NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

An Investigation Into the Value Transference System Among the Kipsigis with Emphasis on the Rite of Marriage and Its Implication on Marriage Counseling Ministry at Lifespring Chapel-Embakasi

BY
CATHLEEN CHEPKORIR ROTICH

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Christian Education

JULY 2007

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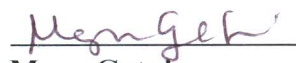
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Student's Declaration

An Investigation into the Value Transference System among the Kipsigis with Emphasis on the Rite of Marriage and Its Implication on Marriage Counseling Ministry at Lifespring Chapel – Embakasi

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology

(Signed) _____

Cathleen Chepkorir Rotich

July, 2007

ABSTRACT

The Church today in urban Africa is faced with rising increase of divorce and broken homes. The church has developed material for premarital counseling in a bid to forward discussion on issues on marriage. However, a lot of the material that has been used has been adapted from the west. The contribution of the African system in relation to marriage and what went into marriage education is largely unexplored. The purpose of this study was to take a look at the Kipsigis community and how it prepared members for marriage.

The seven participants were drawn from Kericho district. The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using qualitative methods of open, axial and selective coding. The study uncovered a cycle of influencers and educators, with the core being family and widening to mentors and the community at large. The context of learning was imbedded in everyday life and moved from unstructured to focused learning, as one approached adolescence.

The recommendations for Lifespring Chapel involved seeking points of integration in the curriculum so that from an early age, within the context of God's community, children, youth and adults learn and value the place of family life. The preparation must be within this community finding in it influencers that will speak candidly and positively for family life.

TO

ROBERT, CHEBET & KIM

YOU GIVE ME A REASON TO LIVE, TO LOVE AND TO SERVE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To God, my anchor in this sea of life. For giving me life, a family, energy and a purpose to live. To you be the glory!

To Robert, Chebet and Kim- I do this for you. Thanks for allowing me to pursue my dreams and for graciously supporting me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cherop waited in anticipation for Saturday, the day when her future in-laws would come and ask for her hand in marriage. This was the culmination of many years of learning and preparation in the case of a young girl among the Kipsigis; going to her own home. The coming to agreement between her parents and her future in laws essentially meant that Cherop was married.

The process of marriage preparation in Kipsigis culture began at an early age. Young girls, known as "little moms," were often seen carrying their younger siblings in the way they observed their mothers doing. Girls learned a lot by observation. The community provided a very deliberate educational process for the younger generation such that, when they went to their own houses, they would not be a shame to the clan. It was a lifelong process that culminated in the "Koito," the ceremony that Cherop was looking forward to.

The literal meaning of "Koito" is "to give away." It was the opportunity for a woman to begin her own home and put into practice all she had learned from her community. The "Koito" denoted the transition from one home to another and was characterized by certain elements. These included the coming to an agreement between the elders from both sides on matters of dowry; which represented both appreciation for and commitment to the relationship between the two families. After a successful negotiation the girl hosted her parents to a farewell party. Here she offered gifts to her parents in appreciation for raising her. She in turn received gifts from her"new" family. The farewell was significant as it communicated "a leaving and

cleaving" from her home to her new husband's home. In comparison to the traditional process the modern marriage preparation has noticeable differences in structure. Today many prospective marriage partners undertake the program merely to fulfill the requirement so that the church would join them. Nevertheless, the challenges facing marriages today require long- term, life participatory education that affects the worldview. Divorce, for example, was unheard of traditionally; where there were difficulties, established structures existed to safeguard the marriage and solve problems. Many such structures have disappeared in urban Africa, without a viable substitute on the horizon. My aim is to explore the process that took place to prepare a young person for marriage and how this can inform the premarital counseling and marriage ministry at Lifespring Chapel.

Problem Statement

The value transference system among the Kipsigis was a deliberate process that resulted in passing societal traditions from one generation to another. This was a lifelong process that, in this case, culminated in marriage.

Lifespring Chapel developed its pre-marital education program in response to a need that contemporary society was not filling. Considering the importance of family the church stepped in to fill the gap. Additionally, the changes in society have seen a lot of cross cultural marriages that do not lean towards a particular community. Even when there is no intermarriage, modernity has diluted cultural influences significantly. The Kipsigis value transference system, with reference to the rite of marriage, may not have been studied with the view of informing the pre-marital counseling ministry in an urban setting. One of the shortcomings of Lifespring's programs is the lack of contextualization drawing upon the African educational process.

Ethical Considerations

The values that were key in sustaining a marriage in the Kipsigis community will be preserved as a result of this research so that they are not entirely lost, either through modernity or intermarriage. This research will store for posterity values that may otherwise be lost.

This research gives voice to valuable tenets in our society that need to be espoused and honored. The factors that contributed to stable relationships will be identified and propagated.

This study will also add to researched materials specific to our community thus bringing exposure to the Kipsigis community.

The data collected will be properly stored for 5-10 years and is not to be used for any purpose without the participants' advised consent. Ownership of the research material will be agreed upon by the researcher and the participants, giving them a say as to how it will be used in the future. (Creswell 2003) Where needful the enquirer will "use aliases and or pseudonyms for individuals and places to protect identities" (Creswell 2003, 66).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to understand the value transference system in relation to the rite of marriage within the Kipsigis community, with a view to informing the pre-marital counseling and marriage ministries at Lifespring Chapel. For the purpose of this study Value Transference will be defined as the systematic and consistent means by which traditional customary education was carried out specific to the rite of marriage.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following central question: What structures did the Kipsigis community have in place to prepare young people for marriage and family?

The sub-questions are as follows:

Who was responsible for preparing a young person for marriage?

When was one perceived to be ready for marriage?

What was taught to prepare one for marriage?

How long must the preparation be before marriage takes place?

What lessons can be drawn for the pre-marital and marriage ministry at Lifespring Chapel?

What structure needs to be in place to support marriages?

Definitions

Kipsigis- This is a sub-tribe of the Kalenjin Community that is a Nilotic ethnic group in Kenya. The are found in the Rift valley in Kericho, Bureti and Bomet districts.

Koito- This is the ceremony that symbolizes the "giving away" of a bride to her matrimonial home.

Matirenik- The traditional circumcisers who carried out medical operation and also served as teachers and mentors.

Significance of Study

This study proposes an innovative perspective to the field of pre-marital counseling ministry by highlighting how the Kipsigis used their established structure to educate the younger generation on matters of marriage and family. The principles that will arise out of this study will be helpful in informing the marriage ministry within an urban church context.   The research will inform structures in marriage ministry that will facilitate better preparation for marriage and family. The knowledge gained through this research will be applicable generally in urban churches.

Delimitations

The research will be limited to participants from the Kipsigis community aged 50 years and above. The study will confine itself to interviewing this age group, which most likely went through the process of being prepared for marriage in the traditional context and therefore has first-hand experience.

Limitations

The cultural diversity in the urban context may not allow for application from the specific community that is the focus of this study.

There may be no parallel rites today that were central to value transference in the traditional Kipsigis community to facilitate application of the education process drawn from this study.

The geographical area of the Kipsigis community is large. This study will be limited to the Kipsigis from Kaplong and Belgut.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

When we talk of marriage today a variety of issues come to mind, even within the context of the same ethnic or church community. In our urban Christian context, we are a complete "salad" of people. People from different ethnic and racial backgrounds regularly come together in worship. As a result, there has been intermarriage across cultures, adding further to the many categories of marriage.

Because of this diversity in representation, a reflection of the society, we have varied traditions regarding marriage. There has been a public outcry in the media recently because of the law passed in South Africa accepting, as law, same sex marriages. Many quarters defined this action as being "un-African" and denounced it as negative Western influence on Africa calling it "a foreign action imposed on Africa." The thinking behind a lot of outcry concerning gay marriages, even in the past, was related to the thinking and understanding of marriage in the African context. These same sex marriages are said to violate what we know as marriage in Africa.

As we look at the educational process associated with "Koito," the Kipsigis rite of marriage, we will first look at traditional marriage customs among different communities in Africa. This "orienting framework" will establish a general understanding of marriage within the African context, before we zoom in on the Kipsigis rite of marriage. (Creswell 2003)

As earlier mentioned, the urban Christian community is a cocktail of cultures that has embraced what we will view as an African urban perspective of marriage.

These two approaches to marriage within our context are significant because they anticipate the positive contributions of this study to marriages in the African urban church.

Marriage Customs in Africa

Marriage in Africa was a very important part of life. Almost everyone got married at some point in their lives. "There were no spinsters or bachelors for life" as we know of today (TAG 1994, 11).

A person was born into the community and grew from childhood to adulthood, physically and socially. (TAG 1994) They passed through various rites that identified them as full members of society, and marked their exit from one social stage and entry into another stage of life within the community. These social stages were marked by occasions and were celebrated at birth, puberty, marriage and death. (TAG 1994) These occasions marked significant transitions from one stage of life to the next and ushered members into the next stage of life. For example, at puberty, it was marked by the rite of circumcision. This indicated a social "promotion" from childhood to adulthood. It signified the end of childish ways and marked a new stage in which an individual took on social responsibility. This period was marked by a lot of learning that prepared them for the new stage in life. (Masabo 1994)

Marriage, as one of the rites of passage in the community, was viewed as a normal stage within the society and was a quasi-universal expectation because marriage was seen to fulfill a very important role in the community. The reasons was the fact that marriage was a means of procreation thus ensuring the community's continuation. Posterity was very important in the African community. Childless was frowned upon. In some communities, like the Akamba of Kenya, another woman would be brought into such a union to bear children for the barren woman. These

children would belong to the married woman and her husband and these "surrogate" mothers were referred to as "iweeto." The "iweeto" were "married" by the barren woman to bear children. The barren woman retained her place as the woman of the home and the children born out of this relationship were considered as hers. (Ndumu 2006, Class notes)

In modern times, marriage often takes place after people complete their college education. For the many who do not attend college there is still a longer waiting period compared to traditional society for various reasons; economic being key among them. However, in traditional societies young people were said to be ready for marriage soon after the onset of puberty. At this time, they were taught and prepared for adult responsibilities such as parenting. This social transition was anchored in physical maturity, which indicated that a young woman or man was physically ready to bear children.

There was an extended period of social preparation to educate them on acceptable behavior within the society. This was during the initiation process that took different forms among different communities. Indeed, it is noted that "the initiation schools were indispensable preliminary preparations prior to marriage" (TAG 1994, 11).

So important was this rite of puberty that an uninitiated person was not seen as a full member of the society. Initiation was important to the rite of marriage because, in very many communities, people could not be married unless they had been initiated into adulthood. The rite was not limited to circumcision only, but diverse means were used to transition girls and boys into adulthood. In the whole process, there was in-depth teaching about matters relating to adult life (TAG 1994). In many communities, initiates were kept in seclusion for as many as three months. In this time they were

taught various things such as sexual matters, parenting issues, dealing and living with in-laws. Finally they were ready for marriage.

Hastings summarizes the marriage rite well when he says,

> Marriage in Africa as in other communities was probably the most common part of life. It did not take place at a single moment of time, but came in to being across a series of meetings, negotiations and ceremonies. The ceremony of marriage beginning with careful negotiations between the two families and culminating in the birth of a first child, were normally confirmed at every stage by big or little presents. In principle, the essence of a valid marriage would seem to have consisted in (a) the consent of those involved and their guardians; (b) the handing over of gifts, particularly from the bridegroom to the bride's parents; (c) the blessing and ceremonies surrounding the handing over of the bride to the bridegroom and culminating in their official cohabitation. The process took time and was not hurried. It took weeks if not months and the expected result was the birth of a child. (1973, 30)

Key Aspects of African Traditional Marriage

The African marriage was a very important element in community life and was characterized by certain aspects. The process began at initiation and culminated in the young man and woman going to their own home and having an addition to the family.

Sexual Education

In many African communities, passing through the initiation rite at puberty meant one was eligible for marriage. Hence, the gap between physical maturity and the onset of sanctioned sexual activity was short, at least much shorter than we see today. The period between the two was probably three to four years, in which time these young people were taught about their sexuality and expected sexual conduct.

Various communities held different ideals on matter of pre-marital sexual relations. Young people were taught how to relate to members of the opposite sex

within certain parameters. In many communities, pregnancy before marriage was a disgrace and young people were warned not to shame their families by sexual misconduct. Sexual learning and discovery happened during this time and so young people learned some measure of control. In other communities, virginity was highly valued and so youngsters had to be very careful how they related.

This learning and interaction happened under close supervision and instruction from aunts, in the case of girls, and uncles in the case of young men. Intense instruction was given by way of stories, dance and song to prepare girls for marriage so that the girl would be able to satisfy her husband. (Masabo 1994) Nothing was left to chance or discovery. A young person was adequately prepared for all aspects of married life so that once young adults "left" their parents' home they would be able to build their own.

Partner Selection

Partners were selected differently in different communities. Among the Luo in Kenya there was first the selection that happened at the level of parents. Parents who were friends often solidified their friendship by giving their children to one another in marriage. The negotiations were done and the youngsters were released to marry after all the necessary procedures were completed. This was seen as the most acceptable way of getting a partner, as it came with the full consent of both parties. This was just one of the acceptable ways the Luo selected marriage partners.

In other cases, young people who fell in love in the course of social interaction would introduce one another to the parents after which investigation followed. If it was seen as a fitting relationship, the procedures to solidify the relationship followed and the two were married. However, investigations could disqualify the marriage if it was discovered that the partner was unsuitable.

Lastly, in instances where it was known that the groom would be rejected for instance if he came from a poor family that was unable to afford dowry or say pregnancy had occurred, the young man would organize a raiding party to "steal" the girl as she went to fetch water. Thereafter, a delegation was sent to her home to report that she had been married. (TAG 1994)

There were strict underlying principles to the selection of a mate. The Nandi, for example, forbade the marriage within the clan so as to prevent cross-breeding that posed genetic problems. (Langley 1979) People were also prevented from marrying into families that were considered social outcasts or delinquents, e.g. families that had a history of witchcraft or mental illness hence one's family was safeguarded from "contracting" these social ills.

Engagements

After selecting the partners, families came together to agree. It is important to note that in most communities in Africa, "marriage was not primarily an agreement between a man and a woman but between two families. Only in a secondary sense was marriage viewed as a relationship between two individuals" (TAG 1994, 180). The families came together and "showed" themselves as prospective in-laws. This often included an inquiry into the intentions for their visit and an investigation into their background. This included the specific background of the boy seeking their daughter in marriage. However, as soon as the young people announced their intentions, investigations were initiated and during the engagement they mainly did cross checking. By the time the families agreed to a meeting, the chances of the marriage happening were high.

Sometimes, families refused to meet the other party or made the negotiations difficult and painful in order to frustrate the possible marriage. Often times it stopped

there. It was viewed as a checking mechanism to safeguard the family offspring, especially where the families were of the "un-accepted" kind.

This family approach to marriage fostered a deep sense of accountability in the marriage and an avenue of conflict resolution. A woman was married into the community. The family and the groom publicly accepted to take care of her. Indeed, among the Masai, a man was investigated on his ability to take care of the bride financially as a means of safeguarding against mistreatment. His ability to pay the bride price was also indicative to some degree of his ability to support a bride and later on a family. (Arthur 1998)

Bride Price

The bride price was a significant aspect of the marriage rite, and was common to many communities in Africa. (Hastings 1973) This was essentially a "marriage payment made by a prospective husband, or more often by his family to the family of the bride" (TAG 1994, 19). The transaction of the marriage was seen as complete after there was transference of part of the dowry.

However, it was never for the purchase of the girl but merely a gift in appreciation for the nurture of a person who would become the mother in their home. In the African community, the bride price or dowry was and is often evidence that a marriage has taken place. In fact, when a wife was returned home for whatever reason, the bride price was also returned. Hence, the bride price served as a deterrent to divorce. Everything possible was done to resolve conflict and uphold the marriage because divorce significantly affected not only the groom and bride but the two clans. (Hastings 1973)

In many communities, including the Kalenjin, the dowry was never paid as a lump sum. It was paid over the lifetime of the relationship. (TAG 1994) The idea was

that dowry was not for purchase of the girl but rather to facilitate the relationship of the two extended families being brought together by the marriage. Hence, over the years, families visited and brought the dowry that was agreed upon. Among the Kikuyu, a man who did not give dowry for his wife could not receive dowry for his daughters. In fact, any dowry paid for his daughters was received by his wife's family. Such safeguards protected the community from using the dowry as a means of enriching oneself and undermining its intent. (TAG 1994)

Polygamy

A notable distinctive of the African marriage was polygamy. "Polygamy is that form of marriage in which either the husband or wife has more than one spouse" (TAG 1994, 23). In many African cultures, polygamy was also accepted and served more than one purpose. As we have seen, marriage was expected of everyone and in the case where there were many marriageable women in the society, polygamy absorbed them. It was accepted and was a normal part of life in most African communities. However, the kind of polygamy practiced in most parts of Africa was where the man married more than one wife and not polyandry, where the woman married more than one husband. In this sense, the African community was mainly patriarchal.

Polygamy also was a status symbol within the community because only a wealthy man could afford multiple wives. Marriage in this case was motivated by augmented status for both families because many parents felt honored when their daughter married a man of means. They also judged that their daughter would be well taken care of in her new home. Sometimes community leaders also sought to seal alliances through polygamous marriages.

Further, polygamy provided a means for a man to get many children, who were seen as a sign of blessing and success. Polygamous homes were self sustaining because there were many more hands to help with the domestic chores. Young boys took care of the family animals, learning in the process about life and responsibility. Young girls often took care of their siblings as their mothers worked the farm. They also helped with domestic chores.

Polygamy is the single most distinctive aspect of the African marriage that has continually posed a challenge to the church and the biblical view of marriage. However with time, the African church has found a way of including polygamous families while restricting their accession to leadership positions. It becomes tricky to force separation from other wives because the children involved who would suffer immensely from such separations. A view of marriage in the African continent is indeed incomplete without a candid look at polygamy and the influence it had on the people involved.

These are some of the central elements in marriage that were held in high esteem. Yet as we look at our society today, there is great western influence that has changed how marriage is viewed.

Aspects of Our Urban Marriage Rites

Education and urbanization have caused people to leave their traditional settings and move to urban areas. As a result, people have been removed from the African ideals of marriage as discussed. Our churches have people from diverse backgrounds who are largely influenced by Western tradition that has come into our culture with the missionaries and educators not to mention the mass media. Our

churches' approach to marriage is partly from this Western view that caters, by and large, for a cultural mix of people.

Cross cultural relationships and marriages are more common in the urban church than in the rural setting because of exposure in the working environment or the church. Thus the easiest and most acceptable approach to marriage is the one adopted by the church; this is a largely Western approach. However, we must recognize that it is not as Western as we like to think of it but by and large its perspective is greatly influenced by Western culture and approach to marriage.

Marriage is Primarily a Relationship Between Two Individuals

Unlike in the African setting, marriage embraced within the urban church is primarily between the bride and the groom. Rarely do we hear of instances where the families select a spouse on behalf of their children, as was common in the past. This is due, in part, to the fact that many do not live in that setting anymore and, therefore, do not subscribe to those ideals. Many prefer to find for themselves their own marriage partners. This trend has also led to intermarriage across cultures that were thought of as "don't touch!"

Young people meet and bring their future spouse to meet the parents. Negotiations then follow and the marriage is sealed with a colorful wedding. However, because of the distance separating the new family and the in-laws, there is not often a deepening of relationships with the extended family. Interaction is often limited to social functions in either family.

This drifting of the extended family to a more nuclear family unit is very characteristic of the Western way of life. It does indeed have its positive aspects, yet the significant role played by the community in our African context is not filled and this could weaken a marriage. The church in many cases has stepped in with "aunties"

and the "uncles" to the couple. A clear communication of this role needs to be taught as the church seeks to be a community for young couples within its membership.

Wedding Focused Preparation

Preparation in the urban setting tends to focus on the wedding ceremony and not on the marriage after the wedding. Pre-marital classes are scheduled a few months before the wedding and some counseling happens in a classroom-like setting. However, due to time constraints, there is rarely an in-depth intermingling between the counselors and the couples sufficient to affect their views and actions on many issues. People are taken through the counseling as a pre-requisite in order to be married by the church. As such, newly weds are left to find their own way through the sometimes murky waters of marriage. With no aunties and uncles to discuss their struggles, many of these marriages deteriorate to mere shells of relationships.

Late Age of Marriage

Due to educational aspirations, among other things, people today tend to marry later than their grandparents did. The African community prepared young people for marriage and, as soon as the preparation stage was over, they got married. Women had children at a very young age, probably 16-18 years, and continued in their now adult responsibilities. Today, people who marry at 23 years of age are considered young. Many get married much later, opting first to pursue their careers.

The traditionally small gap between puberty and marriage attenuated sexual exploration that would lead to unwanted social behavior. Today, many are "sexually liberated" and necessarily see no link between sex and marriage. Hence, the "urgency" to marry disappears. Thus, a significant part of the marriage relationship has been removed from the bounds of marriage, making marriage unnecessary. This

view of sexual liberty endangers the very institution of marriage and influences couples' behavior within the marital union.

Changed View on Roles in Marriage.

Changes in economic demands that affect the family also have influenced the institution of marriage in Africa. With respect to children, many are opting to have only one or two because of the financial implications of having many. Traditionally a man was considered wealthy if he had many children. Hence, procreation was a key reason for marriage. Today, some people opt not to have children.

Economic pressure has also meant that the primary caregiver in the home has delegated that role to a nanny. Many mothers have careers outside their homes and so are not the primary care givers of the children. The woman in the African society was prepared and taught how to raise children. This preparation was a significant component to her transitioning to adulthood. Parenting was learned within the context of the community and was critical to how the next generation was transitioned into society.

Because of mixed cultural approach to marriage today, roles are not very clear. Many have succeeded but many more have struggled.The urban marriage in and of itself is not bad. However, it manifests deficiencies vis-à-vis the traditional African approach. These deficiencies expose the institution of marriage to unnecessary challenges. Many people today enter marriage almost wholly ignorant of their roles and what is expected of them. Neither secular education nor parents and families address the problem. Indeed in the traditional African society, it was not the place of the parents to directly instruct their children but rather the community through the aunts and the uncles.

In conclusion we can say, "the traditional African marriage was part of a larger system and served it well. The system as a whole was at the heart of social life, it asserted a continual range of moral responsibilities towards both your next of kin and many other people. It promoted joy as well as sound order, emotional release as well as security, the education of the young, the maintenance of the old. …There is no reason to think that the African traditional marriage was less effective as a forum and a stimulant for the exercise of human virtue than the traditional marriage system of any other continent" (Hastings 1973, 37).

This system worked well in the past and the challenge is to find out its good elements and how to incorporate them into our cultural setting that is a cross breed of the African approach and the Western approach.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCUDURES

Traditional African societies had systems in place that guided them through the various stages of life; there was a systematized, understood and accepted way of doing things from birth to death. These systems, however, were not documented and archived to provide reference for the next generation. They were passed from generation to generation through the traditional way of teaching and learning in the family and community. In this study I will be using the qualitative approach because I desire to discover more about how the Kipsigis taught and transferred their values.

Rationale for Research Approach

Open ended observations and interviews will be appropriate for this study because it is a discovery process. The qualitative approach lends itself well to this kind of study. The theories are emergent and will become clear with more discussion and interviews as opposed to a close ended approach. (Creswell 2003) The research participants also possess a great deal of information that could be significant to the direction the study will take.

Qualitative research uses methods "that are interactive and humanistic" (Creswell 2003, 181). It involves active participation of those taking part in the research. The data gathered will form part of the theory being developed. To gather information and understand the topic being studied, a good rapport with the research

participants is needed. This research approach is very relational and the researcher and the research participants spend a lot of time talking through the issues. (Creswell 2003) As such, credibility and confidentiality on the part of the researcher is crucial to the success of the research.

The qualitative approach also favors the interpretation and application of data and discovery to different situations. The implications and discoveries drawn from this research will be helpful in informing the marriage enrichment ministry at Lifespring chapel, yet because of the "broad panoramic view" that this approach affords the researcher, it may lend itself to many other aspects that had not been intended; for example, discipleship and other mentoring situations in the church setting (Creswell 2003, 182).

Research Tradition

The research tradition most appropriate to this study is ethnography because the study seeks to describe and interpret the Kipsigis culture in relation to its value transference systems. Ethnography focuses on interpreting an aspect or aspects of a cultural or social group; in this particular study, the aspect of marriage. The researcher will immerse herself in the context of these people and try to understand the perspective of the Kipsigis as they practiced preparation for the married life. (Creswell 1998)

Research Participants

Because this is an ethnographic study, the researcher will take a purposeful sample of participants within the Kipsigis community both in the rural Kaplong Division and in urban Nairobi. All participants will be above the age of 55 years. This is a generation that has most likely gone through the rite. In the last three or four

decades, there have been influences such as inter-marriage and education that may have changed certain dynamics which could have been critical to marriage. For example, the age in which young girls and boys were married has changed dramatically from early teenage to late teenage or early twenties with the onset of education.

This sample will allow the researcher to hear from the perspectives of both those who most likely went through the rite and have lived in an urban setting and those who continued living in the traditional setting.

It is important to recognize that the traditional setting as it was in the olden days is different from what this sample group currently lives in. Some reasons for this change include the impact on rural life that education, the media and modernity has had. Hence, one may be living in a rural environment but not actually experiencing the traditional context as was in the past.

Data Collection

As data collection and analysis happen concurrently, there will be a place for looking at all the data as a unit in order to have a sense of its general meaning. The coding process will be used at this stage. "Coding is the process of organizing the material into 'chunks' before bringing meaning to those chunks" (Rossman & Rallis 1998, 171). Coding involves taking data that has been collected and segmenting into categories, and "then labeling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participant" (Creswell 2003, 192).

The analysis process will begin with open coding, "which is the process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions discovered" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 125). This means that the researcher is

analyzing the data in order to generate a description of the setting and the themes for further analysis.

Axial coding, "though not strictly a subsequent step in coding process, further analyzes categories from open coding and collapses them into a higher level. The researcher perceives similarities in open coded categories and combines these categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 127)." However, the interactions of these two processes happen simultaneously moving back and forth from open coding to axial coding.

Data collection and data analysis go hand in hand. As researchers collect the data, they interact with and analyze it. In fact, a researcher is advised to record his meditations on data while they are still fresh in his memory because of the volume of data involved. As data analysis progresses, the themes advance and become more complex as the process continues and the themes emerge more clearly to the researcher. (Starcher 2006, Class discussion)

"Beyond identifying the themes during the coding process, qualitative researchers can do much with these themes in order to build additional layers of complex analysis. For example, researchers may interconnect themes into story lines, like narratives, or develop them into theoretical model and these can go far beyond theme identification to theme connection" (Creswell 2003, 194).

Data Analysis

Data will be collected mainly through open-ended, face-to-face interviews that will allow for observation and further inquiry on significant themes. It may be that different research participants will give weight to different aspects of the study. For example, the women may dwell more on the ceremony while the men focus on the negotiations where they are the key participants. The researcher will make audio

recordings of the interviews to facilitate further analysis and reflection at a later time and for reference during the coding process. The importance of audio recorded data cannot be overestimated because it allows for regular counter checking of information gathered especially where queries or confusion arise. (Starcher 2006, Class discussion)

As mentioned above, data collection and analysis happen concurrently such that the researcher needs to use a method that will enhance the processes making them as seamless as possible. Proper and reliable data storage is crucial, for as the researcher talks with other research participants, there will be need for clarification or revision of collected data until the point of saturation. As such, there is need to limit, to a small number, interviews before transcription.

Besides limiting oneself to a specific number of interviews, the time lag between the actual interview and the transcribing should not be too wide. Any artifacts that were of use and aided the process of education will be labeled and stored for further analysis.

The final step in data analysis will involve an interpretation of the data collected. This is the place to enumerate the lessons that could be drawn from the research and may also suggest further questions that could be researched. It could also affirm material that is already available or show a divergence from the available literature. (Creswell 2003)

Validation and Verification

"Validity is seen as the strength of the qualitative research. It is used to suggest whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant or the readers account" (Creswell 2003, 196). For this research, a number of strategies will be applied.

First, the researcher will give participants an opportunity to review the final report or the specific description and themes that stood out for the researcher. Having done this, they will determine whether they feel that they have been accurately captured. (Creswell 2003) This way the researcher will truly be tested on whether the truths discovered were emergent or pre-determined.

The researcher also will seek to clarify whatever biases she brings into the study. The participants will be asked for clarification in the event that queries are raised.

This study will be participatory in nature. The informants will be involved in most phases of the research, from the design of the project to checking the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the findings.
Further, the research supervisor and fellow education students will serve as peer examiners, lending objectivity to the research and helping keep the researcher focused. Questions raised by peers will drive the researcher to seek clarification, thus strengthening the research findings. (Creswell 2003)

There is also the place of presenting "negative or discrepant information" that may not lend itself positively to the themes that have been presented. This is because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce. In presenting them, the reader recognizes that though these were present, the research is credible for it recognizes these discrepant aspects" (Creswell 2003, 196).

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

I used open, axial and selective coding to analyze the data obtained through interviews from seven participants from the Kaplong and Kericho areas. There were five female and two male participants, all of whom grew up in the traditional Kipsigis community and took part in the traditional educational process.

The Context

The educational process in regards to marriage happened in the context of every day life. One participant said, "No one ever said up front that they were training you for marriage, but you realized when you got married that some of the things that your mother had talked about and made you do helped you to become a good wife." There was a circle of influence in the life of every child with family at the core, followed by peers and mentors. The focus of learning moved from a wider, unstructured general learning towards a focused education process, especially in regard to marriage. This combination of influencers and curriculum focus gave the child necessary exposure to marriage in the context of community.

The strong influence of the society, in regards to marriage preparation, changed with time with the coming of Christianity and formal schooling because children interacted with other people such as teachers, who became significant influencers in their lives.

The Values

The Place of Marriage

Marriage held a very important place in the Kipsigis traditional society. The family was central to what the society became. Every preparation for the continuity of the society happened in such a way that preceding generations carried the values and taught them to the next. There is an evident and intentional intergenerational link ensuring the transmittance of the ideals of the marriage rite through time. Grandmothers spent a lot of time with their grandchildren and taught them about their place in the community. Older men spent time with young men and boys showing them manly responsibilities. It was learning that ensured that these youngsters understood, so that when the time came they would fully take their role in society especially in regard to marriage, which was a normal and expected state of life.

However, with introduction of Christianity and formal schooling, this time of close interaction reduced significantly. Schooling, introduced an aspect of time that was different from the traditional one because children were to be in school for many months in a year, thus reducing the time that they would have otherwise spent with grandparents and elders of the community.

Roles in Marriage

From a very early age, one learned the distinct roles of people in the community. These roles were primarily divided along the different sexes. One participant said, "Men would not carry babies let alone be seen with them. He did not sleep in the same house with the mother and child until the child was six months. Children and all issues concerning them were seen as women's work. And so we women were taken care of by other women. Men were supposed to be strong and so

they only did things that would show this." The Kipsigis prepared young people within the context of the community. The whole community was involved in the teaching on matters of marriage. The role of every person was clearly understood and was passed on from generation to generation. Women folk were responsible for training young girls and young women on their role and place within the society and by extension their place in the marriage."

Young boys were responsible for the animals and went out to herd the cattle. One participant said, "We used to spend the whole day taking care of animals. As we did this we learned how to fish. We learned how to identify good and poisonous berries. We learned how to use the sling. We learned how to identify wild animals because of the tracks they left behind." Rarely was a boy from the age of eight years found hanging around the homestead unless he was very sick. As the boys grew older, they would leave the tending to younger boys with whom they had herded. In this way generation after generation passed on skills of herding cattle.

A significant role played by the men was that of being protectors of the community. One participant told of their going to raid cattle. "We went to the land of 'Kosopek' (modern day Kisii community) to raid cattle. This was regular and when there had been quiet for long, a raiding party went to remind them that we were still there." War was sometimes a show of might especially when it involved taking droves of cattle without loss of life.

Men also served as the custodians of the history of the community. Men were often seen sitting together talking about what the community was about and how it was that they had become what they had become. They heard of the battles fought, won and lost. They exchanged tales of communities with which they had agreements. A participant said, "We used to sit at men's meetings and hear stories told of where

we came from, why we are called the Kipsigis. We are known for 'giving birth' because we are many compared to our cousins say the Nandi."

The Circle of Influence

Because of the importance of marriage in the community, there was a wide circle of significant influencers in the lives of young people, all involved in shaping their understanding of their role in society. The circle of influence in the life of a young person started with the family in the inner core, the peers, then the mentors all within the well defined structure of community life.

The Community

Young people learned in the context of community. It was unheard of that one would get married without the knowledge of his or her family. And even in the extremely rare occasions when it did happen, the individual was guided by the principles taught to them as they were growing up. Community was the essence or learning environment where learning took place.

In the Kipsigis community, a child belonged to the community. This was illustrated by the concept of a peace child. A peace child was one who was given away to a community that was at war with the Kipsigis as a means of brokering peace. This child would fit certain description of age and build and would in most cases be a boy child. This child would be taken from any family. The child sent would represent the community in the hope that the relationship with the warring community would change. After giving away this child, a relationship with the said community was developed and the Kipsigis would not go to war with that community for they had become apart of it.

This understanding of children 'belonging' to the community meant there was communal responsibility over children. Elders could discipline errant children who were not their biological children. This was allowed, as this kind of intergenerational communal responsibility would ensure a good heritage. A heritage of undisciplined uncontrollable children was a shame to the community and would endanger possibility of good relationships, and even marriage with other communities.

Children were said to be mirrors of the communities from which they came. In the same way, within a community, a child was a mirror of the home they came from. Homes that "produced" good wives and good husbands would be sought out for these relationships by other families. The reverse was also true. Families that were known to be lazy or violent would find it hard to get mates for their children.

The Grandparents

Grandparents played a significant role in raising children. Because of age, grandparents, especially grandmothers, stayed at home with the children. The younger women would be out in the farms but would leave the young ones at home in the care of grandparents. Mothers also played a role, but it was often the grandmother who clarified issues, who asked questions and generally was available.

The grandparents' role was significant because they could speak candidly to youngsters out of a lot of experience in matters relating to marriage. They also had more focused time than the younger women, who had a lot of chores and responsibilities. The grandmother's role was interchangeable with the great-grandmother, if she was still alive. When young girls were approaching adolescence, they often slept in their grandmother's hut. Night time was characterized by fireside stories and tales from days gone by. Bedtime was the time to ask questions of life that would not have been talked about in the open.

With time expectations were communicated and a way of thinking begun to form. Young girls and women on the one hand, and young boys begun to understand their place in society. However, they were not full members of the society until they went through the rite of initiation in their early teen years.

The Outside Mentor

Preparation of young people went outside the immediate family and included mentors from the community. These people played a specific role that was targeted very specifically to their place in society as an adult.

The Sponsor

When a young person was entering teenage and was to go through initiation, the family looked for what they called "sponsor." For both the boys and girls, the sponsor was a male figure who was considered able to prepare the youngsters for marriage. In the case of a girl, marriage followed soon after initiation. And so the sponsor played a significant role in her preparation. For boys, marriage was later because they had to accumulate cattle with which they would pay dowry. This they did not have at a tender age of initiation except in cases where a young man was the only son and there was urgency for him to marry.

The ladies on the other hand were deemed to be ready as soon as they passed through initiation. The sponsor's role was to be a male model for her as she prepared to get married. He taught her practically how to serve food to her husband, how to conduct herself. It was considered necessary for her to pass through the hands of this person because until this point in a girl's life, there has been very little interaction with the members of the opposite sex. This is especially so with an authority figure. The relationship however was dictated by high expectations.

When the time came for girls to undergo initiation, they were checked by the grandmothers and the circumciser to confirm her state. A girl that found to be a virgin till this time was highly honored and so was her family. She was dressed in customary gear that communicated that she had honored her home by keeping herself chaste. The costume that she wore was made of hide of the Columbus monkey and she wore bells on her feet. The costume was decorated with elephant tusks and horses tail decorated with beads. This dress was provided for her by her sponsor and they were returned after the circumcision ceremony. This was a day of great honor both for her and her parents and the sponsor.

On the other hand, a girl who had lost her virginity would not be honored in dance and celebration like the one who had remained chaste. She was a great disgrace to the family and to the sponsor, especially if he was responsible. Instead of the costume, she carried a club called a "rungu" that was sign of disgrace for a young woman.

It was very important to a family that their daughter had remained chaste. Hence, the selection of a sponsor was taken very seriously. Those that had respectfully handled other young girls were honored and many families would seek their assistance. It was not strange for these men to marry the girls whom they sponsored, because polygamy was accepted.

The "Matirenik"

The "matirenik" were the circumcisers who carried out the actual operation on the initiates. However, they played a bigger role than ensuring proper healing. They were considered the "initiation mother" for the girls that passed through their hands.

Traditionally the time of seclusion lasted between eight months to one year. During this time, the young initiates spent a lot of time with these women. In the case of boys, they had male mentors chosen by the family to care for them.

The surrogate parent to initiates played a crucial role in shaping their thinking in regards to community and family life. She became advisor to the girls in many issues. She became involved in the life of the young lady and would even arrange for the girl to marry a suitable man. A "motiriot"- (singular) played the role that a best maid or best man play in the modern, urban context. They were experienced and families looked up to them for advice and counsel. So important was their role that failure by the initiates, in terms of conduct, was considered failure on their part. Because of the stakes involved, these mentors had great authority and a strong influence in the life of the initiate. They were also experienced as this role was played by very few people and so families had high expectations .As the initiates entered adult responsibility, the "matirenik" were respected for "raising" a respectful member of the society.

The Curriculum

Unstructured

Learning happened everyday as people interacted. Young boys learned how to herd animals as they went out with the older boys and young men to the field. Preparation of marriage was built into every aspect of life so that a child was instructed well on how to care for children or how to cook because one day in the future they would have a home of their own. Every situation was a learning one. The method was fairly unstructured to begin with, but as the children grew into

adolescence, the focus was sharpened to greater detail so that the youngsters could have a fuller picture of the responsibility.

However, in this context, young girls and boys would watch and see how things were done. Young girls would be left to care for the younger siblings and as they observed they learned.

Though it was unstructured, society determined by role, who did what. Women watched what other women did and grew into those roles. Young men sat with older men and observed what they did and followed suit.

A lot of learning happened around firesides in the form of tales and stories from the past. Grandparents related stories of the history of the community and in this way the young generation would grasp the history of the community.

It was in this setting that matters of life were also considered and discussed. One participant told of how they were told stories of girls who accepted to be married from communities and families that were considered outcasts and went out there and were mistreated. This was a means of discouraging children from considering marriage to those communities.

Initiation

The initiation ceremony marked the end of childhood and the entry into adulthood. One participant said, "Prior to initiation, we were not considered a 'Kipsigis' but rather the 'child of a Kipsigis.' So initiation was like a school where we went through a season of 'becoming' Kipsigis. It was like the certificate one gets after primary to allow them to enter secondary." In this time, values were affirmed and a lot of instruction was given to the initiates.

Among the Kipsigis, circumcision was the means by which young children were initiated into the community. Although circumcision was of great importance,

the operation itself was only a part in a series of ceremonies and instructions through which an initiate went through to be considered a full member. The reasoning behind this was that anyone could undergo the cut, but it was the values learned through instruction that made a true member of the community. This was a very important period in the life of youngster and was pivotal in directing all that he or she had been taught. Indeed for the girl child, it was from this platform that she went on to her marital home. It was at this time that one dropped the name by which he or she was known as a child and accepted another name. In the case of sons, they were now known as, "the son of his fathers' name." The initiation time was characterized by 1) ceremonies, 2) a course of instruction and 3) mentors.

Ceremonies

The ceremonies during the period of initiation emphasized the communal aspect of life in the Kipsigis community. Initiation was conducted in age sets over a couple of years and so that whole community was involved. It brought the society together in accepting and affirming the place of the initiates in the society.

A participant said of their time of seclusion, "We were taken to a home nearby and we were eight initiates being taken care of in one place. The families of the initiates brought food to this hosting home for every meal. It was community effort. We were with other girls from the same neighborhood and some of our cousins also joined us. Besides the food, beer was brewed and stored in preparation for the many ceremonies that accompanied this time. There was a lot of singing and dancing from the time it was announced that girls were 'going in,' which was the term describing their entry into seclusion." The community placed a lot of emphasis on the ceremonies for these were a means of engaging the whole community in the acceptance of members into the community. It was a time for celebration.

Ceremony accompanied every stage during the time of initiation. Each of the ceremonies was a marker in the life of the initiate of the things they were becoming as members of the society. For example, circumcision was the first stage of initiation and it symbolized the "cutting off" from childishness. It vividly represented a separation from childhood and its ways. At the end of the seclusion time, there is a ceremony called "coming out" that signified the official entrance into the society they are now part of. Because of the communal nature of the ceremonies, accountability was built in so that the society at large witnessed the young people's commitments.

Course of Instruction

At initiation, the course of instruction was focused and structured. Initiation was entry into the community prior to which one was not considered a member. There was a lot of secrecy surrounding the kind of teaching that happened in this period of seclusion. Indeed, it was only those who went through initiation that knew what was taught in this time. One of the participants said this concerning their time of seclusion, "We spent our days with the 'matirenik' for all those months. They were our primary instructors and care givers. The first month was a time to heal from the operation. Traditional herbs were used to speed the healing process. We were well fed, and the goal was to really fatten us. It was the pride of the mothers, especially the one in whose home we stayed, when the initiates were well fed. This was supposed to contribute to speedy healing as well."

The instruction touched on many aspects of life. Firstly, initiates learned a lot about their history and a touch of their spiritual heritage. Secrets of the community were shared with them because they were now full members. They were taught behavior that would distinguish them from children. As members of the community, there was to be a marked departure from childish ways. For example, one participant

said of the expectations of this time, "Initiates were expected to exercise self control which was not expected of children. One was to carry themselves with dignity. Laughing loudly and carelessly was deemed childish and one would be seriously rebuked if found." And so as one exercised their duties, they were expected in many ways to show they were no longer children and could be entrusted with adult responsibilities.

Mentors

As earlier mentioned, the initiation parents, the "matirenik" in the case of the females, became life long mentors to the initiates and they were held in high regard, like ones parents. This regard also extended to the mothers who took care of the initiates in the time of seclusion. These people were important and were involved in the important decisions concerning the initiates from that time forward.

The mentors had meddling rites in the lives of the initiates they had cared for because they were the ones who had taught them many things especially in regard to marriage, they became the natural reference point in the life of the initiates.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to give the conclusion of the study, it is crucial to revisit the purpose of the study, which was to understand the value transference system in relation to the rite of marriage among the Kipsigis community, with a view to informing the pre-marital counseling and marriage ministries at Lifespring Chapel. With that purpose in mind, the research proposed an innovative perspective to the field of pre-marital counseling ministry by highlighting how the Kipsigis used their established structure to educate the younger generation on matters of marriage and family. The principles that have arisen out of this study will be helpful in informing the marriage ministry within an urban church context. The research was also to inform structures in marriage ministry that will facilitate better preparation for marriage and family. The emergent theories were expected to shed some light into curriculum development for marriage ministries in general.

Conclusions

Implications for Marriage Ministry at Lifespring Chapel

Stories of broken or breaking marriages are becoming a common reality in the African church today. A subtle shift is taking place that is embracing a greater level of laxity towards the bond of marriage and the church is struggling to provide long term relevant structure to support families and marriages through these changing times as can be gleaned from the Kipsigis communal structure.

As God's community, the church provides a great environment for the nurture of healthy and vibrant marriages. Myles Munroe says that, "God's context and plan for marriage is permanence" and as we come to it the community must uphold these values and help us walk the walk (Munroe 1992, 42) the task is to prepare people so that through the storms, floods, deepest valleys permanencies a value that will characterize the Christian marriage.

The following principles are suggested for pre-marital counseling and marriage ministries at Lifespring Chapel: 1) community life, 2) intergenerational interaction, 3) integrated curriculum and 4) mentors.

Community Life

The community was the context in which learning happened. The community upheld its ideals and by means of stories and myths taught generation after generation who they were. The community had clear expectations and well defined roles that enabled everyone to fit in.

The church as a community of God's people must avail a system that enables accountability and growth to happen. We have been through a structured system of learning that has created an individualized society. People live for themselves and by life for themselves. However growth can happen well in the context of community of like mind and purpose. A community also becomes a place of healing and support in difficult seasons of marriage. Integrating discussion of family into existing community structure viable so that family life is not seen to exist exclusively outside community of God's people.

Intergenerational Interaction

Interaction across generations facilitated for teaching and guiding thus preserving cultural values. Points of interaction need to be found so that the young and old come together and share. Such forums can be in the form of sports events or social forums which allow people to engage at a deeper level without feeling threatened. The church can look at having rites of passage programs and find the mentors from older generations who commit to the life of a young person for prayer and counsel in the years to come as life and career mentors.

Integrated Curriculum

Marriage was always in the background as youngsters were prepared. At the time of marriage, one knew what was expected of them. Hence, people fitted into their role. The question for us is how we prepare young children for their place in marriage. The role of every individual in the traditional society was clearly defined because the family was highly valued. There needs to be discussion in Sunday school curriculum on family God's intention for the Christian marriage.

In this day, many may not know what a healthy relationship looks like and the church in the best place to teach and model God's ideal for marriage. Families being challenged to serve together in ministry as husband and wife would help build a healthy picture of marriage and family. The importance of this is greater today with more and more children coming from broken homes and not having a model for family life.

Mentors

A strong emphasis should be placed on the role of mentors in the lives of those getting married. This is already recommended but the importance of mentoring

deserves to be underscored. Mentor couples need to be equipped on how to walk with a new couple. These should be lifelong relationships with the sole purpose of supporting couples as they walk the journey.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview guide

Central question:

What structures did the Kipsigis community have in place to prepare young people for marriage and family?

The sub-questions are as follows:

Who was responsible for preparing a young person for marriage?

When was one perceived to be ready for marriage?

What was taught to prepare one for marriage?

How long, must the preparation be, before marriage takes place?

What lessons can be drawn for the pre-marital and marriage ministry at Lifespring Chapel?

What structure needs to be in place to support marriages?

· VITA

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