not historically constructed as traditions in the family or tribe, in the case of VWS they are socially maintained, and individually applied. As Mark so clearly states that ‘ the way I can

define our organisation as a community is in relation to purpose. We have an organisation that has participants; for example if a child is coming to our program for a number of years, their family, parents and other children are part of our community. But if they stop participating often, then they are not anymore'. (Mark is 40 years old and is one of the founders of VWS).

b) That VWS further builds families and group relationships where adolescents are instructed in nature and wilderness traditions, observed for initiative and industry and presented for rituals so as to test survival skills and endurance by sustenance from nature.

The school teaches wilderness survival and primitive skills. In living skills, some mix wilderness awareness, animal tracking, or various aspects of indigenous culture, all of them in continuous combinations. As Selena said, 'the key is to start by short term tasks and small activities, watching children and observing what they are passionate about and nurturing that aspect'. Presentations and demonstrations are followed by opportunities for learners to practice skills, either in a scenario, in small teams, or on their own, depending on the subject. It is important as Selena said,

'That they go out when they are very young learning how to awaken their senses, observing animals, learning from trees, and flowers. They acquire skills of making shelter from debris, and fire from wood drill. They learn what they can do if they were out in the woods or lost in wilderness, to think of shelter, fire, water and food. In extreme weather conditions any of or more than one of the three, fire, water and shelter are basic needs essential for immediate survival'. (Selena)

As part of a group, they work in teams and cook meals in the backcountry, examine case studies, and navigate orienteering courses. Saul recounts of a story told of how native people instructed via oral traditions and directions. He volunteered for a SOLO that is interpreted as 'Stone-hearth Open Learning Opportunity' experience following instructions received and retained from hearing and memory. He was to undertake a journey, follow direction, identifying landmarks, where to turn and where to stay for the night, build fire (wood drill) and use natural materials for shelter and continue at sunrise and climb a mountain to return a rock he had been

given, to its place on the specified mountain. He said he lost his way and missed most of the landmarks but he spent two days and one night alone in the woods. Summarizing this experience he said ‘When you have an experience that is emotionally charged, an experience that is on the edge, there is adrenalin flowing and you are nervous; that forms very strong memories’ There are also a number of practical simulations involving both leadership and survival skills. After a scenario or practice session, learners have opportunities to receive coaching and evaluation on their performances. Preparing them for tests begin with what Amy, a 34 years old instructor, describes as creating necessity to practice skills by increasing discomfort;

‘In the fall when they are presented as a group, we split them into small groups, blindfold them and take them into the woods so they have no idea where they are. For the first night they have comfortable sleep in tents and sleeping bags, fire, water and food. Second night, we take away tents and sleeping bags so they create shelter and make fire and sleep in a debris hut. They sleep in their own no matter how well or poorly constructed. Next day we take away the plates so, they have to have to create fire and prepare food without modern items, no aluminum foil or anything and only have a knife as a tool. So skills of cooking on a flat rock or wrapping food in leaves (spit-grill) is fun and adventure too’

Throughout the program, presentations, practical sessions, and activities all stress the fundamentals of leadership in the areas of trust building, structure for participation, division of responsibilities, and assessment skills. The school teachings include wilderness skills such as constructing shelter, making tools, managing self-sustenance off the land and traditional form of guidance, good counsel and spirituality. Saul remembers the first gathering he attended at the age of 13.

‘This is the first time I had been away from my family’; he said. ‘It was a week program in the Pine Plains of New Jersey. Well-known wilderness education teachers John Young and Tom Brown were there. Also Gilbert Walking Bull, a Lakota elder was responsible for organizing sweat lodges. From VWS four of us attended, my friend who was three years older, his dad, my mentor and I. Besides the experiences of four sweat lodges, that week I learned about spirituality and how to pray and to conduct myself in good manner when I am with elders’. (Saul)

Saul described the process of organizing for sweat lodge and the steps taken as follows.

‘First dry logs are assembled to make a big fire to heat rocks set in a fire pit. When the fire is done the rocks retain the heat. Then the lodge structure of saplings is created in a form of a dome, covered with blankets and tarpaulin for the outsides hold the air inside. The extremely heated rocks are in the pit at the center. Water is sprinkled on them at intervals to raise steam; the interior of the lodge gets very hot like in a sauna room. So, participants sit inside in a circle for about 45 minutes of an hour and perspire profusely as part of purifying the body. Prayers and sacred songs accompany this physical activity. So, I had not experienced anything like this before’. (Saul is 21 years old graduate of VWS.)

These are some of the experiences and observations described about VWS programs as integrating spirit, ritual, and depth psychology and are important aspects in traditional cultural practices. There are also planned advance levels of experiences for the older youths who volunteer to work with other younger children. Saul concluded that:

‘About all the rituals that I have been through, some are bits of a stretch; there had to be a little bit of doubt and now that I am older, I realize that while going through some of the experiences, I was frightened. I am part of the people who now support the younger children. In my time it was the same that the older people were not visible but they were there although I did not see them, they were watching over me to make sure that I was ok’. (Saul)

The above statement is an example of descriptive thoughts and reflection most likely gained by critical thinking through individual and group duration of vision quest or seclusion.

c) It follows that: Mentoring practices at VWS in nature and wilderness traditions are expected to instill discipline, and building mutually rewarding trusting relationships between parents and their children. The interaction of these families in organized instructions and rituals are parts of a process supporting transitions from childhood to adulthood and can be referred to as adolescents’ rite of passage.

Historically Gikuyu in Kenya:

Working from the premise that the Historically Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK), participants had some knowledge about the subject matter made it easier for the selection of the site. However to safe guard for uncertainty of the volunteer and free willingness to participate, 34 people were contacted and 26 of them freely participated in the study according to explanation given in the copies of the consent form given to them. 17 questionnaires were administered to the 26 respondents as follows:

In writing, 20 people responded whereby 12 chose to provide answers in pairs. The other 8 answered individually. Another 6 people made up of mixed categories of elders, parents/teachers and adolescents; were organized into focus discussion groups of three persons with the research assistant taking notes in each group.

Out of the 8 who responded in writing, further selection by categories was used to generate diverse richness of information from male & female in each category of 2 parents and 2 Gikuyu history writers currently engaged in institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

Those who participated included the people who live in the village and some other who live in urban lifestyle in Nairobi. Main categories we considered were multi-generations age 22 to 97(age, position and roles; grandparents, parents, children) of 4 women and 6 men. The age difference was important because of the changes that the tribe had endured regarding adolescents' rites with variations forms different and somehow similar to the historical context.

The 2 Research Assistants:

- Timothy Gathendoh 64 yrs, MA Education Administration: Retired Ass. Registrar, University of Nairobi UON. Current volunteer and organizer in a Community Health Education Program of a Community Based Organisation (CBO).
- Martin Kanyingi 36yrs, B Ed., Financial Management. Volunteer youth education coordinator in the community Health education program, CBO.

The 10 Participants:

- Daniel Kanyingi Snr. 92yrs old, local farmer and retired Chef, retired Chairman of Makwa Harambee School and currently a member of Catholic Men Association of Makwa Catholic Church.
- Regina Njeri 87yrs old, Farmer and active member of a local women group

- Stephen Muruu Meria-57yrs old. Gikuyu Elder and Oral Historian
- Francis Njau Mungai –59yrs old, Pharmacist, manager of family Enterprise. Provides information about drugs related to prevention of pregnancy or treatment of infections while dispensing over the counter sales to youth age 20 to 30yrs.
- Kihoro Magu-writer 45yrs old, Former Secondary School Administrator, currently a librarian Un. Of Nairobi. Provides youth counseling in local Church.
- Ruben K. Waweru-writer.
- Agnes Mwai parent from Mukurweini.
- Emma Wanjiru Githuka 22 yrs. An adolescent /youth
- Mwalimu Lucia Wanjiku 54yrs, Primary School Teacher and farmer, Volunteer in CBO providing home based care for the sick and elderly.
- Murage, Primary School Teacher and farmer.

So, the final selection included men and women, old, adolescent, parent, teachers and writer in each category for the purpose of generating diverse information on their experiences of HGK adolescents' rites of passage including Irua according to the set questions.

I printed copies of the written responses to the set questionnaires and studied them. I decided to pick the responses of 10 participants (also sometimes referred to in this paper as respondents,) who were further coded for purpose of comparative study. Therefore I worked with typed notes from the two focus groups, written responses from the parents and writers and organized these statements according to each of the 7 set questions. I then proceeded to type the responses and produced one document with multiple continuums answers to the same question

For example in the study response to the first sub question asking for the explanation of different understandings of adolescents rites even in HGK, responses were so different according to the age, the place and point in time that each respondent chose to relate to; One respondent in the parent category-Mr Francis Njau- cited a set of rituals which are as follows:

(a) Guchokia mwana ihuini, which means signing release or weaning from the mother and granting permission for a child to spend nights away from home. If a misfortune befalls him/her this would not affect the parent;

(b) Gutonya ndugira kana matu, a ritual of piercing ears and wearing ornaments and earrings. This was heightened way of body beauty and readiness for circumcision;

(c) Mwarano, community organised ceremony that was done to publicly announce the readiness of adolescents plans for circumcision Irua;

(d) Irua, a set test of endurance enacted and symbolized by physical genital cut so that one is recognized as man or woman marking the end of childhood. (Francis aged 59). All others respondents named Irua as the only ritual or added piercing of the ears.

Francis further clarified that the first three rituals were family based and instructions were carried out within the family circle which corresponds to the experiential learning cycle as described by (Kolb 1984) The other respondent in parent category said that ‘traditionally important aspects of adolescents rites including Irua were laid out and the whole community was conversant about the institution’ (Agnes).

All respondents agreed that Irua involved the whole community and even those who lived far apart came together as recognized social *forms* (Huitt 2003) for the ceremony and celebrations. This constant living together established rhythms of interaction thereby providing time for demonstration of skills and test of performance. It is from such experiences then the study summarized that it is possible to follow the explanations that these processes contribute to formation of acceptable habits.

That the HGK rite of passage includes Irua and can be meaningful where other social interactions take place in the following instances:

(a) Where children learn in interactive ways with parents and from stories about the tribal meaning. The category of focus groups which included the elderly people named the whole process from birth ‘ the child to be born and to be given a name’: there is an assumption here that a person who reads this statement can relate to the history of the tribe especially in the naming of every girl child according to the nine daughters of Gukuyu and his wife Mumbi. The naming ceremony and the celebrations signify and are accepted as major symbolic family blood relationships. (Daniel aged 92, Regina 87 and Stephen 57 also Agnes 45yrs) The bonds provided

for community rituals and ceremonies that mark changes actively involved in a *joint enterprise of learner with the teacher in creating* ‘constructing’ *new meanings*. (Laurillard, 2002). That these bonds had and continue to have further value and meaning through continuous transitions from birth to death is evident as noted in a Kenyan Autobiography, by Neubaure (1983) and the afterlife of the ancestors and tribal sense of spirituality.

(b) That historically, adolescents were trained in life skills, see Bunche (1941) by demonstrations of task accomplishments and observed for initiative and industry and presented for three rituals namely; 1) being born again 2) sent with blessings for few days away from home to be with peers. 3) Through engaging in the art of ear piecing and wearing ear-ornaments. That community engaged in these events or rituals to mark a process of transition from childhood. One of the HGK participants further noted that:

‘Irua ceremony marked tribal, social, human developmental phase that is ending i.e. from the uncircumcised referred to as Ihii, for boys and Iriigu, for girls and a beginning to mix and mingle with Anake, for young male after circumcision and before marriage and Airitu for young women after circumcision and before first pregnancy or marriage which ever comes first. There is was a process of preparation for Irua circumcision because it was and still is a test of endurance and blood bonding.’ (Francis.)

The focus group summarized that ‘the cut for Ihii and for Iriigu due to the pain and discomfort was significant in setting the attitude about endurance and ability to work through challenges of what is expected in life of an adult of Gikuyu person.’(Older and young Gikuyu respondents.) This was and has mostly been marked with a variety of instructions during the healing marked by seclusion as noted by Wachege (1992) and signified the threshold and entry into adulthood stage. Other participants Agnes, and Francis noted that:

‘Older and elderly people were teachers in the society, training others on how to become responsible, for example skills in solving family matters, explaining what is expected of reciprocated relationships, ways of building mutual trust in age-cohorts also known as Riika and respect for men and women alike’ (Agnes & Francis)

Irua especially for boys is a significant focal point in the growing up and graduating process into other adult levels of responsibility and leadership. Regrettably focus groups summarized what most respondents said about this aspect, 'traditional model is nearly dysfunctional' hence the noted loss of the historical contextual framework of learned behaviours guided by instructions that were more binding and long lasting for boys and girls. And they continued lamenting, 'the results are visible in low state of respect for age, change in marriage protocols and other important traditions.

Another participant noted that 'aspects of marital counseling have changed and seem more diverse as men and women grow separately and apart because nowadays they do not receive teachings about life together.' (Magu).

Responding to the questioning of what new (or future) rite of passage might be created for Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the adolescents' rite of passage. The practices developed in Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) and those historically practiced by the Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK) reflect *context* and *content* themes and are outlined below.

The themes were about social relationships between adults with children because the generations form connections making it possible for learning to take place.

Interviews, discussions, observation and literature reviews were methods used in this study and answered the main research question and subsequent sub questions.

Two main themes of a) relationships forming context as one; b) the other is joint enterprise in construction of meanings framing content which emerged in response to the main question and which indicated differences as well as similarities from the models of rites of passage for the adolescents being studied as follows:

In many and different ways, adolescents maturity and growing up is a process and is marked in a unique way as explained from the experiences of the participants of the study that significant events, rituals and ceremonies were describing the experiential learning cycle:

Children directly related to parents; birth, blood or (surrogate experiences of clan in HGK's and instructors /mentors in VWS's relationships. The parent (s) and the child or children making choices in the continued participation of this learning in social *forms* (family, group, school and community) where children are likely to benefit by increasing capacity to *understand their world* (naming, identity, language and daily interactions), with a focus suggesting that the learner even if *simply growing up* (persuasion, instruction, initiatives and creative skills) is much more actively involved in a *joint enterprise with the teacher in creating* (stories, events, rituals, tests, gatherings, prayers, ceremonies and celebrations,) 'constructing' *new meanings*.

I welcome the participation of people working in the field followed by document analysis and value their contribution to the study.

Discussion

The past social cultural performance influences the values and meaning of cultural experiences of the present, because it is the reality that makes known any change that has taken place over time. The performance in the present is measured as less by an existing standard measure or improved beyond the standard mark of excellence. This study compared the data from the elders as well as from current youthful generation. This attention to details of different experiences at different generational periods of the Gikuyu tribe has been documented and is available as resources and tools to inform as to the degree on facts of the culturally embedded values, beliefs and meanings that have changed from the past to the present.

The main sources of knowledge, including this study were therefore combined as an opportunity that has generated a third source of data because at the end, the study itself is a resource. The first was the historical past as a source of data was for this study. This source of information from written and context narratives of experiences of the past were regarded as

important to this study. We gathered knowledge that revealed the lived experiences and observed departure between them regarding the past and the present.

The study included modern scholarly and civic advocacy documents. These instruments provided analytical views about changes from the past to the current situation. This thread of information gathering became useful suggestions on how to regain the lost conceptual framework for creating needed alternative model(s) of adolescents' rites of passage.

Finally as principal researcher, I worked with an open mind to create space and I scheduled time to listen to diverse observations from the subjective Gikuyu people contributions to this study. Other participants from other cultures with different tribal and racial identities who are interested parties contributed too and I valued their views as objective contributions to the research, including VWS.

I gathered spoken, observed and recorded individual contributions and made written work of them, then put them together as a document. This document will in future serve as a source of reference material for those seeking basic information. It also contains an in-depth knowledge regarding the adolescents' rites of passage for adolescents as practiced in the Gikuyu community and other cultures outside Kenya. There is a wealth of information regarding examples of the practices more specifically of the Vermont Wilderness School Community in Vermont State in the U.S.A. Besides, the information and in-depth knowledge gained from this study will be helpful to demonstrate that there are facts and realities of tribal meaning that are likely to be lost in pursuit of social modern styles. This study is work in progress on an assumption that current Gikuyu generations can learn and incorporate best practices from other models developed from historically cultural traditions of the American Indians.

This study reached out to its target audience with tools and resources, from observations, practical examples and programs studied in this study and recommend them as useful tools for creating an Alternative Rite of Passage (ARP). This conclusion was based on assumption that

resources and tools identified through this study have been useful only to the extent of the buy-in that the communities opt for, after understanding the consequences of the genital cutting of the female for example, and that this understanding will be translated in change of attitude and practices within the Gikuyu community.

A study of the Vermont Wilderness School model practices of rites of passage in the USA, conducted by this researcher showed that; although the adapted American Indians model does not embrace genital cut for boys or girls, it possessed unique qualities which could help benefit development of a new model for Gikuyu community in Kenya. The introduction of such practices would gradually replace the traditional one which is being replaced by modern social practices and which the current generations mainly appear to embrace indiscriminately.

Recommendations.

Recommendation 01: The Development of a New Educative Rites of Passage Model for the Gikuyu Community Adolescents.

This study has established that traditional rites of passage for the Gikuyu adolescents played a vital role in developing generations of virtuous people with qualities of human virtues. These were wholesome men and women of integrity, courage, wisdom and strength of character capable of shaping self, family, and the community's present and future destiny.

However, due to forces of modernization, our current generations, especially the youth appear to be embracing the Western social way of life indiscriminately. This trend has not been without critical repercussions to the affected families, the youth and the community due to loss of family values and norms leading to the breakdown of socially constructed instructions and teachings. On the basis of the above highlights, the study respondents highly recommended, that:

- a. A new educative rites of passage model for the Gikuyu community's adolescents be developed to respond to the modern social needs. That model should be educationally oriented;

- b. The traditional rites of passage for the Gikuyu adolescents be critically re-evaluated to establish specific important roles played by the traditional rites of passage for adolescents and whether they have a role and place in modern social life, and hence they can be incorporated in the new models;
- c. The results of the re-evaluation are used to develop the new or improve the traditional model.

Recommendation 02: The Composition of the Evaluators

When collecting data for this study in the field, several respondents recommended that a task force be established to study the results of this study with a view to developing a strategic plan to enhance the implementation of this study project.

The taskforce to comprise people of integrity, commitment to the planning with the needs based agenda, well versed in the historical, social contents, and practice especially the rites of passage for Gikuyu's adolescents.

The members of the task force to organize initial forum(s) to examine the study results and to deliberate the best way to successfully implement the study recommendations.

The taskforce would have to start with guidelines about clear terms of reference followed by the strategic plan of action and the timeline of events.

Recommendation 03: Data Gathering Instruments.

The study used structured interview schedules, which were administered individually or in groups of maximum 4 respondents. The assistant researcher asked the question and left the respondents to seek for the answer(s). This approach generated hot discussion to the extent that the assistant researcher had a difficult time to move the respondents to the next question. This happened because the old generation tried to demonstrate their knowledge about the rites while the young generation struggled to show that they too had read relevant books, observed, heard stories, and that they too wanted to be listened to.

In the process, the researcher observed the debate in every question asked and noted that the young people provoked and challenged the older generation deliberately in an effort to learn more about the issues at hand. At the end of it all, both the young and old generations learnt from each other while the researcher got the data he was seeking for.

Other instruments used to gather the needed data for this study were the review of the relevant books, journals and articles. These instruments served the needs of this study well.

In the case of Vermont respondents, the principal researcher used structured audio recording interview. This was done between the individual respondents and the principal research. The technique worked well since it provided all the needed data.

Finally, the principal researcher further enriched the study data by providing information about her experiences and encounters when growing up in respect of Gikuyu social life and practice and particularly the rituals of circumcision.

All the highlights above contributed significantly to the success of this study project and are therefore strongly recommended to those who contemplate to conduct studies of a similar nature today and in the future.

Recommendation 04: The Nature and Contents of the Educative Program for the Gikuyu Adolescents' Rites of Passage

During the data collection period, the study respondents and especially the young adults were emphatic as to what should comprise the adolescents educative program. They were of the view that, in addition to imparting information and knowledge regarding the Gikuyu historical, social contents and practices, it was important that the education/ training program include modern social phenomenon, challenges and problems facing young people today, causes, effects, and pragmatic solutions.

In view of the above, the respondents emphasized that, necessary resources be sought to enable the program leader and supporters implement the program. These resources include human, physical facilities, equipment and finances.

Recommendation 05: Methods for Providing Information, Imparting Knowledge, Appropriate Attitude and Behavior Transformation.

Some educators start training without first establishing the specific learning needs of the learners, worries, concerns and fear. This way, the learners drop out of the program because as the training continues, they feel their needs are not being taken care of. Thus, the respondents recommended that potential trainers and facilitators keep this point in mind when selecting training methods for the target audience.

Since the above information had not formally been asked for from the unstructured questions in the interview schedule, the need to seek such information emerged during the group's discussion. Such methods are for example: Short lectures to clarify difficult issues, demonstration, case studies, brain storming, audio visual aids, narratives, self-testimonies, question and answers. These are useful tools for comprehensive studies between traditional and modern issues of the participants concern.

Demonstration technique is good, they observed. But since it would, most likely be based on the traditional versus, present cultural practices, a lot of care is needed not to portray the traditional culture as primitive or uncivilized. Old generation is extremely sensitive and equally attached to the old cultural practices. The respondents also recommended that, as far as it is practically possible, a combination of methods should be considered. This initiative would make the learning more effective, beneficial and interesting.

Recommendation 06: The Dissemination of this Study's Results.

The dissemination of this study's results will largely depend on the availability of the required resources such as time, physical, human interest, funds, needed information, knowledge

and skills. Consequently, it is recommended here that the task force meet to deliberate the required resources, their source and mode of mobilizing or sourcing them.

Another strategy would be for the principal researcher to organize forums of potential consumers of this study's results. In these forums, the researcher would present this study's outcome and lead the discussions with an intention to receive feedback necessary to make this program a success.

It is also recommended that the results of this study be published and marketed as one of the ways of making known the existence of this study and its results. It should be marketed at minimum costs in order to sustain the program. The publication should encourage the potential readers to read it, not necessarily the Gikuyu people only but also other people from other communities, so that they can also benefit from the study's results in their own way.

Recommendation 07: The Implementation Strategy.

It is also recommended that, in addition to the above recommendations, the task force also deliberate on the implementation strategies, and that the process to be followed.

Final Words:

As a graduate student I have been required to take courses outside my specific areas of interest including cultural background and thus to confront quite different approaches to knowledge.

But there are also pressures in my local, (read) Kenyan community's workplace similar to the School for International Training SIT and in the US. I realize that making intellectual connections demands confidence, but not arrogance. This is because we are all at first ignorant of areas other than our own, yet to advance we must not be afraid to be in error, or to appear foolish in the eyes of more established, single-minded practitioners. These practitioners may be experienced but they are not necessarily right or even headed in the same or appropriate direction as my own.

I am thankful and with heart full of hopeful joy, I want to again thank all those who participated in this study, the assistants and the participants and all my mentors, peers and friends.

May this study provide the foundation to a new additional rite of passage for the Gikuyu adolescents.

The Blessings from the Source of all good things and through my heart for everyone, the reader at large, the future student at SIT, the faculty, staff and community at SIT and the peers of the fall capstone seminar, are captured in this old Gaelic (Irish) blessing:

May the sun shine gently on your face;

May the rain fall soft upon your fields;

May the wind be at your back;

May the road rise to meet you;

May the Lord hold you in the hollow of his hand, until we meet again!

(Canticles of the Earth: Celebrating the Presence of God in Nature
By F. Lynne Bachleda, 2004)

Bibliography.

Books

- Creswell, J. (1998) *“Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Choosing Among Five Traditions,”* SAGE Publications
- Gathendoh Timothy (1988). The University Of Nairobi’s Extra Mural Education Service In Kenya: *A study Of Causes for its slow development and solutions*, Nairobi- Kenya (p 10)
- Gennep, Arnold van, (1960) *The Rites of Passage*: Reprint, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Initiation Rites, (p. 65)
- Ingwe. (1984) *Echoes of Kenya & Other Poems*, by Ingwe
(b) *Spirit of the leopard, other stories by and narrated by Ingwe* (2 cd’s)
(c) *Folklore & Legends of the Akamba, Volume 1* (cd), by Ingwe (narrated by Victor Wooten) (<http://store.wildernessawareness.org/>)
- Kari Lyons If Ritual s Go Wrong: *Understanding the Female Somali Refugee Experience in Health Clinic in Portland, Oregon.* (2004 pp17-19)
- Kenyatta, Jomo (1965) ‘Facing Mt. Kenya.’ New York: Vintage Books. pp 125-149.
- Kenyatta Jomo (1978), Kenway Editions) *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kenway Publications, Nairobi Kenya (p 132)
- Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development* New Jersey: Prentice-Hall (0 13 295261 0)
- Laurillard, D., (2002) *Rethinking University Teaching: A framework for the Effective Use of Learning Technologies.* Routledge (UK)
- Merriam, Sharan B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Mwaniki Kabeca (1973). *The Living History Of Embu and Mbeere*, Kenya Literature Bureau, Nairobi, Kenya, (p92)
- Nduati, R. and Kiai Wambui (1996,). *Communicating with the Adolescents on HIV/AIDS IN Eastern and Southern Africa*, Regal press Kenya Ltd, Nairobi (pg. 54)
- Nganga, M. Philip (1996). *Muugi Ni Mutaare: Gukura kwa Mundu Kuuma Guciarwo Kinya Kuhika Na Kuhikania.* East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi-Kenya, (p37)
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Piaget, J. and Inhelder B., (1969) *The Psychology of the Child*: London Routledge and Kegan Paul

Rossman, G.B. and S.F. Rallis (1998). *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. California, USA, Sage

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1990) *Basic of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. SAGE Publications, Newbury Park, CA

Taylor, S.J. and Bogdan, R. (1984) "In-Depth Interviewing," in Taylor, S.J. and Bogdan, R. *Introduction to Qualitative Methods: Research for Meanings*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, pp 75-106

The Tracker. (1978) *The story of Tom Brown, JR. as told to William Jon Watkins*. Berkley Books, New York

Thomas L. and Harri-Augstein, S., (1977) "Learning to Learn: the Personal Construction and Exchange of Meaning" in M J A Howe (ed) *Adult Learning: Psychological research and applications* Chichester,: John Wiley and Sons,

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher mental processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (p57).

Wachege, N.P. (1992) *Jesus Christ. Our Muthamaki (Ideal Elder): An African Chronological study based on The Agikuyu. Understanding of Elder*, Phoenix Publishers Ltd, (pp19-22)

Wanyoike Wilson. (1999,). *Understanding Youth and Family Issues From A Christian Perspective*. Wilson Wanyoike Publisher, Nyeri- Kenya. (p 20-26)

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing

Journals and Articles

Berry, W. (1986). Does community have a value? In R. Eller (Ed.), Proceedings of the 1986 Conference on Appalachia (pp. 3-8). Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, Appalachia Center. (ED 312 112)

Bunche Ralph (January, 1941) *The Irua Ceremony Among the Gikuyu of Kiambu District, Kenya*. Journal of Negro History, Vol. 26, No 1(pp 46-47)

Buchmann, 2001, *Historical Development of Education in Kenya* p.97
Edyou, Higher Education Administration Newsletter Volume 3, Issue 1 - July 2004

Citation: Huitt, W. (2003). Constructivism. *Educational Psychology Interactive*: Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved [date], from <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/construct.html>

Dewey, J. (1938) *Experience and Education*, New York: Collier Books. (Collier edition first published 1963).

D.Koech, At a time when local and national agendas call for school reform
...www.theoledafrica.org/AJET

From Boys to Men: Rediscovering Rites of Passage by Israel Helfand and Jon Bliss
as published in *Voice Male* <http://www.soulawakening.org/rediscovering.html>

Glaser, Barney G. and Strauss, Anselm L. (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Harold F. Miller, (1998) *Exploring wisdom of Africa: Kikuyu Elderhood as African Oracle: Occasional Papers*. Mennonite Central Committee

Huitt, W. (2003). The Information Processing Approach to Cognition. Educational

Psychology Interactive, Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved on 05/05/05 from, <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/infoproc.html>.

Kennedy, T., *Legal Aid before Human Rights Treaty Monitoring Bodies*
*butler int comp law q.*2000; 49: 360-389

Nickols, Fred. (2000) *Feedback about Feedback: Contrast between the Social Sciences and Engineering View*. This article appeared in the Fall 1995 issue of *Human Resources Development Quarterly* (Jossey-Bass)

Mwiria, Kilemi (1991) Education for Subordination: African Education in Colonial Kenya *EJ442138 v20 n3 p261-73 Sep 1991*

Money, J, Walker, P.A.(1971): *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.1, No.1, 1971 Psychosexual development, maternalism, nonpromiscuity, and body image in 15 females with precocious puberty

Office @ Vermont Wilderness School. Org

The wilderness expedition as a rite of passage: *Meaning and process in experiential education*, Andrews, Ken (June 1999) *Journal of Experiential Education*

Van Arnold (1960) *interaction of physical maturation and cultural practice in ontology: Kikuyu Adolescents*.<http://www.jstor.org>

Wikipedia.Org/wiki/Ritua

Appendix: A

Informed Consent Form

I appreciate your agreeing to participate in my research project as an interviewee. My name is Protasia Gathendoh a student at the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont. I have successfully completed practicum as Student Advocate at the School for International Training. Currently, I am registered for capstone and my topic of research is: 'in search of a new model of an educative adolescents rite of passage: a comparative study of adolescents' rites of passage of Gikuyu in Kenya and the Vermont Wilderness School in the United States.' My research question is: What new (or future) rite of passage might be created for Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the adolescents rite of passage practices developed in Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) and those historically practiced by the Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK)?

This research project will also contribute to the fulfillment of the requirements of my MA in Program in Intercultural Service Leadership and Management with graduate certificate on Conflict and Psychosocial foundations in peace building; under the supervision of Professor Karen Blanchard. She can be reached at P. O. Box 676, Kipling Road Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676.

The face-to-face interview will be tape-recorded to help save all data. The interview will take about an hour to one and half hours. In some interviews I will transcribe the collected data and send it to you to read and you are free to make changes if it does not reflect your point of view. I may need to ask clarifying questions later on that might arise from your response to the interview questions. You have a right to ask questions as a participant and I will make a copy of the results available.

I will use pseudo names for quotations from your interview sessions. To ensure confidentiality and privacy of any information given by the participant(s) name(s) shall not be used in documentation other than the consent forms and destroyed after November 2006 or when I will have completed my studies and presented the capstone paper. Names can only be used with your written permission. As a participant, you are free to participate and answer questions you are comfortable with. You can withdraw at anytime during the interview without risk of prejudice to the decision you choose to take.

I appreciate your willingness to participate. If you have any questions, please e-mail me at: protasia.gathendoh@mail.sit.edu or pcnga@yahoo.com

I have read the above and discussed with the researcher. I understand the study and I agree to participate.

..... (Print your name)
..... (Signature)
..... (Date)
..... (Researcher's signature)

Appendix: B1**Research question is:**

What new (or future) rite of passage might be created for Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the adolescents rite of passage adapted from Native American and developed and practices in Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) and those historically practiced by the Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK)?

The sub questions are:

- a) What is the significance of the rites of passage in practice to the people involved in it?
- b) How are the program and associated activities are organized, implemented and managed.
- c) How the two players addressed issues or concerns that affect the adolescents' rites?
- d) What strategies have been used to address them?
- e) What achievements have resulted through adolescents' rites?
- f) What are some of the challenges of practicing adolescents' rites?
- g) What futures have the programs for both the Gikuyu and Vermont communities?

Appendix B2: Questionnaires guidelines

The main research question is:

What new (or future) rite of passage might be created for Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the adolescents rite of passage practices developed in Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) and those historically practiced by the Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK)?

Sub questions:

How have these two entities (VWS and HGK) defined rites of passage for adolescents?

- a) What are the different understandings of adolescents' rites? What is/are the major goal(s) of rites of passage in VWS, in Vermont/HGK? Is it an act or a process? What are the other groups that you may know of outside the VWS community/HGK community?
- b) Who are the supporters of the rite? How inclusive is it, in terms of gender, ethnic communities or racial groups?

How have the adolescents' rites of passage been organized at the community level?

- c) How are adolescents' rites' groups organized i.e. at the local, state and national level? How are decisions made? How is the rite organized in VWS/HGK? Do you have specific name for the rite? What is your role in the 'adolescents rite'?

What have the issues or concerns been addressed by these two players?

- d) What are the issues of concern that have been addressed or need to be addressed that affect families with adolescents?

What strategies have been used to address them?

- e) What strategies have been used to address the issues in the past and are they any different today? What strategies will be used in the future? [Is there any strategy that has proved more effective than others?]

What achievements have resulted through adolescents' rite of passage?

- f) What successes have been made? What are the consequences/benefits of being in the adolescents' rite of passage of VWS's/HGKs' initiatives?
- g) How permanent are these achievements?
- h) Who are the allies and or opponents (future or present)?

What are some of the challenges of practicing adolescents' rites of passage?

- i) What are some of the challenges of practicing the adolescents' rites? [Are these viewed as affecting people locally (in VWS, Vermont State)/GHK?] How are the challenges addressed?

How are the future and sustainability of adolescents' rites of passage to be maintained?

- j) What is the future of adolescents' rites? What is your role in the future thereof?
- k) Is it a sustainable process? Are there alternatives resources besides community contributions? Any alternative plans?
- l) Name at least four or five characteristics of a successful adolescent rite of passage.
- m) How are adolescents' rites perceived: as a part of the peoples' and cultural rights movement or as independent of any movement?

Appendix C: Collated Responses from Historically Gikuyu in Kenya

1) What are the main Gikuyu rites of passage that marked the transition from childhood to adulthood?

Parents:

- Guchokia mwana ihuini
- Gutonya ndugira kana matu
- Mwarano-pre pubescent instructions before irua

Youth:

- Initiation irua in Gikuyu
- Circumcision

a) What was the significance of each of these?

Parents:

- First three were family based support in the family circles
- Irua involved the whole community even those from far gathered during this ceremonies

Youth:

- Irua for both sexes was an important and significant custom and a deciding factor in giving status from boy and girl to manhood and womanhood
- Symbolizes tribal unification

b) What were the major differences in the community's understanding of these rites

Parents:

- Traditionally there was no misunderstanding because important aspects of the irua circumcisions were clearly laid out and the community was conversant with the institution

Youth

- Besides the physical cut (irua)we have the psychological attachment to the customs which is a mark of the difference between a traditionalist and a modernist

2) What was the historical strength of these rites in terms of social education & acculturalisation? Parents:

- Each rite prepared adolescents for the every stage of their development with the legitimate goal of growing up
- Each rite marked the path for the young to interact with an older age group, hence learning in a process of development that aimed at preparation for independence
- Space and time are set apart for important aspects of education and teaching for the people. And they were regarded as very important

Youth:

- Events were markings of age group members who were circumcised at the same time and the custom became the system of living history of the Gikuyu nation/tribe

a) In what way are there similarities between the rites as they were practiced historically & as they are practiced today?

Parents:

- The rites today have been inactive except irua which is a preserve for boys, but there are just some scattered events for girls
- The main principal aim education and guidance remains the same but rituals for irua are divided significantly and may hold different significance depending on the place. The change has affected the uniformities of what is imparted
- The cut is also performed in hospital and the end product is not the same!
- Little similarities, the society has not set aside time for the ceremonies. Conflict is about whether girl circumcision should take place. Some families organize independently and secretly.

Youth:

- The cut and the presence of sponsor ‘mutiiri’
- b) What are the strengths of each of these in part 2(a) parents
- Instructions were made clear at each stage and these involved both parents and sponsors. The initiates were made aware of the consequential outcomes arising from omissions or lack of honouring the teachings of each rite

Youth:

- The Sponsor (mutiiri) was and is expected to be better informed and capable of imparting cultural and life skills aspect of ‘gutiira’
- Nowadays many of them have minimal knowledge

What are the shortcomings of each of these in part 2

Parents:

- Teachings and preparations have been neglected because of the change and immigration from rural to settlements in urban life of the Gikuyu.
- The formal system of education in modern ways of life has significantly altered the social importance of the rite. There is haphazard preparation of the initiates, sponsors and the parents.
- The communities have focused more on other aspects of development, selectively choosing what aspects of culture to get involved in.
- More time and investments is devoted in ‘modern’ education, economy and generating wealth
- Many families do not plan cut for girls nowadays

Youth:

- Example is such that ‘a boy comes from school and searches for an older cousin already circumcised to accompany him to the hospital for the cut. Healing takes place in about 14 days and the Youngman returns to school. Where is his riika? The school population is made of sons from many tribal communities, some have rites of passage including the cut others have no rituals marking this transitions. So, how will he form a bond and with who!

3) Historically the traditional initiation model also served as a sort of participatory democratic model (riika system), is this still the case today?

Yes..... No ///.....

a) Explain your answer in part 3 above.

Parents:

- Not applicable today. The event was a coordinated traditional initiation for the whole country/Gikuyu nation. Immigration to urban life has interfered with this process and each family organizes for their adolescents during the school vacations
- Riika has no claim because education advancement from primary level signifies another institution with different levels in social groups
- Some families have opted to carry out infant and child circumcision for boys aged 5 years especially in towns

Youth:

- The sense of belonging is not there any more, it is lost, it is gone
- The youth want to be in riika but are in school life with those who do not circumcise

4) What role did the circumcision (initiation) ceremony play in socialization of adolescents into the age group system

Parents

- Appreciation of one another during the seclusion also known as Kiganda. Share instructions which were significant to the rites details, expectations, and approach to relationships, growing up sexually and the group bond riika
- Initiates were started on the path of learning about roles and responsibilities, general social conduct about marriage and participation in matters of family and clan and tribe
- There was a sibling sense of social group and peer support and caring in character and moral behaviour. No one would go astray because the group would be there to help and counsel

Youth:

- Newly circumcised boys and girls walk, chat, discuss and live together as one riika learning to understand one other better.
- Probably and most likely they learn to choose friends and make decisions regarding the selection of a partner for marriage
- In this way those who chose to marry understood each other through difficult and good times and of life's challenges

1. What role did these ceremony play in preparing both the boys & girls for future community & family responsibilities?

Parents:

- Older and elderly people were teachers and instructors in society on how to be responsible community members and on skills of problem solving.
- Aspects of reciprocated relationships of mutual trust and respect were discussed for men and women and role as well as responsibilities in marriage and family life were imparted

Youth:

- Time of seclusion was teachable moments where elders instructed initiates on how to be dignified, learning about prohibitions and provisions for good moral conduct and choice/decision that mark responsibility and maturity

- Other formal discussions were conducted and insights gained into traditions/ customary matters and about engagement in community life

2. What was the importance of this ceremony in symbolically signaling transition & hence acceptance into the adult way of life? ...

Parents:

- Ceremony marked ending of one phase of human cycle for those called ihii and irigu and a beginning of another phase to mix with and mingle with anake and airitu. The role of an individual changed with the acquired status of responsibility and respect at each level thereafter. Boundaries in relationships were clearly expressed in terms of growing up sexually and about active genital sexual behaviours before decision for marriage
- The cut for boys and girls and pain and discomfort was significant in setting the attitude about endurance and ability to work through challenges expected in adulthood

Youth

- Sense of maturity, emphasis that community and society expected role models of high standard of conduct
- Knowledge of expectations and assimilations and assumed responsibility in marriage and community life on to elder hood

3. Historically, circumcision was seen as the badge of right to leadership (council of elders), is it still the case today?

Yes.....

No...///.....

Explain your answer to part 7 above

Parents:

- Nowadays education levels rather than circumcision determine leadership. Some families have opted for circumcising infant boys and children bellow age of 3 years
- The status of education and wealth determine entry to the court of elders nowadays
- Age for boys is lowered and even after circumcision they are still in parental care
- Formal and modern education is given preference over learning informally or from the council of elders
- Our society values modern way of education

Youth:

- Nowadays it is the local bully and the alcoholic hustler who is considered a peer group leader

4. What valuable aspects of the traditional model do you think have been lost through the passage of time and evolution of the rites program?

Parents:

- Lowered respect for age, change in marriage protocols; valuable aspects of marital counseling have changed direction and seem to be diverse as young women and men grow

Youth:

- No pride in the adolescents' circumcision irua, no moral obligation, no respect for its significance of social responsibility
- We have a routine and a performance where by an adolescent thinks it is something one has to do and must do

5. What suggestions can you give on how to bring them back in the new model being formulated?

Parents

- Documenting a code of cultural ethics can lead the way. To avail relevant literature to all who are involved including parents, sponsors and initiates; before, during and after irua. This information can become knowledge for current generation of adolescents and for the society and be recorded for future generations.

Youth:

- Elders to conduct training for potential sponsors who in turn will take responsibility to impart knowledge to the initiates
- Then include prayers and spiritual knowledge (the sacredness of life)

6. The traditional model was a tool that was used to teach growing up sexually & family life education, what aspects of this model still have practical uses in today's society with regard to these 2 variables?

Parents:

- For boys there are traceable aspects of teaching of the traditional model of teaching about life and growing sexually and about family life education. However the process of instruction is limited so initiates look upon diverse role models
- Girls' teachings have to come from mothers, older sisters, aunties and friends. There was and is inconsistency such that women and society have witnessed increasing number of crisis and early pregnancies, high divorce rates and or delayed decision for marriage
- Instructions about growing up sexually can respond to concerns, curiosity and openness of the prepubescent and adolescents stages of the youth. Factors, functions and recognition of genital organs can be provided because many of the barriers and taboos in Gikuyu do not inhibit dialogue any more.

Youth

- The Gikuyu tribe's current rite is like the inside of a dark tunnel. But an alternative model of adolescents rites of passage would be like a light at the end of the tunnel
- Also some communities organise adolescents rites of passage for girls without the cut but with sex education, self awareness and family life education
- For the boys (as in item 9 above) given an appropriate forum for teaching, tools and resources the objective can be accomplished
- We have cultural centers in Kenya where sex education and family life education is taught

7. Do you in your opinion think that re-introducing the valuable aspects of the traditional model alongside aspects from another model not found in KENYA can help reduce teenage pregnancies, STIs & HIV/AIDS among KENYAN adolescents?

Yes.../..... No.....

- a. Explain your answer to part 11 above

Parents:

- The traditional model is nearly dysfunctional, some valuable aspects alongside another model not practiced in Kenya may help
- Public space in the Education, Gender & Culture ministries to be used for this process
- Direct involvement of parents is important if the model is to be successful
- Cost and benefit analysis be based on intervention for preventive education to be realistic with facts about long term consequences of living in the cultural deficiency gaps
- The use of condoms is an alternative to unsafe sexual activity but it is regarded with a negative attitude by some religious and church organizations

6. Do you in your opinion think that re-introducing the valuable aspects of the traditional model alongside aspects from another model not found in KENYA can help re-introduce abstinence & character education among KENYAN adolescents?

Parents:

- A model with aspects of character building, and development education is a good idea. The success of the single aspect of abstinence poses a challenge because unless there is a concerted effort by churches, media, parents and educational institutions to openly explore all options available, this objective may remain only a mirage

7. Female circumcision was an important aspect of the traditional program, do you think an alternative model based on the traditional & incorporating the aspects mentioned in part 12 above would have any significant impact on adolescent girls social education?

Yes...../..... No.....

- a. Explain your answer to part 13 above

Parents:

- With the documents and literature available for alternative adolescents' educative model rites of passage, there would be significant change in girls attitude and social education.
- Girls' social education would be manageable because accessing information would be made easy.
- Mothers will work through the barriers of communication with their daughters
- Girls who desire to advance in education and training will keenly value advice and instruction availed from such programs

8. The traditional model produced initiates who formed a “club” for life and which produced a leadership & succession system, what practical aspects of this “club” system still have practical applications in today’s leadership requirements among the adolescents & young adults?

Parents:

- Nowadays a structure that provides for advancement based on the education qualification has replaced paths to leadership and succession system.
- These active systems are in social clubs found in schools, colleges and universities and to some extent at village levels too
- Important aspects of political leadership and professionalism are lacking. The same is true in fields of medicine (moral code for sacredness of life and social sanctions that maintain promotion of health) and the Law (moral code for ethics of practice protecting integrity as well as respect of law in upholding justice for the client)

Appendix D: Combined Responses VWS & HGK

Responding to the questioning of what new (or future) rite of passage might be created for Gikuyu adolescents in Kenya by comparing the adolescents' rite of passage. The practices developed in Vermont Wilderness School (VWS) and those historically practiced by the Gikuyu in Kenya (HGK);

The themes were about social relationships between adults and children because the generations form connections making it possible for learning to take place. This constant living together established rhythms of interaction thereby providing time for demonstration of skills and test of performance. It is from such experiences that the study summarized that it is possible to follow the explanations that these processes contribute to formation of acceptable habits.

That the HGK rite of passage including 'Irua' can be meaningful where other social interactions take place such as following: a) Where children learn in interactive ways with parents and from stories about the tribal meaning. Where family blood relationships provides for community rituals and ceremonies, that mark changes and transitions from birth to death and the afterlife of the ancestors and tribal sense of spirituality.

b) That historically adolescents were trained in life skills by demonstrations of task accomplishments and observed for initiative and industry and presented for three rituals namely; 1) being born again and sent with blessings for few days away from home to be with peers. 2) Through engaging in the art of ear piecing and wearing ear-ornaments. 3) And the preparation for 'Irua' circumcision that was and still is a test of endurance and blood bonding marked with variation of instructions during the healing (seclusion) time.

c) Therefore circumcision especially for boys is a significant focal point in the growing up and graduating process into other adult levels of responsibility and leadership. And learned behaviours guided by instructions are more binding and long lasting for boys and girls.

That the VWS rite of passage can be meaningful where other social interactions take place as demonstrated by the following: a) Where children learn in interactive ways of modern education provided by the parents in home school program(s)

b) That VWS further builds family and group relationships where adolescents are instructed in nature and wilderness traditions, observed for initiative and industry and presented for rituals for testing survival skills and endurance by sustenance from nature. Planned advance levels of

experiences lead to critical thinking through individual and group duration of vision quest or seclusion.

c) Therefore it follows that: Mentoring practices in nature and wilderness traditions are expected to instill discipline, and building mutually rewarding trusting relationships.

Sub questions:

1. To the question of how these two entities (VWS and HGK) have defined rites of passage for adolescents, the responses were different and similar as follows:

- Being born again and given a name ‘gucokia mwana ihuini’HGK
- Art of ear piercing and wearing ornaments ‘guturwo ndugira matu’ HGK
- Coyote mentoring, going away from home and learning to live with peers VWS & HGK
- Sacred fire process of transition VWS
- Sweat lodge, purifying the body, fasting getting new name with support of community instructors and sponsored by tribal leaders VWS
- Art of mentoring, vision quest, solo experiences planned to test self learned skills in different ways VWS
- ‘Irua’ circumcision test of endurance and tribal identity sealed in blood ceremony HGK
- Teaching and instructions about provisions (responsibilities) and prohibitions (taboos) weaved through traditions for character building HGK
- Experience of marking one section of adolescents’ life and beginning of the next VWS
- Secrets of community revealed about the sacred fire, the sweat lodge teachings and instructions VWS
- Seclusion during the ‘irua’ circumcision rituals and shared wisdom of the tribe by instructions and teachings provided by the elders and sponsors HGK
- Searching for right connections with elders, with life, other life forms, the spirituality of prayer VWS
- Wilderness and nature mentoring in relationship to earth, water, wind, sun, animals, plants and stars VWS

a) Sub question of the first question was about the different understandings of adolescents’ rites.

The responses were described as goal(s) of rites of passage in VWS, in Vermont and HGK as processes and included more than a singular act as follows:

- Process of graduation from childhood to adulthood
- Designed tasks and physical trials according to observed maturity to test endurance
- Learning process of demonstrated life skills and survival experiences set out to prepare for responsibilities in adult life
- Building on wisdom of mentoring instructions for groups, encouraging caring relationships via activities such as hiking, critical thinking, praying, sacred rituals and purifying the body
- Continuing tribal traditional bonding for circumcision ‘irua’ and creating lifelong bonding also recognized as age grade

- Significant custom in traditional communities for boys and girls symbolisms of transitions and tribal and or group membership

b) Additional response was in regard identity of the supporters of the rite and how inclusive is it, in terms of gender.

The answers included more than blood relations and a wider sense of accomplishments that include like-minded groups beyond geographical boundaries or blood ties as the following illustrates:

- Parents and sponsors especially surrogate or blood relations, uncles, aunts and mentors
- Instructors and schoolteachers or mentors
- Other like-minded organizations and tribal communities
- Older youth and siblings and adolescents amongst themselves

2. Responding to how the adolescents' rites of passage have been organized at the community level and how the decisions are made;

a) The responses referred to social interactions mostly at local levels in socially constructed groups such as the following:

- Teaching traditions through stories about tribal heroes, men, women, youth and children. HGK
- Inclusion at adult gatherings and discussions even if only to be seen (active listening) and not to heard. Example sitting at the feet of the elders or standing behind in the shadows during the community sacred fire ceremonies. VWS
- Young children interactively listening and asking questions during stories told by grandparents at the family level.
- Community socialization in village or at public forums 'barazas' Swahili word for community gatherings where leaders seek consensus on issues of concern or priority and to gain support and commitments for action.
- Instructions during circumcision rituals when the initiates interact with the elders and sponsors for shared wisdom and knowledge about the historical background tracing each sub clan to links of clan and tribal origins.
- Community ways of consequential teachings building links to values and beliefs with meaning of provision and prohibitions of how to live as member of the tribe.

b) And the decisions are made through active participation in different ways:

- Consultations between mentors sponsors and parents.
- Dialogue participation by mentors, parents and the adolescents.

3. On the issues or concerns that have been addressed by these two players that affect families with adolescents: The focus was more on risks and dimensions in responsibilities in child rearing and the social, legal, safety and health implications of adolescents rites of passage in particular from both models:

- About physical risks and safety issues. HGK & VWS
- Maintaining traditions and protection against unhygienic use of unsafe cutting instruments and using one instrument repeatedly for everyone presented at a given event, for the irua ritual for Gikuyu boys and girls.

- Different expectations as in VWS, some children do not complete the mentoring program.
- Inconsistency about timing of Irua where it is carried out at a younger age of 13 to 14 years as compared to the historical traditions when adolescents were 18 to 19 years the transition was marked by a measure of independence from parents. Especially as regards provision of basic needs such as food, housing and gainful form of economic or social occupation. HGK
- Misunderstood and mistaken meaning of Irua as consistent with responsibility as adults therefore the adolescents form relationships leading to early marriage or become parents. HGK
- Reduced tribal ways of group and community organized adolescents' rites of passage including Irua ceremonies nowadays. HGK

4. a) About the strategies that have been used to address these concerns:

Apparently interventions are useful to the extent of interaction within the formed relationships in the family and in community groups and across the generations:

Responses included modern methods of preventive health education and traditional ways of mutual group formations as in case of current age grades of HGK, as well as:

- Wilderness first aid training. VWS
- Counseling. HGK & VWS
- Parents and instructors meetings. VWS
- Engaging older youth as helpers and mentoring their caring skills. HGK & VWS
- In rural areas the adolescents mostly boys, and in some communities the girls who are circumcised in the same month or same year become close associates though this may not always be the case. They regard others ahead of them as senior in a different level and different age grade. HGK

b) Some achievements have resulted through adolescents' rite of passage and are included the following:

- Initiates feel accepted in the community of in the village and the neighbourhoods. HGK
- Adolescents feel more confident to assume a protective role for the community as responsibility. VWS & HGK
- Consistent annual mentoring workshops. VWS
- Organizational plans of annual community sacred fire ceremonies. VWS
- Development of network in seasonal regional gatherings. VWS
- Determination and consistency by elders and mentors in the use and organization of time to provide information about traditions. VWS

5. a) About successes that have been achieved, the consequences/benefits of being in the adolescents' rite of passage of VWS's/HGKs' initiatives: The responses were more of individual reflections of the changed attitudes, feelings and beliefs about being actively there:

- Check in with one another. VWS
- Fire boys roles for adolescents at the community sacred fire ceremonies. VWS
- Consequential teaching in story and metaphors that form strong memories of the senses with emotional charge (like being on edge). HGK & VWS

b) The responses on the concept of these achievements evolved a sense of self-esteem: How the adolescents view their place in the world of the adults:

- A circumcised adolescent is accepted publicly and included in the meetings with elders.
- Learned skills are resources for managing fear of the unknown, for development of sense of value, faith in nature and thankfulness for balancing and stopping reactive thoughts, of recognizing reflective and critical thinking in problem solving skill.
- Circumcision of boys particularly marks the beginning of adult self-responsibilities.

c) And the allies are:

- Other wilderness schools in different states: Washington Seattle, New York, Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts.
- Adolescents referred from some of the wilderness school to VWS and who form groups advancing from one level to another working in relationships with apprentices, instructors, mentors and elders.
- Adolescents learning about the process of mentoring and weaving into the community where they live a celebrated with give ‘away ceremonies’.
- Adolescents who carry name of their clan as well as ‘animal names’.
- The whole Gikuyu tribe supports adolescents’ rites except some communities that have abandoned the rites for girls because they do not intend to continue the physical cut for the girls
- Some elders insist on symbolic rites for girls without the cut.
- In Kenya there are cultural centers where instructions and community education programs are provided. A good example is the Kameme Community Radio cultural center where radio programs are organized to include topics aired for the initiates in Gikuyu language including self-discipline respect, sex education and sexual abstinence among other relevant issues affecting adolescents and youth in the Gikuyu and Kenya in general.

6.a) Attention to some of the challenges of practicing adolescents’ rites of passage resulted in different forms of self evaluation and the role played by the institutions that support adolescent:

- Consistency in the mentoring programs of VWS
- Reintegration of parts of the rituals for adolescents’ rites relevant for the current generations of Gikuyu tribe in Kenya.
- Knowing that one is being watched observed and evaluated.
- Developing personal linkages of relationships in ones community by honoring and publishing about the rites of passage experience with minimum assistance from family. The adolescents have a responsibility to identify helpers, elders and mentors in ones neighbourhood and prepare for the ceremony known as ‘give away ceremony” when it feels right to share their stories like publishing the achievement
- If there are 50 persons invited, each one is to receive a gift form the adolescent and if the number is high so would the magnificent experience of the give away ceremony.
- And on how to maintain the preparation and seclusion for groups of adolescents. It is financially and time demanding and many families opt for the less costly choice, which is to set an adolescent apart and alone for the rite.
- Traditionalists may continue to resist considering alternatives models to genital cut for the girls.
- The current generations questions the justification for supporting new models that may change or alter the traditional practices as historically defined.

b) And the challenges are addressed by:

- Support by parents and families. VWS
- Collective discussions between instructors, mentors and parents. VWS
- Family, sub clans and clans' consultations with parents and sponsors. HGK
- Testimonies by those who have graduated. HGK &VWS
- Openness to learn and adjust with changing priorities in community life. HGK &VWS

c) To maintain sustainability of adolescents' rites of passage there were several suggestions:

Highlighting the expectations of how different age groups and generations can make better relationships thereby growing in wisdom together in future:

- Elders to conduct instructions for prospective sponsors who in turn will take responsibility to impart knowledge to the adolescents
- Integration of rituals spirituality and through sacred prayers
- Supportive process in terms of a structure for rites for girls VWS
- In some communities, some peers will ask graduate adolescents about certain ways and attitudes to nature, wilderness schooling and will be referred if they desire to know more.
- Interested seekers can enroll as students or as apprentices where they will observe and ask pertinent questions.
- Initiatives can be useful where resources and tools are appropriate and resonate with the tribal messages and also any borrowed educational practice has to have credibility to make the transition and process meaningful to the youth.
- Introduction and planning of instructions would make a difference by including the most important aspects of social relationships, emotional needs and growing up sexually. In the educational system, this would mean starting at home and school for children aged 9 to 11 years.

7.a) About the future of adolescents' rites the participants said that:

- Community participation is the main resource for future sustainability. VWS
- Being optimistic about change and recognizing meaningful traditions. VWS &HGK
- Character education can succeed where adolescents learn daily about discipline, self-initiative, industry and responsibility about making informed choices that model accepted behaviours.

b) Is it a sustainable process?

Yes, the potential dynamics are participatory and can be maintained on mutual interest

- Maintaining the vision of the founders and investing on the passion of the instructors about mentoring for children and the youth. VWS
- Willingness to learn by parents, founders and tribal community elders. VWS & HGK
- Getting consistency in social investments to the symbolic, psychological and mental (facultative) alternative to the physical cut for girls and an all inclusive process and rituals that provide support for both boys and girls. HGK

c) Four or five characteristics of a successful adolescent rite of passage include the following:

- Although the number of group-planned ceremonies is less nowadays, it is not a general outcome to form a 'closely knit' club or 'riika' age grade. Traditional system is replaced by mutual groups constructed as social clubs even in institutions of learning. HGK
- Awareness, learning attitudes, and acquiring life skills. HGK & VWS
- Separation, trials or risks and challenges or performances. VWS & HGK
- Group and solo survival experiences. VWS
- Practical application of 'irua' circumcision nowadays has to include learning and tips about good behaviour. HGK

d) How are adolescents' rites perceived: as a part of the peoples' and cultural rights movement or as independent of any movement? The response has more information from the HGK that:

- Mutual social clubs were and continue to be institutions modeled on the governing political concept of 'parliament'; the hierarchical democratization of self-governance.
- In Kenya adolescents' rites of passage are recognized as part of peoples rights with demands that they are enhancing and not an abuse of individual and traditional rites. They are resources and practical necessity for the Gukuyu tribe for social and community sense of belonging including ability to assume leadership positions. HGK

I welcome the participation of people working in the field followed by document analysis and value their contribution to the study

As evident from Patton, (1990) a social scientist with extensive work in phenomenological inquiry, says that in triangulation, the researcher makes use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories to provide corroborating evidence.

Discussion

Statement of conclusion: The role of the past social cultural performance:

The past social cultural performance influences values and meaning of cultural experiences of the present, because it is the reality that makes known about any change that has taken place over time. The performance in the present is measured as less by an existing standard measure or improved beyond the standard mark of excellence. This study compared the data from the elders as well as from current youthful generation. This attention to details of different experiences at different generational periods of the Gikuyu tribe has been documented and is

available as resources and tools to inform as to the facts of the culturally embedded values;
beliefs and meanings that have changed from the past to the present.

Protasia C.N.Gathendoh
Capstone Self-Evaluation

During this research process I had the following learning objectives:

- Learn about conducting research and assess my research capacity
- Learn how traditional practiced by communities assist transitions for adolescents from childhood to adulthood.
- Increase skills of application of data analysis methods I learned at the School for International Training S.I.T.
- Learn how to use research to further my interest in advocacy of cultural rites as human rights.

Personally this capstone experience has been extremely challenging and also rewarding.

When I review the goals I established for this process, I am contented to say that I have achieved each one of them to a certain degree. I also encountered some unexpected leanings as well.

My first goal was to apply knowledge and skills in research to real field and assess my research capacity.

At first I was not certain what other methods to use besides conducting interviews to get enough information to adequately answer my questions. However after hearing the Vermont Wilderness School respondents talk about their experiences, I realized there was too much information to sort out. Each of the 4 had different perspective and also seemed to connect in the way they reflected on personal experiences. I was careful about trying to assimilate everyone's answers to provide insights to my research. However during the transcription process, as I listened to each person's precise words repeatedly, I began to listen more intently to common vocabulary among the respondents. This was the first step helping me to analyze and code the data. I became aware that although my participants each had very distinct experience about practical events, rituals and ceremonies as part of adolescents' rites of passage, their modes of expression were similar. Therefore I recognized that the data could be analyzed to explore my questions.

Therefore when I progressed to the actual coding phase not only did I have a strong grasp of all the words spoken, I also had more confidence that I could find similarities among the variant data. These two factors helped me to more easily code specific themes for each question set. I was also very subjective in the data and I think I was able to analyze it thoroughly.

Sourcing for variant data was part of the comparison and so I recognized that I needed to work with principles of teamwork to access the respondent of the research in Kenya. To achieve

this objective I was dependent upon my two research assistants who translated the questions from English language to Gikuyu native language and administered the questionnaires on my behalf. I realized that I could not have conducted the research solely by myself with limited time and finances. The research assistants enabled the Historically Gikuyu in Kenya HGK participants to speak more freely in their native language and also clarified my own areas of misunderstanding. They translated the questionnaires and were present to explain further to the literate respondents. They consulted with me about working with focus group methods to include respondent who could not read or write even in the native language. They provided the presence and conveyed meaning through the nonverbal communication as well.

Although I performed the coding on my own, I did consult with my research assistants on the individual written responses, which were then typed and the notes taken then typed as reports from the focus group responses. The research assistants helped me understand deep meaning of breaking silence about adolescents' rites of passage and misunderstandings about Irua because the older people do not talk much about the topic. Therefore with the encouragement by the research assistants, the older members of the Gikuyu tribe provided the historical perspective that I am naturally lacking. Without their presence and help from the research assistants, I know my data would not have been as rich or as thoroughly processed.

Further more, this process helped me realize why team research can often be more beneficial to the research process. Working with a team of researchers on a project can help clarify areas of misunderstanding and also broaden the scope of the results. I am convinced too, that with a team approach to research, there is less chance that the researchers will be absorbed in data not to get different perspective outside the situation itself. As a solo first time research I was anxious that I may not have been too involved with HGK traditions of adolescents rites of passage and Irua and what my experience represents and this may have hindered my ability to clearly explain to an outsider. I know that the comparative aspect of including other models in the study and particularly the adapted traditions of the American Indians was helpful in this respect. The other factor that worked well was working with and trusting the research assistants, the consultation procedures lessened this subjective view.

One challenge of doing research in two languages was the use of expressions. In most of the Gikuyu responses, there were many words used without stating something directly. This is common linguistic pattern in story telling whereby in writing this will appear as long sentences. In conversation a speaker may use different words to express disagreement without saying no or do not agree, but would end the sentence with 'but' or 'however'. Therefore translating the data I

often had to rewrite and reduce to present what was recorded so that an English speaker would understand. Through this process, I have learned about contextual differences and gained knowledge about writing an academic work in English language.

My other two goals of learning were about my social identity and much more about cultural traditions of my Gikuyu people of Kenya HGK and a comparative study of the Vermont Wilderness School VWS community have fruitful outcomes.

Throughout the research process I was constantly evaluating and uncovering renewed intensity of aspects about my people and traditions that support adolescents rites in particular. My understanding goes far deeper than what has been expressed in the capstone paper.

By getting information about history is like looking into the rich experiences of my people the Gikuyu, and I could develop some understanding about how the lifestyle have changed rapidly and progressively and that the traditions have evolved into what and how they are practiced by the present day generations.

Fortunately a feel that comparative academic version and interpretations of this study has more benefits to the Gikuyu as well as the Vermont Wilderness School community too. The participating communities were engaged in conversations between and among older and younger generations. Further more I believe that Historically Gikuyu in Kenya had greater opportunity to do something about change that has affected traditions and each participant was passionate about this change. I think it provided an opportunity for the participating communities of GHK and VWS and myself to evaluate the impact of cultural changes and how the changes affect our lives.

I do feel greatly inspired by the relations and the direct intercultural experiences I have had with the VWS community. On the whole I feel I have contributed to the community at S.I.T. and this has been truly unforgettable for me.

Also through the course of this research I hoped to better understand VWS as an organization with a purpose of supporting families of children enrolled in home-school programs. Certainly I noted connections between VWS and home-schooling programs. By examining the vision and mission of VWS I realized families and children and instructors are focused on shared vision to attain specific goals.

In the eight years of the life of the VWS as an organization, the participants have learned much about what is refereed to as ownership or stakeholders' responsibility in mutual group and community development.

Like the founders and instructors, I am very interested in working with cultural practices that set a given community apart in unique and similar ways to other entities. I am particularly drawn

toward informal education as major basis of social foundations in building vibrant community. I have studied so much about intercultural and cross cultural communication structures for social change at SIT, and was eager to apply this knowledge to practical situation.

I searched for links and asked questions for several months and then, I was excited when I learnt about VWS. The homepage and the electronic news letter provided images of a modern institution or an organization that is like a bridge between the cultural traditions and the current youthful generations who are eager and curious to learn about aspects that are basis to foundations of formal and informal learning. During the winter months of 2004 and again that of 2005 as well as spring and summer 2006, I attended learning events organized for parents and children. In the parents and children events the children demonstrated in drama, poetry, song and dance and games some of the skills they had learnt.

I also attended parents, instructors and mentors community events. In the community events, the parents provided feedback about their observation and evaluation of the school's programs. The role of the mentors was to listen to parents and the instructors and help the parties to carry out self-evaluations as participants of the organization. This demonstrated one aspect of stakeholders' responsibility and that conforms that the organization can be referred to as a learning organization. From the two processes, I now know that historical ways of living in harmony with wilderness and instructions about natural world as organized in wilderness school programs constituted positive means to promote the mission of the family especially in support of home school programs. The parents lead the individual children in the home based learning but in the VWS the instructors support further learning as combined effort of the parents and the children in groups. The interaction formed contributed the purposeful organizational school community.

Simultaneously, in the course of the eight years of the life of the VWS, the community has connected with other like-minded groups from the surrounding states learning to work together in what they have formed as a regional movement. There are annual events organized in the fall and the summer as good examples of mutual benefits where the schools refer their adolescents to learn how to live together building trust in teams. The adolescents are watched and evaluated for social developmental skills, and presented to form groups each year for planned tests of endurance and problem solving skills marked by, rituals, events and ceremonies and that signify transitions and end of a process started in the mentoring program of 3 or 4 of 5 years.

Further more, the instructors continue to benefit from the participation of elders and teachers from some specific American Indian tribes. The teachings, skills and knowledge provided by instructions are resources correctly presented and conformed through the participation of these tribal elders.

I believe the wilderness school programs and the community and regional organization contribute to causes of integrating cultural traditions that inspire me. I now have more motivation to seek out extensive and intensive effective and active forms of unified wilderness, nature and environmental management organizations in US and back home in Kenya. I believe the historically Gikuyu of Kenya and other people groups can equally learn from the adapted model of the American Indians models due to the success of wilderness and nature teachings in the US.

Another learning objective was to determine how questions answered through this research would improve on my interest in advocating for practices of cultural traditions as human rights.

Analyzing a rich body of data, I felt I have answered each of the questions posed in my research. However after having read the results, I still find my main or primary question somewhat inconclusive. All the respondents from HGK and VWS do believe that adolescents rites of passage are important to the mission of the family. It seems likely that the traditions of practice support psychosocial development of adolescents. However due to the dynamics of living cultural practices in changing lifestyles, individual meaning has to be reflective of the collective in a broad statement. This would serve to define an entire historical and present status of such practices. The whole community would have to be advocating and promoting the practices. Perhaps this one question has not been adequately answered for me.

Also while answering my own other questions, I am aware that I was limited to, only four Kenyan and one American models reviewed. It would have been broader if there were culturally appropriate explanations from other people groups in Kenya and also in the US. As a Kenyan and an African who has studied service leadership and psychosocial foundations in peace building across culture in details at SIT, I naturally feel that there are cultural sources as good models to strive toward. Being my first in-depth research project, I am not keenly aware of my bias which may have shaped my findings. So, I am not conclusive that I successfully generated adequate resources to develop an alternative educative model of adolescents' rites of passage for the Gikuyu people in Kenya or by accurately answering the questions posed within.

Finally, I sought to develop further questions based on this research. Throughout my research process I reorganized questions in order to determine the course of my research. I think

considering that this research is only a case study with very limited scope; it is natural to create this research product. Even my inquiry is more than what I have listed. I have only listed elementary questions this study produced. Generally I am a curious person and in terms of this research there are some issues I would like to pursue at the community level even informally after my capstone and degree have been completed.

One other unexpected question from this research process is how to work with resistance to alternative models where historical traditions seem to be partially lacking in credibility and current adaptations seem to fall short of the valued meaning of the obligation to promote the mission of the family. This research has uncovered issues of uncertainty and misinterpretations of what is obligated in the continuation of the adolescent's rites for the Gikuyu people. Partly this is as result of mistrust of comparing traditions with other(s) not practiced in Kenya and elsewhere. Part of the reason is also the limited time I had provided for the assimilation of learning for the participating communities.

It is important to note that cultural adaptation cycle takes time and that the VWS adapted practices from the American Indians have to endure the test of time too.

Consequently I learned that VWS as an organization itself is working through organizational restructuring. However, at the same time everyone at the VWS including the founding members, parents, children, instructors and the school board have been enthusiastic about self evaluation process in fashioning a functional and purposeful community.

Those I interacted with and those who participated in the research were all very helpful to me during my research. Further more everyone willingly gave me open and thought provoking interviews. I received information from various angles that enriched the data immensely. I also promised to post a copy of the report to VWS and to the community based organization that coordinated the research participants in Kenya.

On the whole, I feel I have accomplished the objectives of this research to the best of my ability. I have gained deep learning form this process and I know I will very likely pursue another deeper, and richer research project.

I am thankful and with heart full of hopeful joy, I want to again thank all those who participated in this study, the assistants and the participants and all my mentors, peers and friends.

May the outcomes of this research provide the foundation to a new additional rite of passage for the Gikuyu adolescents and the Blessings from the Source of all good things and through my heart reach to each and everyone. My gratitude and hopes to the reader at large, the

future student at SIT, the faculty, staff and community at SIT and the peers of the fall capstone seminar, are captured in this old Gaelic (Irish) blessing:

May the sun shine gently on your face;

May the rain fall soft upon your fields;

May the wind be at your back;

May the road rise to meet you;

May the Lord hold you in the hollow of his hand, until we meet again!

(From *Canticles of the Earth: Celebrating the Presence of God in Nature*
By F. Lynne Bachleda, 2004)