EXPLORING KENYAN WOMEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'

EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS WITH INFORMATION

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AASL – American Association of School Librarians

ACRL – Association of College and Research Libraries

ALA – American Library Association

CHE – Commission of Higher Education

IL – Information Literacy

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

IT – Information Technologies

ITU – International Telecommunication Union

KLA – Kenya Library Association

KNBS – Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

LIS – Library and Information Science

MDGs – Millennium Development Goals

WASC – Western Association for Schools and Colleges

WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society

UN – United Nations

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

USA – United States of America

USIU – United States International University

ABSTRACT


In the alleged information society, providing access to ICT purportedly will enable people, in all walks of life, to actively participate across multiple realms of social, economic, and political life. However, ICT initiatives in Kenya have not necessarily promoted people's ideal participation in an information society. Emphasis on ICT in IL policy and initiatives has undermined research about "what" information people identify as relevant, and "how" and "why" people interact with information. The research has explored IL as the counterpart of information practice, or institutionalized information-related activity. Understanding information practices requires an understanding of the sociocultural and historical practices. A combination of content, phenomenological, and hermeneutical methods have been used to explore Kenyan women university students' interactions with information in everyday life, including what they identify as relevant, how objects gain meaning in relation to each other, and how discourses emerge to enable meaningful communication. Findings have indicated the importance of people as sources of wisdom, interaction as a relevant process of cultural learning, the importance of physical proximity to a source, the preeminence of the book as knowledge, and the use of ICT in walks of life beyond educational and profession. Overall, findings have suggested the need for IL research and policy in Kenya to consider how a range of information practices enable information to be recognized and shared, in ways that create new ways of knowing.

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

International and regional leaders have declared information literacy (IL) a basic human right in an information society because it "empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals" (Garner, 2006, p. 3). The declaration of IL as a human right is premised on the belief that information, or access to information, is what now regulates society. Information society, also referred to as knowledge society, knowledge economy, or information age, is a consociate of the digital revolution, which "has fundamentally changed the way people think, behave, communicate, work and earn their livelihood" and "has restructured how the world conducts economic and business practices, runs governments and engages politically" (World Summit on the Information Society [WSIS], 2008, para. 1). Providing access to information and digital technologies purportedly will enable people, in all walks of life, to actively participate across multiple realms of social, economic, and political life.

Among others, Webster (2006) has questioned the regulatory power of information, or knowledge, as a determining factor in society. While the amount of information produced and circulated in recent decades is increasing, he has argued that the tenets of capitalism have not ceased to control social life. However, technological advancements in information and communication technologies (ICT) have undeniably impacted the wide-spread proliferation of information, in a variety of formats. Inequitable access to various ICT has perpetuated a digital divide, a divide that now distinguishes between the "haves" and "have-nots", between developed and developing nations, and

between networked and un-networked societies. Ultimately, the type of information valued in the knowledge or information society is, increasingly, digital and is evident by the prioritized role of ICT initiatives as a way to equalize access.

To bridge the divide, WSIS (2008) has prompted a global discussion and partnership to connect all people to information by helping developing countries develop their ICT infrastructures. They have partnered with other international organizations to measure and monitor the information society (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2010). As a developing nation (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010), Kenya has reacted by prioritizing the integration of ICT in all sectors to ensure active participation in the information society. In higher education and training, Kenya's ICT policy aims to institutionalize ICT by increasing reliable internet access, providing information technology (IT) skills training, developing distance e-learning programs, and encouraging an overall transition to digital content (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2006).

As the only national information policy, Kenya's ICT policy is the leading information framework by which information is prioritized and, essentially, valued. IL policy has come as an afterthought and, furthermore, has been largely envisioned as ICT literacy. Using the definition adopted by the Association for College Research Libraries (ACRL) as a model, the Commission for Higher Education ([CHE], 2007) in Kenya has defined IL as "a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use the information effectively" (p. 7). The definition is devoid of ICT terms. In fact, the document is relatively vague. Kenyan librarians and educators (Amunga, 2011; Ayere, Odera & Agak, 2010; Ayoo & Otike,

2002; Gitonga, 2010; Kavulya, 2004; Kinuthia, 2009; Ondari-Okemwa, 2002) have

demanded better information, ICT, and IL policies at both the national and institutional

level. All calls for an information-related policy have been directly related to the

integration of ICT and range from (a) provision of ICT access without provision of

necessary skills training; (b) program expectation not being supplemented with the

adequate, or any, funding; (c) inadequate ICT infrastructure, including network

connectivity, electricity, and outdated equipment; and (d) introduction of ICT without

prior assessment of information needs.

## Statement of Problem

The pairing of the concept of information to ICT has undermined explorations and

understanding of information and, importantly, IL from other perspectives. One problem

with the way ICT has been prioritized in Kenya is the adoption of a limited view of IL,

commonly conceptualized or framed as the necessarily counterpart of ICT. Upon

examination of ICT education initiatives in Kenya, Tilvawala, Myers, and Andrade

(2009) have suggested initiative policies have considered the many facets of IL, such as

accessing, location, retrieving, storing, and evaluating information. Instead, accessing and

using ICT have been equated with IL, and ICT remains underutilized because users have

not been instructed on how to use ICT in a variety of ways. Gakuu et al. (2009) have

found supported the research findings. As a result, ICT initiatives have not necessarily

promoted Kenyans' ideal participation in an information society.

Kenya, ICT-based programs have often been introduced without assessing actual

information needs (Ayoo & Otike, 2002; Ondari-Okemwa, 2002). Furthermore, ICT

initiatives in developing nations, in general, have been implemented without assessing

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how ICT can be designed and used to facilitate existing non-ICT information practices (McMahon & Bruce, 2002). An assumption lurking behind many ICT initiatives has been the need for people to "adjust to the information systems of the dominant system" instead of the need to develop systems around existing information structures (p. 125). As an alternative, information policies should support and enhance relevant, local information structures. This "grassroots" approach would lead to integration of ICT into existing information practices in innovative ways that meet the users' informational needs.

### An Alternative IL Agenda

The dominant IL agenda assumes information is transferable, regardless of the sociocultural context, and certain types of information have more value. Furthermore, the ideological assumptions of the information society project dominant information practices on "Others". An alternative approach to IL begins by recognizing "different walks of life" and, then, seeks to understand how information is and becomes relevant in different walks of life. IL is "empowering" and does contribute to a person's personal, social, occupational, and educational pursuits. However, IL extends beyond ICT and considers existing information structures and the sociocultural and historical contexts in which information becomes informative and how people communicate in ways that meaning is shared and created. In all walks of life, ICT is but one set of tools people use to communicate, share, and create information. Approaching IL from a perspective in a way that asks why and how people interact with information creates opportunities to explore authentic situations and possibilities.

One way to conceptualize IL is as an information practice, or a set of recurrent information-related activities instantiated by situations, such as in a work environment, at

school, or speaking to a physician. Accordingly, IL, and what it means to be "information literate", varies across situations and what has been institutionalized as a proper or legitimate activity in those situations. Information practices are embedded in sociocultural practices, which set the parameters for recognizing information and consequently, how information is communicated and shared. To fully explain what being "information literate" means, the sociocultural and historical practices that make information possible and in which an individual performs a range of information-related activities must be considered and will be explored in this study.

**Research Inquiry**

Bhaktin (2004/1986) has stated, "in the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly" (p. 7). Studying another culture, rather than my own, made methodological sense. Having an educational and professional background in international relations and African studies drew my attention to the continent. The literature on Kenya's reaction, through prioritizing ICT, to the international discourse on the information society intensified my curiosity about different ways of interacting with information, beyond use of ICT. Furthermore, as a woman, I am keenly sensitive to women experiences in society. The desire to explore a range of information practices influenced my selection of university students, as a group that represents many "walks of life" but, as students, share at least one common information practice. Ultimately, however, the differing sociocultural and historical contexts presented the women as "Others" to me and, likewise, me as an "Other" to them. The Otherness created a space for understanding to occur through communication and

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dialogue, through disclosure and uncovering, and, finally, by the merging of our differences through an interpretive, intersubjective process.

My research inquiry began with a broad interest in how women interacted with information in everyday life. I wanted to explore what things the women identified as relevant to their everyday lives. I was curious about the various discourses, or "ways of knowing", that influenced how they experienced everyday things and, how they expressed and communicated the experiences of those things to other people. In theoretical terms, I wanted to understand how a person interacts with information in situ, or in a situation instantiated by the relational meaning among objects. In addition, I wanted to explore the social, cultural, and historical context of the situation. The central guiding question of the research inquiry became:

- How do participants experience objects and communicate meanings of their experience and objects to other people?

To research the answer, I also asked the following questions of the data:

- What do participants identify as relevant to their everyday lives?
- How are objects related to each other?
- How do participants experience objects?
- What discourses are associated with or instantiated by interaction with various objects?

To properly address the questions, I used a combination of methods, including content, phenomenological, and hermeneutic. Content analysis is an effective way to approach "what" questions. However, using inferential and relational content analysis

often ignores the contextual meaning of words. Instead, I used a descriptive and conceptual method of content analysis to uncover "clusters" of things or concepts. To answer "how" and "why" questions, I used phenomenology and hermeneutic methods to explore the relational meanings, including context, among concepts. Further explanation of and rationale for using these methods have been explained in Chapter 3.

## Definition of Basic Terms

### Information

IL is difficult to define because information and literacy are not simple concepts. As Hjorland (2007) has suggested, an important factor in defining information is to consider the practical applications of the chosen perspective. My research has required a flexible definition of information that accommodates multiple situations and contexts. I have adopted a definition which has been philosophically inspired by Ferdinand de Saussure and critically explored for LIS by Raber and Budd (2003, p. 519), who have posited information as "clearly a matter of relations between thing and thought" embedded in social context, including historical, cultural, and ideological influences. I have operationally defined information as any implicit or explicit association between a signifier and a signified thing that can be shared.

### Information Literacy

As a concept, IL has changed since Zurkowski first introduced the phrase in 1974. One way to view IL is as social practice. Tuominen, Savolainen, and Talja (2005) have described IL as a sociotechnical practice, and Lloyd (2010) has defined IL as an information practice. Primarily, they have researched workplace knowledge and learning. Conceptually, the same idea is applicable to research outside the occupational setting,

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where individuals interact regularly with specific artifacts and people in a particular context. Anderson (2006) has proposed IL to be a sociopolitical activity, requiring an understanding of how knowledge has been organized and mediated in society as a whole.

I have adopted a definition of IL Limberg, Alexandersson, Lantz-Andersson, and Folkesson (2008) have used and define IL as "a set of abilities to seek and use information in purposeful ways related to the task, situation and context in which information seeking practices are embedded" (p. 83). By viewing IL as embedded in practice, the researcher's attention turns from skills acquisition to how people interact communicatively in situ and in context.

**Information Practice**

Information practice is a descendent of social practice or community of practice, made popular in Lave and Ettienne's (1991) situated learning theory. Savolainen (2007) has defined information practice as the set of institutionalized or recurrent information seeking, searching, use, evaluation, production, and sharing activities of a particular group or community. Information practice has evolved as the critical alternative to information behavior, or the information activities of individuals. Studies of the latter emphasize the information-related behaviors of an individual or an individual-in-context. In contrast to information behavior, the unit of analysis in information practice studies is the individual-with-context, or the individual interacting with objects though recurrent "ways of knowing" the physical world.

**Context**

In past research, context has been defined as occupation, social role, or demographic group (Case, 2007). Context has also been broadly described to include

particular spaces and time, as well as institutional factors and entities (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/1945). I have broadly defined context as the shared social, cultural, political, historical, and economic institutions in which people assign and communicate the meanings of information.

**Discourse**

In simple terms, discourse is "someone saying something to someone about something" (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 138). Foucault (1972) has used discourse to refer to a body of knowledge informed by a particular epistemological viewpoint, or way of knowing, institutionalized through language and implying an idea of how things are. As Merleau-Ponty (1962/1945) has observed, perception also includes a spatiotemporal element. I have defined discourse as the communicative expression of a thing, which can be experienced by more than one person and from more than one spatiotemporal point.

**In Situ**

The Latin phrase *in situ*, or in position, is interpreted differently across disciplines. In general, the phrase is used to denote situatedness, or set of conditions in which a subject or object exists or acts. I have used the phrase to refer to a situation, not separate from context, which instantiates multiple institutions and sets of identities. The definition is influenced, in part, by the theory of self, identity, and social institutions MacKinnon and Heise (2010) have offered to describe how individuals act in the world through "the selection and enactment of identities within social institutional constraints" (p. 4). Their moderate form of constructionism allows interpretation of people as both socioculturally situated and intentional agents capable of interacting in communicative ways with other people.

**Delimitations**

Research findings have been drawn from Kenyan women who attended classes at one private university in Nairobi. In addition, findings are based on twenty participants' experiences of a broad range of phenomena and are not assumed to be representative of a larger population. However, findings have implications for future research and policy on IL in Kenya and similarly situated nations.

**Significance of Findings**

Qualitative research in LIS, especially information-seeking studies, is not popular as quantitative research (Afzal, 2006; Dervin & Nilan, 1986). Afzal has suggested the field would benefit from more ethnographic research and, in particular, research focusing on social context. Furthermore, only a handful of researchers have explored IL from a social constructionist perspective. Other LIS researchers (e.g., MacKenzie, 2003a, 2003b; Savolainen, 1995) have explored recurrent constructivist processes in ELIS, and Lloyd (2010) has proposed a framework for workplace information practices. My exploration is distinct because I have considered the sociocultural and historical context in which information practices are embedded and how many identities are enacted in everyday life situations.

Using participants' photographs to explore both the situatedness and the historical context of women's everyday interactions with information is the leading methodological contribution of my research to LIS research. A mode of analysis often used in hermeneutic phenomenology and content analysis is text, either spoken or written (Myers, 1997). In addition to text, I have explored photographs as containing symbolic representations of material reality capable of communicating shared meanings.

Overall, findings have supported the need for IL research and policy to consider how information practices, embedded in context, enable information to be recognized and shared, in ways that create new ways of knowing. Findings have supported the need for research and policy to consider how people are sources of knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom, distinguished but not separate from knowledge, was gained through past experiences. The affective component of interaction, especially in close proximity, seemed to impact how information was perceived. The international agenda for Lifelong Learning promoted interacting with classmates and was particularly relevant to cultural understanding.

Findings have also suggested the need to relocate ICT from a position of predominance in IL to a supporting role in information practices. Furthermore, Internet and computers, in particular, were identified as relevant for completing assignments, for social communication through electronic email and Facebook, and for personal entertainment, including music and videos. Women also accessed news online. Some indication of a "reading culture" was also apparent. In other words, women were using ICT in walks of life beyond educational and professional domains.

Finally, findings have reiterated the complex nature of information practices across situations. Interacting with information in everyday life requires successful negotiation of the physical environment and appropriation of multiple, sometimes conflicting, identities in order to successfully navigate among the social meanings of objects.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## Defining Information

In research about IL and information practices, defining information seems like a natural starting point. Machlup (1983) has examined data, information, and knowledge, three prominent concepts in LIS research. After reviewing the literature, Machlup has discovered no consistent difference among experts' use of the terms data and information. However, the distinction between information and knowledge is more elusive (Buckland, 1991a, 1991b; Haeckel & Nolan, as cited in Eisenberg, Lowe, & Spitzer, 2004; Machlup, 1983). Zurkowski (1974) has asserted, "information is not knowledge, it is concepts or ideas which enter a person's field of perception, are evaluated and assimilated reinforcing or changing the individual's concept of reality and/or ability to act" (p. 1). Machlup has argued that information is something that is transferred, and knowledge is a state. However, unsatisfactory definitions have led Raber (as cited in Case, 2007) to criticize scholars who distinguish between knowledge and information without discerning how and when information becomes knowledge.

To clarify the distinction, Haeckel and Nolan (as cited in Eisenberg, Lowe, and Spitzer, 2004) have developed a multi-level information hierarchy incorporating multiple information-related variables and the inferential process by which information becomes knowledge. *Facts* form the largest layer and base of the hierarchy. *Information* is the next layer, followed by *intelligence*, *knowledge*, and, finally, *wisdom*. Facts, they have explained, become information given a *context*. When *inference* is applied, information becomes intelligence. When an individual gains *certitude,* intelligence transforms into

knowledge. Finally, *synthesized* knowledge becomes wisdom. While the model definitely

recognized important moments of transformation between information and knowledge,

Haeckel and Nolan have added more ambiguous concepts and modes which require

additional definition and clarity.

Numerous other studies, both internal and external to LIS, have also offered

definitions for information concepts. Through a pragmatic survey of the literature,

Buckland (1991a, 1991b) has identified three common uses of information which he has

categorized as information-as-thing, information-as-knowledge, and information-as

process. In communications, Fairthorne (1961/1954) has offered a definition which falls

into the latter category. He has argued, "information is an attribute of the receiver's

knowledge and interpretation of the signal, not of the sender's, nor some external

omniscient observer's nor of the signal itself" (p. 69). One criticism of the information-as-

process approach is the inability to assess whether a transformation has occurred.

Perhaps, as Case (2007) has suggested, the most vital reason for defining

information is to make meaning from empirical studies. He has outlined two distinct

views of information, objective and subjective, common to information behavior

research. Objective understandings of information assume any difference actually makes

a difference. In contrast, subjective views of information treat information as "any

difference that makes a difference to a conscious, human mind" (Bateson, as cited in

Case, p. 40). As Hjorland (2007) has argued, studies which apply subjective, situated

understandings of information potentially contribute the most to LIS practice because "no

thing is inherently informative. To consider something information is thus always to

consider it as informative in relation to some possible question" (p. 1451).

Further expounding on the relational nature of information, and borrowing from the field of semiotics, Raber and Budd (2003) have explored how a sign, comprised of a signifier and that which is signified, changes depending on spatiotemporal variables:

Information is clearly a matter of relations between thing and thought, but the discursive formations that sustain and reproduce thought occur in a social context within which systems of information organization and retrieval, categories of aboutness, and apriori assumptions regarding relevance are established and constructed, like language, in a manner not free of historical, cultural, and ideological contingency". (p. 519)

In other words, objective reality is a precondition for information to occur, but meaning is contingent upon a rich context in which all signs and thoughts occur.

**The Social Life of Information**

In a review of information needs and uses, Dervin and Nilan (1986) have described two primary paradigms which have guided human information behavior research. The *traditional* paradigm treats information as objective, and "users are seen as input-output processors information" (p. 16). Notably, when IL was introduced, most information behavior theories had been based on system-centered research and objective views of information. Zurkowski (1974) has been an exception to the norm, claiming "information is in the mind of the user" (p. 30). An *alternative* to the traditional, structural paradigm positions the user of information systems at the center of the research inquiry. Like Zurkowski, the alternative paradigm frames information "as something constructed by human beings" (Dervin & Nilan, p. 16). Recognizing the social life of information, a phrase largely attributed to Brown and Duguid (2000), marks a shift from

the dehumanizing treatment of people as slaves to technology, as helplessly overwhelmed in an information age, to a humanistic approach in which people are positioned as the rightful masters of IT and its potential benefits.

Kuhlthau's (1991) model of information-seeking is an exemplar of user-centered studies. Kuhlthau has proposed a procedural model of information seeking in six stages, including initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection, and presentation. Her model differs from other user-centered approaches because she has recognized the affective, or emotional, domain of information seeking. Eisenberg, Lowe, and Spitzer (2007) have claimed her model to be the most influential model in empirical studies on IL, which Kuhlthau has framed "not a discrete set of skills but rather a way of learning" (p. 44). Amunga (2011) and Gitonga (2010) have envisioned IL in a similar way, as a way of learning.

Kulthau's view of IL is a social constructivist model of information seeking. Touminen, Talja, and Svolainen (2002) have stated, "constructivism sees individuals as the true originators of knowledge and meanings. Individuals' cognitive structures are influenced by language, history, and social and cultural factors such as domain and cultural environment but, essentially, the creation of knowledge and interpretations is assumed to take place in individual minds" (p. 276). LIS researchers who are guided by a constructivist view of reality envision knowledge as monological, or as "residing inside rather than between individuals" (p. 276). Sundin and Johannisson (2005a) have further described the constructivist approach as the Individual approach because the focus is the individual's cognitive process, rather than interaction between or among people or on symbols, such as language.

However, Bushman (2007) and Day (2006) have not been convinced that subjective, constructivist views of information fundamentally differ from positivist notions of objective reality. Bushman has argued the very notion of *seeking,* an activity of reference in cognitive models, implies a positivist reality. In other words, if a person is seeking for information, then information must exist in a form which can be found by a seeker. When explaining the epistemological difference, mainly between structural (positivist) and poststructural (constructivist) approaches in information studies, Day has suggested socio-cognitive and –cultural studies often misinterpret poststructural context. Day has clarified, "the site-specific and time-valued *repetition* of what can be generally called 'signs' gives the possibility of structure, or what is commonly referred to as 'context' (p. 576).

Buschman (2007) and Day (2006) have not distinguished between social constructivist and social constructionist research designs. Social constructionist designs acknowledge the eminence of a material structure but focus on the value-added interpretations which add meaning to structural reality (Talja, Keso, & Pietilainen, 1999). Constructionist and constructivist share many commonalities, and the point of movement between them is not always apparent. While sensitive to individual experiences, constructionism has an ontological tie to structural elements, especially the dialogical, time-binding features of language. From a social constructionist perspective, meaning is not an individual production but, rather, a dialogical and structural process occurring within and shaped by sociocultural and historical discourses. In information research guided by social constructionism, "the information user makes the same pieces of knowledge or documents mean different things depending on what kind of social action

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he or she is performing with the help of language in a specific interactional and conversational context" (Touminen, Talja, & Savolainen, 2002, p. 277). Documents are influenced by and interpreted according to various discursive practices, within which an individual is situated. Knowledge is "not located in texts…rather, it involves the co-construction of situation meanings and takes place in networks of actors and artifacts" (Tuominen, Savolainen, & Talja, 2005, p. 338). Most importantly, research influenced by social constructionism focuses on the social constructs and discursive practices that give documents meaning and not on the individual cognitive actions and information seeking processes (Talja, Keso, & Pietilainen, 1999).

## Understanding IL

IL has conceptually evolved since 1974, when Zurkowski, the president of the Information Industry Association, first used the term. Zurkowski's interest in IL has been in relation to workplace skills, workplace techniques, and the economic benefits of being information literate in the workplace. Other IL definitions had surfaced and continued to emphasize being able to locate and use information for solving problems effectively and efficiently. In addition to workplace and occupational effectiveness, Owens (1976) has emphasized the value of IL to enhancing quality of life and, furthermore, as vital to democracy. He has purported, "all men are created equal but voters with information resources are in a position to make more intelligent decisions than citizens who are information illiterate. The application of information resources to the process of decision-making to fulfill civic responsibilities is a vital necessity" (p. 27).

Over the next decade, common element among definitions of IL had surfaced, but a cohesive, working definition had not yet been established. In 1987, the American

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Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy had asked education and library leaders to develop a working concept which could be applied in and appreciated by American schools, colleges, and associated institutions. Two years later, the committee had decided, "to be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (1989, para. 3).

The committee had not worked two years to provide only a definition. They had produced a seminal work which combined the social, economic and political value of IL:

> How our country deals with the realities of the Information Age will have enormous impact on our democratic way of life and on our nation's ability to compete internationally. Within America's information society, there also exists the potential of addressing many long-standing social and economic inequities. To reap such benefits, people---as individuals and as a nation---must be information literate. To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information…Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand. (para. 3)

Based on results from a Delphi study panel, Doyle (1992) has revised the definition of IL to include the ability to access, evaluate, and use information "from a

variety of sources" (p. 1). She has also identified ten attributes of an information literate person which can be cultivated. Importantly, Doyle's report represents IL as a process, not just a set of skills (Eisenberg, Lowe, & Spitzer, 2004).

Also emphasizing the procedural nature of IL, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) have conceptualized and standardized IL into three categories, nine standards, and 29 indicators (AASL & AECT, 1998). Standards in the first category, specifically designated as information literacy standards, are library-mediated. Standards for the other two categories, identified as independent learning and social responsibility, pertain to

general student learning supported by the library. According to category one standards, the student who is information literate (a) accesses information efficiently and effectively; (b) evaluates information critically and competently; (c) uses information accurately and creatively.

ACRL (2000) has outlined a similar set of standards, indicators, and, in addition, outcomes catered specifically to higher education. They have adopted ALA's, their parent organization, definition of IL, to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" (p. 2). The ability to locate, evaluate, and use information from a variety of formats is not explicit, but they have implied that, by learning a "cluster of abilities" (p. 2), students will be able to evaluate information from multiple media and "unfiltered formats".  By ACRL standards, the information literate student (a) "defines and articulates the need for information" (p. 8); (b) "selects the most appropriate investigative methods or

information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information" (p. 9); (c) "summarizes the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered" (p. 11); (d) "individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose" (p. 13) and; (e) "understands many of the ethical, legal, and socio-economic issues surrounding information and information technology" (p. 14).

To meet Kenyan accreditation standards established by the CHE (2007), university libraries are required to "facilitate academic success, as well as encourage lifelong learning by combining new techniques and technologies with the best traditional sources" (p. 17). University libraries must have a locally established and administered IL program to provide IL skills, which "enables the learners to master content and to make their investigations into the literature as comprehensive as possible" (p. 6). Explicitly acknowledging the influence of ACRL on their definition, IL has been defined as "a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use the information effectively" (p. 7). The goal of IL "significantly contributes to the learners becoming more self directed thus assuming greater control of their learning. Such attributes are invaluable to the attainment of excellence in the learning and research processes of the University" (p. 6). Amunga (2011) has noted, the "high reliance on the lecture method and the reading-for-exams-only culture" (p. 430) in Kenya and sparse interaction among librarians and faculty about course objectives have hindered self-directed learning. Rather than fostering the ability to "critically evaluate information for usefulness and relevance, constructively criticise the vendors of information and then effectively use the relevant information to meet daily challenges and answer life questions" (Gitonga, 2010, p. 49), students are coached "to

pass exams and secure jobs" (p. 49). Amunga has also noted how "the habit of reading for exams" has hindered IL in Kenyan universities.

Common elements among the reviewed IL documents and statements are the expectations that students will become proficient in or master the skills necessary and process by which information is effectively, efficiently, and, perhaps, critically assessed. From an authentically critical perspective, however, students are not learning to think critically, they are learning dominant ways of critiquing knowledge.

Shapiro and Hughes (1996) have questioned the totalizing effects of a misdirected conception of IL. In a world increasingly defined in terms of information, they have critically asked:

> What sort of "information literacy"…should we be promoting, and what should it accomplish? Is it merely something that will reduce the number of tech support calls that we have to deal with? Something that will grease the wheels of the information highway? Something that, as defined by representatives of the library community, enables people to be "effective information consumers"? (para. 5)
>
> Or is it, should it be, something broader, something that enables individuals not only to use information and information technology effectively and adapt to their constant changes but also to think critically about the entire information enterprise and information society? Something more akin to a "liberal art" - knowledge that is part of what it means to be a free person in the present historical context of the dawn of the information age? (para. 6)

Most definitive IL works mentioned Shapiro and Hughes's proposal for IL as a new liberal art or their undeveloped, self-admittedly, list of possible curriculum topics.

However, the basis of their inquiry is largely ignored which is their call for an authentically critical response to the social constructs of information, information technology, information age, and IL.

**Technology and IL**

Bawden (2001) has attributed the evolution of literacy and IL to new technologies. Professionals tend to coin a new literacy each time a new technology, and required technical skills set, emerges. As a result, the literature contains a plethora of literacies, or kinds of literacy. As a result, IL is often used synonymously with or in direct relation to computer literacy, IT literacy, digital literacy, media literacy, electronic literacy, visual literacy, library literacy, network literacy, internet literacy, and hyper-literacy. Gitonga (2010) has referenced various "types" of technology-specific IL. However, many scholars (Ayoo & Otike, 2002; Ingutia-Oyieke & Dick, 2010; Kavulya, 2003; Ondari-Okemwa, 2002) have related IL in Kenya to general ICT or IT skills. To stop the rampant proliferation of literacy terms, one suggestion Bawden has offered is to expand the traditional notion of literacy to flexibly incorporate existing definitions and to accommodate new technologies and skill sets. Also in critique of the many literacy offspring, Buschman (2009) has challenged whether the ideological assumptions of IL, or any purportedly 'new' literacy, are different from assumptions of traditional literacy.

**Creating and IL**

Findings from the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University have prompted educators to prepare students to be "active participants, not passive receivers" (as cited in Hensley, Arp, & Woodard, 2004, p. 31). The document emphasizes the value to IL of individual discovery, which requires

creativity and curiosity. Hensley et al. (2004) has suggested two environmental changes in education to foster personally meaningful discovery. Education should provide an environment that asks '"why" rather than "how" and should create "an environment that allows students to experience the problematic nature of information use and evaluation" (p. 32).

Like Hensley et al. (2004), Ward (2006) also has envisioned IL as entailing more than the teaching and learning of technical skills. Bringing attention to individual experience, Ward has suggested information is processed "individually and collectively, subjectively, objectively, emotionally, and analytically" (p. 396). Ward has further described the role of intentionality, or consciousness of a thing, and of comprehending information's "reservoir of meaning":

> Certainly, information literacy encompasses a domain of knowledge that consists of critical thinking about information. This includes applying criteria for evaluating Web sites and articles found in databases, as well as logic in assessing arguments. However, information literacy also includes the imagination of information, our deepening experience of it, and appreciation for the richness of that vast reservoir of meaning and interior life. To imagine or create mental images in response to information is to bring to consciousness something of our own, something from the depths of our psychic life, and to have a connection to it. (p. 396)

Hensley and Ward have both expressed the values of personal meaning and intentionality to conceptions of IL. They have understood the individual, cognitive dimension of IL, but they do not fully elaborate on the role of institutional constraints or parameters on

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creativity, meaning-making, and IL.

Stuckey (2009) has explored the meaning-making process in adult health education by using creative expression to understand individuals' experiences of diabetes. Stuckey has primarily focused on each participant's experiences, but the study also identifies the role of existing social constructs of identity affected participants' experiences of diabetes and, notably, how participants deconstructed the medical knowledge surrounding their illness. To explore the process, Stuckey had asked participants to create metaphorical images which represented their illness and to share the images' personal meanings with other participants. Findings have suggested the experience of diabetes involves multiple layers of imaginal, individual, and social meanings connected to multiple life contexts, such as being a wife or being a supervisor. Upon sharing, each person's understanding of their own image had changed, indicative of the artifact's social dimension. In addition, otherwise unrelated experiences became related. For example, participants had associated their illness and their metaphorical images to other life experiences, such as the death of child or awkwardness as a teenager. Lastly, according to participants, their images reflected their interpretation of their illness, which provided a counter to the medical field's synopsis. In effect, their expressions gave them a discursive voice and power over their illness. While the study does not emphasize IL, the findings represent how creative expression, as a form of communication, enacts multiple layers of identity and meaning-making, crosses temporal boundaries, and facilitates awareness of dominant social constructs, and allows individuals to become intentionally aware, to interpret, and to give additional meaning to their situations.

**Information Practices and Everyday Life**

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Tuominen, Savolainen, and Talja (2005) have argued, "a situated understanding of learning and learning requirements proposes that information competencies cannot be taught 'for life' independent of the practice domains and task in which they are situated and that usually involve a complex system of social relationships and work organizations" (pp. 330-331). IL extends beyond an individual's cognitive ability to seek and discern facts into the realm of understanding related social practices (Lloyd, 2009; Lloyd & Williamson, 2008; Sundin, 2008; Webber & Johnston, 2000). Social constructionists, in theory, believe "knowledge and meanings are built through dialogue and debate. This viewpoint emphasizes the discontinuities and multiple perspectives in scientific and other kinds of knowledge domains" (Tuominen, Savolainen, & Talja, 2008, p. 337). Relevance and meaning are tied to a particular context or set of discursive activities (Sundin & Johannisson, 2005a, 2005b; Tuominen, Talja, & Savolainen, 2005). The unit of analysis, therefore, is the set of discursive activity which guides what is considered legitimate, site-specific information practice (Talja, Tuominen, & Savolainen, 2005). In contrast, social constructivism focuses on the individual(s)-in-context, rather than the context itself.

Savolainen (2007) has questioned whether institutionalized practices exist outside the workplace and has challenged the applicability of social-constructionist research to non-professionalized settings. However, social constructionist research designs have been implemented to explore students' information practices in school settings (Alexandersson & Limberg, 2003; Limberg, Alexandersson, Lantz-Andersson, & Folkesson, 2008; Lundh & Limberg, 2008) and the information practices of pregnant women (McKenzie (2003a, 2003b).

McKenzie's (2003a, 2003b) model is a constructivist model of the individual-in-context. Her contribution to research information practice is the exploration of context beyond academic and workplace settings. She has explained pregnancy as a shared sociocultural context in which women (a) are usually expected to seek information about their pregnancy, (b) affectively disclose information about their pregnancy, and (c) become visibly identifiable by their pregnancy (McKenzie 2003a). A second contribution of her work is the development of a model for everyday life information seeking (ELIS), an aspect of information seeking Savolainen (1995, 2007) has also explored. Of note, McKenzie's model and findings have provided insight about less-directed information activities, such as the notion of information encountering, a type of opportunistic acquisition of information (Erdelez, 1995, 1997). Four modes of ELIS identified are active seeking, active scanning, non-directed monitoring, and by proxy. In addition, the model differentiates between modal activity which occurs when making connections with a source and when interacting with identified sources.

<center>**Information Practice and IL**</center>

As part of the alternative, social approach to IL, social constructionism shifts attention to the social practices in which information activities occur and explores how an individual becomes proficient in a particular information practice. IL has also been portrayed as a critical sociocultural or information practice (Lloyd, 2009, 2010). The common theme is practice, implying rehearsal or recurrent elements of some activity. Information practice, then, can be viewed as the sum of information-related activities (e.g., seeking or sharing) recurrent within a particular context, such as discipline, work place or other environment. One way to view literacy is as practice's parallel, as the way

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a person becomes aware of a community's dominant tools, channels, and behaviors. Similarly, IL is about becoming aware of and being able to participate fully in a particular information practice.

Lloyd (2007) has explored IL as a way of knowing learned through experiences with information in textual, physical (corporeal), and social sites of the workplace. The purpose of IL in the workplace is to produce, reproduce, and maintain sociocultural practices. Her research is inspired by activity theory, and her model is based on firefighters' and ambulance officers' experiences of knowing through interacting with people, artifacts, texts, and bodily experiences in their information environments (Lloyd, 2005, 2007, 2009). She has proposed a framework for IL that examines how members gain proficiency, through textual, physical, and social sites, in the sociocultural practices of the workplace by engaging in influence work, information work, information sharing, and information coupling (Lloyd, 2010).

### Identity and Information Practice

While the models McKenzie (2003a, 2003b) and Lloyd (2010) have offered both contribute to the study of information practice, in different ways, their questions are different than mine. First, my research inquiry explores how multiple identities emerge while interacting because, as Gee (2009/1990) and MacKinnon and Heise (2010) have found, one identity is seldom at play. Lloyd's work attends to the institutionalized practices of a particular identity, the professional, and McKenzie has focused on pregnant women. Second, my research inquiry focuses on interacting with information in everyday situations. Lloyd's model is a workplace model and is not assumed to be translated to everyday life. McKenzie's model explores everyday interactions with information,

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however, her model pays particular attention to seeking, including scanning, browsing, and other related activities. Furthermore, her model is a social constructivist model, focusing on the sociocognitive aspects of ELIS practices.

MacKinnon and Heise (2010) have developed a model of identity that accommodates multiple identities and situations. In addition, while their model does not historically bind actors, humans and situations are embedded in social and cultural constructs which dictate proper and improper behaviors. They have suggested people accumulate, over time, a set of identities, including biological, obligatory, incidental, and entailed identities. In situations, people select from their set of identities the identities they identify as proper. Timing, location, and visual cues serve to define the situation and, by default, the appropriate identities to enact. Essentially, "situations instantiate institutions" (p. 38).

MacKinnon and Heise (2010) and Gee (2009/1990) have recognized the complex, overlapping, and multi-faceted elements of identity, itself a discourse or institution. Individuals respond and react to situations, in which they identify the relational meaning of objects, time, and location in order to enact appropriate identities. In my research, I have used their insight about identity to understand the situations in which participants interacted with information. Specifically, As MacKinnon and Heise have explained, identities are enacted based on situations, the objects and the relational meaning among them. While they study identity and institutions through "the linguistically moored cultural meanings that are consensual enough to support the interpersonal bonding, social collaborations, and institutional function of everyday life" (p. 5). Furthermore, I have used the representational characteristic of photographs, taken as meaningful

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representations of relevant things, as a situational and contextual anchor physical reality.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## Qualitative Paradigm

Inspired primarily by the value intrinsic to qualitative research, my focus was the process, rather than the outcome, of how participants made sense of their daily interactions with information in situ and including the experiences and the institutions shaping their world. The research was exploratory and not guided by a specific theory or hypothesis.

## Epistemological Framework

The methodological framework stems from believing the dominant view of IL, which focuses on allegedly universal, or common, elements of information and knowledge, is limited in scope. For practical reasons, scholars have called for a more critical and holistic treatment of the idea of IL. Within the ideological framework of the information society, information is perceived as a thing which can be transferred, shared, and communicated. As a whole, international and national policy and decision makers have not recognized or reflected on the socio-cultural and historical contexts in and by which information becomes transferrable, sharable, and communicable. Consequently, the dominant conception of IL does not address how information becomes informative, how knowledge becomes knowledge, or how people create and share the meaning of things.

To answer these kinds of questions, focusing methodological attention on processes, rather than outcomes, of various information-related activities, such as access, evaluation, creation, and dissemination, becomes necessary. By focusing on process, I

have first assumed meaning is social, a realization Shera (1970) has asserted is vital to the

work of LIS. Meaning is a shared phenomenon which occurs through symbolization, such

as language. Percy (1978/1954, p. 281) has explained, "symbolization is of its very

essence an intersubjectivity", shared meaning of signs between at least two people, an "I"

and a "You". Communication is made possible through shared meanings, in language,

text, and other symbols, and is revealed through discourse. MacKinnon and Heise (2010)

have posited, "language that lay people use to build and communicate their

phenomenological worlds is the primary depository of cultural constructions, and

therefore social scientists can study language as one avenue to insights about

phenomenological experiences and intersubjectivity" (p. 5).

Hermeneutical phenomenology is an appropriate framework for understanding

both the sociocognitive processes involved in how people make meaning and the

sociocultural and historical processes through which meaning becomes possible (Budd,

1995). The methodology has been applied in other social sciences. Among the first to

explore hermeneutical methodology in LIS has been Lee (1994), who appropriated the

method for communication in information systems. Various phenomenological

approaches have been explored in the context of adult literacy (Bossaller & Budd, 2009)

and sources preferences (Savolainen, 2007). I used the methodology to explore

information practices by exploring how people interact with information and, more

specifically, how participants assign meaning to objects in communicative ways, or ways

that can be and are shared.

While acknowledging hermeneutic analysis and phenomenological analysis are

not entirely separate, I have approached participants' interaction with information by

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separating sociocognitive experiences from sociocultural and historical experiences. For the purposes of this research, I have used a phenomenological method of analysis to explore the sociocognitive structure of participants' interactions with information, and I have used a hermeneutic method to explore, in a more holistic way, the sociocultural and historical context in which participants' interactions with information. I have gathered data using a combination of spoken language, textual language, and photographs. Language is viewed as powerful enough to transmit meaning through time based on "linguistically moored cultural meanings that are consensual enough to support the interpersonal bonding, social collaborations, and institutional function of everyday social life" (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010, p. 5). Each photograph serves as a marker of a participant's experience and as an anchor of the experience to the object, as signified in the material world. In contrast to the approach Stuckey (2009) has used, I have used photographs rather than non-photographic images.

## Research Design

At the most basic level, the research design was a modified-ethnography, interpreted loosely. Keeping in mind the philosophical purpose and guiding principles of ethnographic research, Hammersley and Atkinson (2002/1983) have liberally interpreted ethnography, and have suggested, "in its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research" (p. 1). Data collection and analyses required my immersion, for an extended period of time, in the group's general life to observe and gain insight and

feeling about the cultural, spatial, and temporal contexts of participants' experiences. Overt participation and observation in context provided me with the methodological means necessary to focus on participants' experiences and, ultimately, interpret the context in which photographs were created and shared.

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

**Demographics**

Participants were aged 18-24 and included five Freshmen, nine Sophomores, three Juniors, and three Seniors. Nineteen participants were unemployed, and one was self-employed. Sixteen identified family as a primary source of income, and three received some type of scholarship. Severn participants lived on campus, and 13 lived off-campus.

All participants were unmarried. Number of siblings ranged from zero to 10 ($M$=2.95, $Mdn$=2). Most commonly, participants had two siblings. Most participants' parents had some level of college or graduate education. Seven participants self-identified as Kikuyu. Other tribal affiliations, represented by two or fewer women, included Kalenjin, Kamba, Kisii, Luhya, Luo, Mbeere, and Meru. Twelve participants identified as Protestant, five as Catholic, two as Evangelical, and one as Muslim.

Participation was limited to Kenyans. However, after group discussion commenced, I discovered one participant was Tanzanian. I did not retract her information because she had participated in several group discussions, and, therefore, her participation could not be experientially separated. During analysis, I remained aware her nationality might potentially affect interpretation.

**Selection**

Participants included 20 women who students at a private university in Nairobi,

Kenya. I recruited volunteer participants by posting flyers about the research project on approved notice boards located on campus (see *Appendix A* for recruitment flyer). On the flyer, I briefly stated the nature of the research, listed eligibility requirements and provided my contact information. To be eligible to participate, respondents had to be (a) Kenyan, (b) a woman, (c) a student at the university, (d) at least 18 years of age, and (e) available to meet one time per week for six to eight weeks. I selected the first 20 women who responded and met eligibility guidelines. All 20 volunteers participated for the duration of the project.

**Research Setting**

The research setting is an important element in any kind of research. Often, qualitative research is defined by a tie to "natural" setting, rather than the "experimental" setting typical of quantitative research. However, Hammersley and Atkinson (2002/1983) have suggested, "settings are not naturally occurring phenomena, they are constituted and maintained through cultural definition and social strategies. Their boundaries are not fixed but shift across occasions, to one degree or another, through processes of redefinition and negation" (p. 41). Keeping their observation in mind, I have reported many characteristics of the setting, including the site location, history, and properties where the research project occurred. I have also described the conditions under which participants interacted with each other, the researcher, or while taking photographs.

The purpose of describing the setting in detail is to promote a sense of external reliability compatible with suggestions Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte (1999, p. 288) have made to (a) clearly describe "both the nature and the context of the researcher's relationships with the study population and the research site", and (b) clearly identify the

"situations of the research, including conditions under which ethnographic surveys were administered; this enhances the likelihood of replicability and permits readers to identify limitations and gaps in the data collection process that could affect results and their interpretations".

Students were recruited from United States International University (USIU), a secular, private university located in Nairobi, Kenya. As of August of 2010, Kenya had a population of 38,610,097 people, of which over 3,000, 000 lived in Nairobi, the cosmopolitan capital (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2011). USIU Nairobi campus was established in 1969, by the parent organization, of the same name, located in California, United States of America (USA). Original courses offered were business administration and science teacher education (USIU, 2011, "History of USIU"). Regulation required student population to be comprised of 40% Kenyan and 40% American. In 2010, they had over 5,000 undergraduate students enrolled in their Schools of Business, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Science and Technology (USIU, 2011, "Fact Sheet"). Their student population was 88% domestic, 12% international, 54% female, and 46% male. Fifty-one nationalities were represented. They had over a dozen international exchange programs, half of which were with the USA. USIU has been dually accredited by the CHE in Kenya and the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) in the USA. As required by WASC, USIU has facilitated student participation in applied settings through community service learning and internships (Oanda & Chege; 2008; WASC, 2008).

Interviews and group discussions occurred in the campus cafeteria. Interviews

occurred in the campus cafeteria based on the time of day most convenient for each participant. For group discussions, participants chose to meet in the cafeteria on Friday mornings. Normally, classes were not held on Fridays, and the day was reserved for club and organizational activities. Furthermore, most club activities were held in the afternoon. Participants chose to meet on the second floor of the campus cafeteria, a spacious, two-leveled building with large windows on both floors. On Friday mornings, the space was often used by study groups or group meetings. A common seen in the cafeteria were the "cafeteria cats", the stray cats who wandered into the cafeteria in search of food.

While taking photos, participants described being aware of and affected by other people noticing their activity. For example, one woman refrained from getting closer to the object (i.e., trash) of her photo because people were watching her. When photographing a stranger on campus, on participant mentioned how she asked for the person's permission before taking the photo. University administrators were aware of the nature of the research project and that participants would be photographing things on campus. Obtaining administrative permission gave some participants more confidence to photograph campus structures, such as the main gate, and spaces inside campus buildings, such as classrooms and the library.

We met once at a campus Internet café to upload photographs to an online photography forum. The forum was considered a social networking website, which was blocked by the university during certain hours to ensure Internet connectivity was adequately available for academic work. The location allowed us access to the forum using a non-university network. The process of uploading was slow and exceeded the

length of time reserved for the facility. Some upload processes timed-out. Participants who had not uploaded all their photos met the following week and uploaded photos in the cafeteria using a non-university network.

<div align="center">**Data Collection**</div>

Principal sources were participants' spoken words during group discussion, participants' written descriptions of their photographs, and participants' collection of photographs. A total of 745 principal documents were collected and included (a) 251 transcribed group discussions, (b) 244 written descriptions, and (c) 250 corresponding photographs. Only written and transcribed documents were coded for content analysis. Formal interactions with group and individual participants were audio-recorded to maintain an accurate account of participants' actual words and verbal expressions. Audio-recordings were transcribed into text documents for preservation and analytic flexibility.

Supplementary events of data collection included face-to-face interviews, informal interactions with participants and non-participants, and data collected about local events, places, and objects to which participants referred. Face-to-face interviews with participants were audio-recorded and transcribed. Informal interactions with participants and non-participants were not audio-recorded. Insight gained through informal interaction was documented as a note and stored with related documents.

**Collecting Spoken Words**

When people speak, their communicative acts are ushered in by more than words. Cameron (2001) has pointed out, "anyone who works with talk needs to bear in mind that meaning may lie in prosodic and paralinguistic features as much as in words…these features have to do with pitch, stress, rhythm, pace, loudness, voice quality, and so on" p.

37). Words spoken in the presence of two or more people require active negotiation of meaning through "real-time" reflection and reflexion (Michrina & Richards, 1996). As Lee (1994) has stated, "face-to-face is the richest medium [of communication] because it provides immediate feedback so that interpretation can be checked" (p. 144).

Unfortunately, transcribing spoken data is a necessary step for analyzing data in-depth, through comparison or counting expressions, and also "reduces the load on memory" (Cameron, 2001, p. 31). Michrina and Richards (1996) have also warned, "memory fades quickly" (p. 55). Audio recordings and notes need to be transcribed and coupled as soon as possible after the interaction to preserve detail of the account. However, dialogue and conversation are qualitative different than writing. Cameron (2001) has stated, "writing is not a direct representation of speech so much as a model of language more generally" (p. 33). Transcriptions are useful, and indispensable, for analysis but do not replace spoken words.

Another concern is that when spoken words are "transformed into a written text the gap between the 'author' and the 'reader' widens and the possibility of multiple reinterpretations increases" (Hodder, 1998, p. 112). The gap is not entirely unfortunate because the possibility of multiple interpretations equals multiple possibilities for new knowledge. Foucault (1977/1967) has passionately essayed the power of text to evoke the imaginary, the fantastic; "it derives from words spoken in the past, exact recensions, the amassing of facts, monuments reduced to infinitesimal fragments, and the reproductions of reproductions…Only the assiduous clamor created by repetition can transmit to us what only happened once (p. 91).

For the purpose of the research project, the spoken words included data collected

while interacting verbally with participants. Spoken words were collected during group discussions, face-to-face interviews, and informal interactions with participants and non-participants. When interacting with participants, I followed mainstream ethnographic advice to (a) avoid leading questions, (b) unnecessarily interrupt or redirect conversation; (c) carefully observe participants' external demographic cues, such as dress; (d) observe paralinguistic cues; and (e) refrain from offering nonverbal or verbal opinions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2002/1983; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999; O'Reilly, 2005). However, I also actively sought to build and maintain a rapport with participant through interacting authentically and empathically without building an over-rapport (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2002/1983; O'Reilly, 2005).

**Collecting Text Documents**

The collection of text documents included participants' written descriptions, notes describing local events, transcriptions of group discussions, transcriptions of face-to-face interviews, and field notes taken to document informal interactions with both participants and non-participants. I chose not to take notes during group discussions because "it distracts the interviewer from the openness of direct communication with the interviewee" (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 145). Instead, I chose to digitally audio-record interactions. I ensured participants were aware of and consented to being audio-recorded. I took notes directly after the meeting and when transcribing the data (Michrina & Richards, 1996).

Hodder (1998) has outlined the differences between interpreting spoken word and interpreting text, or "mute evidence" (p. 110). Evidence that is "mute" includes material culture, or artifacts, which Hodder has described as not entirely different from text

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because text "endures physically and thus can be separated across space and time from its author, producer, or user" (p. 110). At the same time, the separation is a disadvantage because the evidence is given over to a contextually and situationally different interpreter. Ricoeur (1981) has framed the separation of a reader from the text as distanciation. For Ricouer, the separation actually enables understanding by forcing the reader, or researcher, to locate meaning through the merging of discourses, between the researcher and the participants. The process of distanciation, the separation and the attempt to gain meaning, is also a process by which the researcher starts to define herself through the text, similar to Foucault's (1977/1967) explanation of the relationship between text and the potential for creating new knowledge.

**Collecting Photographs**

Participants took photographs to represent things they identified as relevant to their everyday lives or to represent how they go information about a thing. As representations, the photographs were intended, by participants, to "mean" something and were signs, or contained signs and, furthermore, potentially were symbols or contained symbols. In other words, the intentionalities behind photographs marked them as a legitimate source of experience, as a valid representation of an apprehended thing. Furthermore, the potential of photographic representations to contain structurally recurrent signs, recognized as symbols, rendered the photographs as useful tools for analysis as both markers of experiences and as anchors connecting experience to the material reality. Researchers (e.g., Davis, 2010) have used imagery to help participants recall an event in constructivist research. Davis has described her use of imagery, which were participants' paintings, as an anchor. The purpose of using photography in the

current research has been informed by constructionism and was explored as a way to bind a participant's experience of an object to a specific historical moment in in which that object was perceived and in a way that can also be transmitted through time.

**Data Collection Procedure**

Formal data collection spanned eight weeks. During Week 1, I met with participants to provide more information about the nature of the research, address their questions and concerns, and obtain informed consent. (See *Appendix B* for a copy of the informed consent form). After addressing concerns, we assembled and tested cameras. As a group, we chose a week day, time, and place to hold weekly group discussions.

During Weeks 2 and 3, participants were asked to:

1. Photograph 2-3 things (events, places, or objects) you find relevant or meaningful to your daily life.

2. Prior to meeting with the group, write a short description of each photograph stating what the photograph is meant to portray and why that thing is relevant to you.

3. Meet with us, as a group, to share and discuss your photographs.

During Weeks 4 and 5, participants were asked to:

1. Identify a concept or topic. Photograph 2-3 things (events, places, or objects) to represent how you get information about that concept.

2. Prior to meeting with the group, write a short description of each photograph stating your concept or topic and how the photograph represents how you get information about that concept.

3. Meet with us, as a group, to share and discuss your photographs.

For Week 6, I asked participants to select three group concepts or topics to

photograph. Participants chose to discuss Culture, Environment/Nature, and Sports. Using the agreed upon concepts, I asked participants to:

1. Choose at least one previously agreed upon concept. Photograph 2-3 things (events, places, or objects) that represent how you get information about that concept.

2. Prior to meeting with the group, write a short description of each photograph stating your concept or topic and how the image represents how you get information about that concept.

3. Meet with us, as a group, to share and discuss your photographs.

At the beginning of each group meeting during Weeks 2-6, I uploaded participants' photographs to my research laptop. As each participant discussed her photo, we passed the laptop with the image displayed on the screen to all other group members to ensure each participant had the opportunity to view the image. At the end of the group meeting, I collected participants' written descriptions. At the end of each meeting, I read participants' descriptions and wrote notes to myself, and to participants, directly on the paper. Then, I typed each written description and my notes for organization and preservation of data.

During Week 7, I met with participants individually to ask semi-structured open-ended questions about their experiences and photographs and to receive clarity and feedback about my interpretations (see *Appendix C* for interview questions). During the interview, we reviewed their collection of shared photos on the project laptop. During the meeting, I also returned their original written descriptions, keeping only typed copies of their and my words.

During Week 8, we met as a group to upload the images to an online photography

international forum. The original purpose of incorporating the online component was to explore how participants' represented and communicated their photographs in an online, international community setting. The online component was not fully explored as a primary event of data collection.

## Data Analyses Procedures

I used a combination of content, phenomenological, and hermeneutical analysis. Using three methods enabled me to apply varying levels of interpretation and represent the many dimensions of participants' interactions with information. Content analysis was used primarily as a prelude to the other methods. Identifying the occurrence and co-occurrence of words created a type of semantic "cluster" of participants' experiences. The relationship among content was explored through phenomenological analysis. I used participants' actual words and linguistic expression to retain their voice and avoid decontextualizing their experiences. A broader interpretation of participants' experiences was explored through a hermeneutic analysis, a process in which I reviewed relevant literature to interpret socioculturally and historically contextualized meanings of recurrent, abstract expressions (e.g., education, development).

### Content Analysis

As Weber (1990) has explained, content analysis has been used for many purposes, two of which are to "reveal the focus of individual, group, institutional, or societal attention" and to "describe trends in communication content" (p. 9). I have used content analysis to mark things participants identified as relevant and to explore preliminary patterns and associations among objects.

Two primary types of content analysis are conceptual and relational. Conceptual

analysis focuses on either the existence or the frequency of a concept. In relational analysis, the objective is to understand relationships among concepts by using inferential statistical tests. Using statistical inference would be inappropriate for understanding "why" and "how" participants interacted with information. Instead, I have adopted a conceptual approach, and I have used phenomenological analysis to describe the relational meaning among objects. I used a combination of computer and manual coding and did not use pre-existing dictionary categories, which inevitably decontextualize words (Hogenraad, McKenzie, & Péladeau, 2003).

**Coding.** Level of analysis for coding was the document. Each image and each passage of corresponding text was considered a document. However, only text documents were coded during content analysis. Associated images were used to clarify meaning. I used a combination of automated and manual coding to refine concepts or themes interactively. Coding began during data collection.

Initial coding corresponded with research task and participant-defined concepts. At a minimum, each text document was coded as the participant-defined concept. In other words, I did not use my own judgment to evaluate the accuracy or applicability of the concept to associated text; this was a form of bracketing, similar to that which is expected in phenomenological research. For example, if a participant said her photo represented education, then I coded the associated texts as education. Documents were then coded based on word occurrence, associated image content, and data gained through informal interaction with participants. Commonly occurring codes and "clusters" pointed toward potential relations among concepts and possible identity themes. Relationships among concepts and deeper understanding of concepts required integration of findings from

phenomenological and hermeneutical analyses.

I modified the research task three times over the course of the project to gain more insight about participants' conceptual associations. To account for the shift, I created variables which separated text documents into three groups based on research task. The group variables provided a way to more cautiously compare and analyze both participant-defined and emergent concepts within and across groups.

The variable for Group 1 included data collected from all participants during Weeks 2 and 3. Group 1 data differed from other data in two ways. Participants were not asked to identify a central concept, and the task did not explicitly ask participants to photograph things that represented how they got information.

The variable for Group 2 included data collected from all participants during Weeks 4 and 5. Codes were drawn from 181 text documents and covered 29 explicit participant-defined concepts. The number of text documents about each concept varied from two to 20. From most to least commonly occurring (with the number of documents about the concept in parentheses), the concepts were Beauty (20), Money (16), Development (12), Environment (12), Food (10), Health (10), Talent (8), Culture (6), Family (6), Fashion (6), Knowledge (6), Life (6), Love (6), Music (6),  Religion (6), Technology (6), Treasures (6), Education (4), Entertainment (4), God (4), Sports (4), Value (4), Trust (3), Animal (2), Career (2), Royalty (2), Nature (2), and Survival (2).

Group 3 included data collected from all participants during Week 6. Due to the research task, Group 3 data focused on three concepts, interpreted loosely by the participant: Culture, Environment/Nature, and Sports. Participants focused on one or a combination of the three concepts. Of 88 text documents, 40 were about Culture, 42 were

about Environment/Nature, and 6 were about Sports.

**Reporting.** In the findings, I have reported, in percentages, two types of association between things:

- How often a specific thing co-occurred with other things. For example, "Student co-occurred with School (53%)". In other words, the concept coded as Student appeared in 53% of the documents coded as School.

- How often other things co-occurred with the specific thing. For example, "School co-occurred with Student (79%). In other words, the concept coded as School appeared in 79% of the documents coded as Student.

Associations have been reported for conceptual, not relational, purposes. For organizational purposes, I have separated associations as being either "At Least Half the Time" (50% or more of the time) or "Often" (between 25% and 50% of the time). Associations less than 25% have not been reported but were not considered insignificant.

## Phenomenology

In simplest terms, phenomenology is the study of experience. Sokolowski (2000) has described phenomenology as "the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience" (p. 2). Furthermore, "the core doctrine in phenomenology is the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional: it is essentially 'consciousness of' or an 'experience of' something or other" (p. 8). In the phenomenological sense, intention is a cognitive function denoting "consciousness of" (an object or thing). The importance of this explication is to understand that intention, experience, and consciousness are all

directed toward, and tied inextricably to, an external material object. Furthermore, the whole of an object is comprised of various parts. To experience an object is to intend, or to be conscious of, the present and/or absent parts of an object. The structure of experiences occurs through avenues of appearance such as perception, memory, imagination and anticipation.

The focus of phenomenology, however, is not on avenues of appearance. Rather, phenomenologists focus on an individual's articulation of what has been perceived or remembered. Language, our means of articulation, is the vehicle through which experience is given structure and humans assign meaning to objects. Deliberate, communicative acts constitute objects and give objects "the kind of identity that is presented, preserved, and transported through speech" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 92).

**Phenomenological method of inquiry.** Phenomenology is primarily classified as a methodology but has also been adapted as a method, as a set of steps used to analyze data. Phenomenologists have been reluctant to formalize such analytical procedures, "for fear that they [steps] will become reified as they have in the natural sciences" (Hycner, 1985, p. 279). Phenomenologists' reluctance stems from Husserl's (1971) criticism of scholars who are blindly taken over by positivist tradition at the expense of the methods more suited to understanding the eccentric, cultural, and historical aspects of humans being in the world. However, Hycner has argued, a set of general steps serves as a guide for people who are new to the research method and can be used without compromising the integrity of the phenomenon being explored. Similar to the methodological goals, the objective of the phenomenological method is to systematically uncover the structure of a particular experience. What follows is an explanation of each of the fifteen steps Hycner

has recommended and how I used his method to explore how Kenyan women interacted with and communicated information in situ.

The first step is *Transcription.* "An obvious but important step in phenomenologically analyzing interview data is to have the interview tapes transcribed. This includes the literal statements and as much as possible noting significant non-verbal and para-linguistic communications" (Hycner, 1985, p. 280). Accordingly, I digitally audio-recorded each discussion and interview. Then, I transcribed each recording. I took care to note pauses, discourse markers and moments of hesitation and considered these cues part of the communicative experience. Next to the transcribed next, I recorded notes about possible meanings, discrepancies, and points for further reflection.

In Step 2, the researcher attempts to neutralize predispositions about the data or accept what the participant says as true. The process is called *Bracketing and the Phenomenological Reduction*. Hycner (1985) has explained the phenomenological reduction as "suspending (bracketing) as much as possible the researcher's meanings and interpretations and entering into the world of the unique individual who was interviewed. It means using the matrices of that person's world-view in order to understand the meaning of what that person is saying, rather than what the researcher expects that person to say" (p. 281). Standing criticisms of Hycner's interpretation of the phenomenological reduction include the researcher's actual ability to bracket one's beliefs in this way and the necessity of bracketing because the researcher is an integral part of dialogic process. Hycner's has drawn his interpretation of bracketing from the field of psychology, and concerns regarding the ability of individuals living with certain mental disorders might have influenced the interpretation and application of bracketing in that domain.

As an alternative, I used Sokolowski's (2000) interpretation of bracketing, as focusing on the intended object as valid (not in need of verification) and not on whether one believes the intentionality is verifiable. By focusing on this structural element and on intended objects as objective correlates (of natural observation), I did not attempt to validate or falsify the accuracy of the intentionalities. Sokolowski's definition is drawn from Heiddeger (1988/1975), who has explained the phenomenological reduction as "leading phenomenological vision back from the apprehension of a being, whatever may be the character of that apprehension, to the understanding of the being of this being (projecting upon the way it is concealed)" (p. 21). In other words, reduction is acknowledging the apprehension of a thing as an apprehension offered, uncovered, by some person. The apprehension of thing exists and is, therefore, an authentically valid representation of a thing.

Step 3 is *Listening to Interview for Sense of the Whole*, accomplished by "listening to the entire tape [recording] several times as well as reading the transcription a number of times" (Hycner, 1985, p. 281). The purpose is to gain a sense of the context of the spoken and paralinguistic communication in relation to the task or question.

I listened to each interview a minimum of two times. I listened to some recordings additional times to discern and clarify voices that were difficult to interpret due to background noises and voice volume. In addition, I read each transcription multiple times to adequately understand the context in which each interview or discussion occurred. Context included (a) the topic or question as perceived by the participant; (b) the overt social characteristics of the setting, such as the multi-ethnic and-lingual characteristics of the group; (c) identity roles explicitly stated or eluded to in discussion; and (d) pragmatic

linguistic elements, such as mode, audience, and tone. I noted the contextual elements in the margins of transcriptions and referred to them when clarification of context was needed to accomplish later steps.

In Step 4, the focus is *Delineating Units of General Meaning*. Hycner (1985) has defined a unit of general meaning as "those words, phrases, non-verbal or paralinguistic communications which express unique and coherent meaning (irrespective of the research question) clearly differentiated from that which precedes and follows" (p. 282). Following his advice, I analyzed each communicative element of each document in order to determine distinct units of unique and coherent meaning (see Table 1 for example of units of meaning). At this point, the general units of meaning were comprised primarily of the participants' literal words.

The primary issue I encountered during this step was deciding what constitutes a unit of meaning. Hycner has confirmed that such an issue is common and has advised that, when the gestalt of a unit of meaning is in question, err on the side of caution by further delineating a unit rather than "subsuming and therefore obscuring apparently separate meanings" (p. 284). Furthermore, as the researcher becomes more engrossed in the data and develops an understanding of the context, units of meaning can be changed. Following his advice, I delineated ambiguous utterances into separate units of meaning. I re-delineated units of meaning as I (a) became more familiar with the method, (b) became more familiar with the data, and (c) became more familiar with the participants.

Step 5 deals with *Delineating Units of Meaning Relevant to the Research Question(s)*. Units of relevant meaning are derived from units of general meaning and are the units that answer or provide insight about the research question(s). For example, on

participant was describing the fact that her brother and her mother were constantly in her

life and they will always be there for her. (See Table 2.) I considered Unit 5 to be

Table 1

*Example of Delineating Units of Meaning*

| Unit | Unit of Meaning |
|------|-----------------|
| 1 | That's her family |
| 2 | Okay, her dad isn't there |
| 3 | He was at a meeting |
| 4 | This was her brother's birthday dinner |
| 5 | They went out for dinner, |
| 6 | because it's a family tradition to go out to dinner for birthdays and celebrate, |
| 7 | because it's special. |
| 8 | Brother was in kind of a bad mood because he fought with mom. |
| 9 | These guys are really tense. |
| 10 | As you can see, |
| 11 | they look tense. |
| 12 | She's the only one smiling, |
| 13 | because she has no idea what is going on. |
| 14 | She got to know later what happened. |
| 15 | They just had dinner. |
| 16 | After that, they had cake. |
| 17 | It was a good evening. |
| 18 | Despite the fact they weren't talking, |
| 19 | Whatever happened. |
| 20 | Mom is a constant |
| 21 | Brother is a constant. |
| 22 | This bond they have, |
| 23 | She always sees her mom |
| 24 | Always sees her brother |
| 25 | It's like they'll always be there |
| 26 | Doesn't see her dad often because he always travels |
| 27 | Her mom and brother, they've always been there |

different enough from Units 4 and 6 to mark as a unit. Considering the context of how the

photo was relevant to her, I then considered only Units 1-7, 15-17, and 20-27 to be

relevant units of meaning, relevant to her brother and mother being constants in her life.

In other words, I did not consider Units 8-14, 18 and 19 as essential to her experience of

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mother and brother as constants.

Step 6 suggests *Training Independent Judges to Verify Units of Relevant Meaning*. Hycner (1985) has added the analytical step to satisfy "experimentally-oriented

Table 2

*Example of Delineating Relevant Units of Meaning*

| Unit | Relevant Unit of Meaning |
|------|--------------------------|
| 1 | That's her family |
| 2 | Okay, her dad isn't there; |
| 3 | He was at a meeting |
| 4 | This was her brother's birthday dinner |
| 5 | They went out for dinner, |
| 6 | because it's a family tradition to go out to dinner for birthdays and celebrate, |
| 7 | because it's special. |
| 8-14 | Omitted |
| 15 | They just had dinner. |
| 16 | After that, they had cake. |
| 17 | It was a good evening. |
| 18-19 | Omitted |
| 20 | Mom is a constant |
| 21 | Brother is a constant. |
| 22 | This bond they have, |
| 23 | She always sees her mom |
| 24 | Always sees her brother |
| 25 | It's like they'll always be there |
| 26 | Doesn't see her dad often because he always travels |
| 27 | Her mom and brother, they've always been there |

researchers who are concerned about the 'subjective influence' of the researcher" (p. 301) and issues of scientific reliability. However, he has confessed to be "under no illusion that this will satisfy these concerns" (p. 301). While trained phenomenologists may argue about what constitutes a relevant unit of meaning, varying interpretations do not discredit findings. Giorgi (1975, p. 96) has clarified, "it is conceivable that another investigator could write a different structure of style, but my experience has shown that it is never wholly different, rather it is divergent because another investigator is looking at the same

data slightly differently" (p. 96). Giorgi has addressed two, not entirely separate points. One point is the researcher's role as an inextricable part of the interpretive, intersubjective experience. Secondly, the researcher who accepts all perceptions as valid rarely alters the *essence* of the phenomenon.

Further reasoning for their exclusion included lack of financial and human resources and, most importantly, the lack of theoretical necessity. Hycner's (1985) recommendation is aimed to pacify positivists is, admittedly, not in the spirit of phenomenological research, which is a reaction against positivists' view of objectivity and reliability. Both phenomenologists and hermeneutic phenomenologists have claimed value-free research is not only impossible but results "in the loss of certain kinds of knowledge about human experience, such as meaning-making" (Laverty, 2003).

Step 7 is *Eliminating Redundancies*. I eliminated clearly redundant units. I eliminated a unit when it did not differ in literal content, emphases (either because of number of times mentioned or the accompanying paralinguistic cues), or context from another unit. If I thought a seemingly redundant unit could be significant, I retained both units. The only unit of meaning I considered to be clearly redundant was 15, 'they just had dinner'. Of note, based on intonation cues in the audio recording and familiarity with the participant's style of communication, I did not take her statement to mean they had just, at that moment, had dinner. Rather, I interpreted her statement to be a repetitious statement about the fact they 'had dinner' to celebrate birthdays.

Step 8 describes *Clustering Units of Relevant Meaning,* or grouping units of relevant meaning that seemed to share a "common theme or essence" (p. 287). Hycner (1985) has explained, a common essence

emerges through rigorously examining each individual unit of relevant meaning and trying to elicit what is the essence of that unit of meaning given the context. For example, if there was a number of units of relevant meaning whose essence pointed to the importance of bodily reactions which occurred during the experience being investigated, those units of meaning could then be placed together under the cluster of 'bodily reactions'. (p. 287)

Context is vital to understanding what units seem to cluster and how many different clusters are necessary. Importantly, clusters are situation-specific, and units can be placed in more than one cluster. Placement is a process of constant reading of the transcript, units of relevant meaning, and possible clusters.

Individual judgment is usually required to discern which units might naturally cluster. Furthermore, clusters are not definite but, rather, interpretations of the experience in context at that moment. How units relate to the whole may remain somewhat ambiguous. Units of relevant meaning seemed to cluster around 'doing a family tradition' and the 'feeling her mom and brother will always be there'. (See Figure 1.) In the first cluster, her experience seemed to be focused on the fact this was a special occasion that the family always celebrated. That her dad was not present did not seem to alter carrying out the tradition. The feeling her mom and brother will always be there was related to the fact they have always been there and she sees them all the time. They are a constant in her life. Rather than being a distinct cluster of experience, the fact that she did not always see her dad and that he was not at the dinner seemed to further point toward how constant her mom and brother are in her life.

In Step 9, the research focus is to *Determine Themes from Clusters of Meaning.*

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Clusters of Relevant Meaning_____

 I.  Doing a family tradition

    A. Identifying her family (1, 2, 3)

    B. Describing the tradition (4, 5, 6, 7)

    C. Carrying out the tradition (15, 16, 17)

II

    A. They are a constant, she always sees them (20, 21, 23, 24)

    B. They have a bond (22, 1)

    C. It's like they'll always be there (5)

    D. They've always been there (26)

    E.  Her dad is not always there (26, 2, 3)

*Figure 1.* Example of Clusters of Relevant Meaning.

At this stage, "the research interrogates all the clusters of meaning to determine if there is

one or more central themes which expresses the essence of these clusters (and that

portion of the transcript)" (Hycner, 1985, p. 290). At this point, a central theme did not

seem to unite (a) doing a family tradition and (b) feeling her mom and brother with

always be there. I left each cluster to represent a separate theme

    *Writing a Summary for Each Individual Interview* is Step 10. After I analyzed

each transcript, I wrote a summary of the discussion and the possible themes. The

purpose of this summary was for me to regain sight of the whole and how themes fit into

the overall context of each participant's set of experiences and of the group's set of

shared experiences.

    In Step 11, Hycner (1985) has allowed the researcher to *Return to the Participant*

*with the Summary and Themes* to conduct a second interview, if necessary. My research

project required analysis of group discussion, written descriptions, and photographs collected weekly through Week 6. I interviewed participants during Week 7 to seek clarification on emerging themes.

Step 12 is *Modifying Themes and Summary.* When new data from discussions and formal interviews differed in any way from the original discussion, I repeated Steps 1 through 10 to regain a sense of the whole, and, when appropriate, I incorporated modifications. In several cases, their formal and informal feedback helped me regain a sense of their experience and the context of our query. Modifying themes was also a critical fusion of horizons. For the phenomenological method used for this project, I attempted to stay as true as possible to the voice of the participant without overtly interpreting statements according to the sociocultural and historical context, reserved for the hermeneutical method.

Step 13 is *Identifying General and Unique Themes for All Interviews.* At this point, two activities occurred. First, I identified and grouped themes which were common to all, most, or many transcriptions. In the example, the feeling her mom and brother will always be there was similar to experiences expressed by other participants, and I identified a general group theme on sensing a bond or connection with family members. When identifying general themes, I considered significant differences in context or wording. If I chose to include a theme which significantly varied in the group, then I noted any differing element. Secondly, I identified themes unique to a single interview, single participant, or minority of participants. I used these themes as counterpoints.

Step 14 focuses on *Contextualization of Themes.* "After the general unique themes have been noted, it is often helpful to place these themes back within the overall context

or horizons from which these themes emerged" (Hycner, 1985, p. 293). Basically, Hycner has reminded the researcher to contextualize the role of the phenomenon in the participants' live to ensure experiential themes were not stripped of important contextual meaning.

At this point, I deviated from Hycner's (1985) method. To fully contextualize themes, I (a) integrated findings from content analysis, which identified events, places, and objects, with associated phenomenological themes; (b) supplemented findings by interpreting participants' experiences within the associated sociocultural and historical context in which themes and associated objects emerged; and (c) grouped content, themes and context discourses by emergent identity roles, as identified implicitly or explicitly by participants and within which experiential themes were enacted.

Isolating a single identity is not possible (Gee, 2009/1990; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010). However, particular identity roles recurred in participants' experiences of various themes, and I found discussing recurring references to a particular identity was useful in exploring the relational experience of a thing and its meaning. The job was less difficult when participants' experiences of a thing, and the roles they assumed, changed between taking the photo and communicating the meaning of the photo in writing or with other people. Their awareness of the change was instrumental in understanding different roles.

After Steps 1 through 14 are completed, Hycner (1985) has recommended creating a *Composite Summary*, Step 15, of all the interviews and experiential themes is "helpful and instructive" (p. 294). The summary "describes the 'world' in general, as experienced by the participants" (p. 294).

**Hermeneutics**

Gadamer (1991/1960) has explained, "however much experiential universals are involved, the aim is not to confirm and extend these universalized experiences in order to attain knowledge of law – e.g., how men, people, and states evolve – but to understand how this man, this people, or this state is what it has become or, more generally, how it happened that it is so" (p. 5). He has argued, in seeking to find universal laws of behavior, scientists have overlooked a compelling, distinctive, and telling facet of human activity, which is the historical development of knowledge, including modes and methods of justification. A primary appeal of Gadamer's approach to hermeneutics is his insistence that historicity is part of consciousness. His view is different from the hermeneutical beliefs of, for example, Emillo Betti (1990), for whom historical consciousness is an external force, imposed on an objective thing, rather than part of the thing, as a whole (Palmer, 1969; Gadamer, 2006).

Part of the rationale Gadamer (1991/1960) has offered extends from the belief that all human behavior occurs in a unique, finite, sociohistorical context. Human beings exhibit unique behavior based on unique historical experiences. People who have shared more historical experiences will exhibit more similar behaviors to each other than to people with whom they have shared fewer historical experiences. Methodologically, the logic means several things. First, patterns of behavior will arise. Positivists' efforts to ascertain common behaviors are well-suited to uncovering typical and common patterns. However, people's unique experiences potentially lead to unique behaviors, divergent from the norm or what is expected. Positivist research tends to gradually and deliberately disregard outliers. Unfortunately, depending on the type of inquiry, outlying behaviors and activity might provide valuable insight about discontinuous knowledge or what is

more natural, less social, behavior. Finally, if people who share more similar historical experiences behave more similarly to each other than to people with whom they have fewer shared historical experiences, then looking at the historical context of the experiences as the object of analysis helps uncover how various patterns of behavior or activity have emerged.

  **Hermeneutic Method of Inquiry.** Gadamer's (1991/1960) research method is a response to the (mis)interpretation of texts, but the epistemological assumptions are applicable to human activity captured in other genre (Palmer, 1969). Ricouer (1981) has suggested the hermeneutic method is applicable to any form of communication which can be translated into text. Scholars have demonstrated the method using electronic mail and interview data (Lee, 1994; Paterson & Higgs, 2005; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; von Zweck, Paterson, & Pentland, 2008).

  The method is also applicable to non-textual aesthetic forms of cultural representation (Palmer, 1969). Language functions to transmit and perpetuate knowledge and culture through time (Neelameghan & Narayana, 2011). Evica (as cited in Neelameghan & Narayana) has asserted, "the continuity between speech, writing, print, books and libraries defines language's time-binding institutional function" (p. 18). Written and oral language, however, are not the only forms of time-binding communication. Symbols, in general, are time-binding and are rich vehicles for cultural and social knowledge. Intentional communication occurs through paintings and photographs, which become time-binding and embedded anchors between material reality and sociocultural and historical structures of reality. Davis (2010) has incorporated both verbal and visual symbolic expressions into the dialogic process of interpretation. In the

study, the image "served as both an anchor and signpost for organizing thinking and expressing" (p. 179). As an anchor, capturing the photograph binds the individual experience and expression to a moment in time. As a signpost, the photograph presents an opportunity to engage in a reflexive process and, retrospectively, constitute the self.

Anchoring, reflection, and reflexivity are parts of the recursive nature of the hermeneutical understanding. Often, hermeneutics and phenomenology are identified as two parts of the same coin, better understood as hermeneutical phenomenology (Ricouer, 1981). While I am in agreement, I have distinguished between the two methods in effort to rigorously represent participants' experiences of various phenomena by documenting, as much as possible, their experiences and my theoretical interpretations. Hycner's (1985) steps are well-suited for exploring participants' authentic experiences. By narrowly focusing the analysis to delineated units of meaning, the minute enactments of identity and activity become apparent. However, only through exploration of the embedded situations is it possible to interpret how the recurrent practices came to be. By separating the methods, I was able to capture participants' authentic experiences and apprehension of things around them by focusing on their words and the structures of experience they identified, and I was able offer my interpretation of the possible sociocultural and historical context in which it all makes sense.

The metaphor of the hermeneutic circle is often used to represent the cyclical nature of understanding. Bontekoe (1996) has reviewed the evolution of the hermeneutic circle, modified in attempts to fully represent motivation, processes of justification, actions, and linguistic dimensions. Radnitzky (as cited in Gustavsson, 2007) has offered a modified model using the metaphor of a helix, which is visually sensitive to the process

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of time, reflection, and reflexion.

Influenced by the idea of a hermeneutical helix, also referred to as a spiral, Paterson and Higgs (2005) and von Zweck, Paterson, and Pentland (2008) have developed a practical model of hermeneutical analysis. Their model visually represents how the researcher approaches an inquiry in the midst of existing constructs and with pre-understandings, which serve as a baseline for creating questions and interacting with possible sources of information. Creating the research questions is the first spiral, and the questions lead into the next spiral where researchers and participants engage in dialogue. Through dialogue, new questions emerge and lead to another spiral where themes and more questions are developed. The process continues until the inquiry is satisfied by an authentic model of the phenomenon. The core of the hermeneutic process is the fusion of horizons, between what is known and what can be known through dialogue and is the space where the whole and parts of a phenomenon are contextualized. From a practical standpoint, a fusion of horizons occurs when general questions are answered and replaced by narrow questions.

The hermeneutic method I have used, inspired by Gadamer (1991, 2006), recognizes the relationship between intentionality and historicity. The practical models offered by Paterson and Higgs (2005) and von Zweck, Paterson, and Pentland (2008) are methodologically valid and rigorous. However, the hermeneutic method I have used recognizes the differences between my emic understanding of participants' sociocultural and historical context and participants' etic understanding. In effort to stay as true to participants' experiences and apprehensions as possible, I used a method proposed by Hycner (1985) which allowed me to separate, as much as possible, the sociocultural and

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historical context. As the structures of experience of various phenomena began to

emerge, I used a hermeneutic method to explore sociocultural and historical components,

to which participants alluded. Based on a review of the literature and other researchers'

findings, I have explored the context as it related to participants' stated experiences. The

separation has allowed the researcher and the reader to critically examine the components

as possible, and valid, interpretations but, importantly, not totalizing the experiences or

claiming to represent the full range of possible experiences.

## Data Quality

Important to ensuring the quality of the research was providing a measure of

authenticity, or "certification of the researcher's actual presence in the field" (Gobo,

2008, p. 281). I made every effort to ensure participants' voices were heard, throughout

the inquiry and in the final documentation. To make my presence in the research process

known, I took care to record and describe the setting and fairly represent participants'

situations and context as fairly as possibly. In addition, I consulted participants

throughout the project to seek clarity and discuss preliminary findings.  During Week 7, I

met with participants face-to-face to conduct one-on-one, open-ended interviews, during

which I sought clarity on individual experiences.

The fact that I am American and have been influenced by a Western worldview

was acknowledged. To minimize imposing my own views on the data, I (a) documented

and used participants' own words, (b) carried out a combination of structured and semi-

structured interviews with open-ended questions, (c) auto-recorded interviews for

repeated review, and (d) took notes as a means of documenting my reflective thought

patterns. Careful documentation, collection, and reflection alerted me of my own biases

and thought patterns, provided opportunities for new understandings to emerge, and, above all, directed my attention on substance of participants' actions and statements.

Triangulation is a concept traditionally associated with positivist research. Triangulation can also be seen as a "craft skill" (Seale, 1999, p. 472) without methodological limit. Triangulation is "an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4). For hermeneutic phenomenology, sources and methodologies can be triangulated to expand the field of perception of an object, its manifold, as a preventative measure against becoming too narrowly focused on one line of inquiry and limiting possible ways of knowing.

Data was triangulated through comparing and consulting multiple sources. Principal sources of data included participants' photographs, written descriptions, and transcriptions of group discussions. Triangulation of principle sources was beneficial as the spoken, textual, and pictorial data brought different aspects of the phenomena into view. Other data sources were face-to-face interviews, informal interactions with participants, informal interactions with non-participants, and data collected about things to which participants indirectly referred. Regarding the latter, for example, participants photographed things at local events, which they may not have explicitly named, and I collected data on the local event to better understand the situation and context. Through informal interaction, I observed and gained insight about participants' living situations, family lives, and routines. When applicable, I used my knowledge of their situations to evaluate latent and implicit content.

Findings were triangulated using multiple methods. As a prelude to phenomenological and hermeneutical inquiry, content analysis served as a way to identify manifest objects and pointed to preliminary patterns of co-occurring words. Phenomenological analysis was used to elicit the relational meaning among objects based on participants' expressions. Hermeneutic analysis offered a means of further interpreting participants' experiences and the context in which objects became associated. Separating the methods enabled me to present a multi-dimensional view of participants' experiences.

**Limitations**

The group used English as the primary language of communication during the research project. English is a national language and the official language of administration. As such, participants communicated fluently in English, usually as a second or third language. Participants were given the option of communicating in English or Kiswahili, the other national language. My first language is English, and my ability to communicate in Kiswahili is limited. However, my research connections were willing to interpret communication in Kiswahili. Ultimately, participants chose English, and women sporadically integrated words or phrases from Kiswahili and their tribal language. While linguistic challenges were minimal, our differing worldviews may have limited the mutual understanding and interpretation of ideas.

A component not fully integrated into the findings was uploading photos to an online international photography forum. The uploading process was slow and exhausted the participants' patience. By the time all photos were uploaded, many participants did not feel like entering their keywords and descriptions. They decided to enter text later in small groups, one-on-one with me, or on their own. In the end, the time required to

complete the online task in the manner I had originally envisioned exceeded the amount

of time I had originally asked from participants. Despite the technological limitations, the

online component provided insight, in other ways, about how participants interacted with

information and served as a secondary event of data collection.

**CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

I have organized research findings by identity roles which emerged in situ. Emergent identities included Student, Friend, Family, Believer, Traveler, African, Kenyan, and Tribal. For each identity role, I have reported findings from content analysis, which included things participants associated with that identity role. Prevailing concepts from content analysis were School, Environment/Nature, Culture, Travel, Money, and Beauty. Less prevalent concepts also emerged and have been included. Next, I have reported findings from phenomenological analysis of recurrent experiential themes associated with the identity role. Finally, I have provided a sociocultural and historical context, based on literature review, which supplemented by interpretation of content and experiential themes.

**Being a Student**

**Content Associated With Being a Student**

Sixteen participants identified the role of Student. One-hundred-thirty-four documents were coded as Student. All documents referring to Class, Classmate, Classroom, Degree, Desk Mate, Lecture, Lecturer, and Major were coded as Student. The word student occurred in 17 documents and was also coded as Student. Student co-occurred with School (53%) and with the identity role Traveler (27%).

Documents associated with the following things were also associated with Student At Least Half the Time: Education (92%), Schoolwork (92%), Knowledge (90%), School (79%), Book (76%), Roommate (75%), Career (73%), Strong (73%), Gain (70%), Poverty (67%), Hard Work (64%), Employment (46%), Government (67%), United

Nations (67%), Diversity (67), Development (65%), Campus (59%), Land (62%),

Computer, (61%), Internet (57%), Future (57%), Hope (54%), Library (53%), Nation-

State (53%), Club (50%), Learn (50%), Jungle (50%), and Read (50%).

Often, documents associated with the following things were also associated with

Student: Entertainment (40%), Help (45%), Teach (40%), Encourage (37%), Society

(43%), Traveler (39%), Slum (40%), Construction (40%), Stress (37%), Indian (33%),

Calm (32%), Interact (31%), Money-Related (31%), Money (29%), and City (25%).

**School.** The word school appeared in 81 documents, which were coded as School.

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following things were also

associated with School: Government (67%), Schoolwork (67%), Society (67%),

and Health (54%).

Often, documents associated with the following things were associated

with School: Technology (45%), Hostel (44%), Class (44%), Education (42%),

Computer (38%), Travel (34%), Diversity (33%), Knowledge (33%), Home

(31%), Nation-State (29%), Community (27%), City (25%), and Safety (25%).

**Experiential Themes of Being a Student**

As Students, participants reported they "go to school", "get an education", "gain

knowledge", and "learn". They did their school work, which required them to read books

and use the computer. They also went to the library and attended conferences. They met

new people and interacted with other people. They also viewed interaction as a way to

gain knowledge and learn new things, especially about culture.

**Going to school.** Students described being in school and at school, and they also

described going to school. Participants' references to school included both abstract and

physical. Abstract references to school included "take your children to school" and "when I came to university". Sometimes, abstract references marked stages in life: "and I think I've grown up because when I was small, I used to think I want to go to university. Now, I'm here". Students also referred to school as a physical thing, such as a building or area. Examples were "all the schools I've gone to", "she stays outside school", and "in this school". For some Students, school was where they stayed or lived. In one case, school was described as a thing that "tries to make us learn" and "celebrated differences".

Conceptually, "going to school" implied a process which included education and knowledge. In a few cases, the three concepts were inseparable. One Student photographed a building on campus to represent how "school all through the years" contributed to her knowledge, "not directly but through the education." School was also represented by a photo of classmates and of Students going to class, accompanied by the description "Education: School to get knowledge".

Four Students directly associated going to school with future goals, such as "preparing for your future", "achieving our goals", and "what I want to be tomorrow". Three Students associated their specific degree with their future goal. One Student associated a degree with employment.

**Getting an education.** Education was represented by books, the library, a building on campus, students going to class and housing in one of the slums. Many participants saw education as a thing they got from going to school and that gave them knowledge. Examples included "all the schools I've gone to have contributed to my knowledge. They might not be directly but through the education' and education is going to 'school to get knowledge." Regarding a photo of textbooks, a Student commented,

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without books "you can get no education". To her, and other participants, books represented knowledge. Education was also linked to the future, as in goals or aspirations. For example, one participant explained education as "going to school to get knowledge, to empower yourself, to prepare for the future".

**Gaining knowledge.** Knowledge was most associated with education and school but also with culture and parents. Furthermore, one participant distinguished between knowledge gained in education and "everyday life" knowledge. Knowledge associated with culture was intercultural knowledge. Knowledge associated with parents was also called wisdom and contrasted with "what I know that was not innate".

*Going to class.* Knowledge was associated with going to class, which was associated with multiple objects and activities. One participant associated a photograph of an empty classroom with the concept knowledge and described a classroom as a place where she "spends most of her time gaining knowledge, learning new things, meeting new people, and discovering herself". Other participants' photographed classrooms filled with people and associated them with classmates or a particular course in which they learned knowledge about something (e.g., culture). One photo representing class was of a task or project completed off-campus. In one instance, a participant associated a stack of books, initially representing knowledge, with class and said, "I'm doing classes that are teaching me about my own country which I didn't even know at all, and I'm gaining new knowledge and loving it".

*Learning about culture through interaction.* In some cases, Students associated knowledge with culture, especially as a result of "coming to

university". Association was related to an integration of cultural topics into university curriculum and, also, Students interacting with Friends and Students in class and at school. University Students were required to take a specific intercultural communication course, which was "mandatory and forces students to learn about communication between cultures". One Student explained she thought, at first, the topic was "irrelevant", "general knowledge", or "obvious", but "if more people seriously considered following or applying the book then the world would be a better place to live". In another class on senior Students' experiences, one Student said she learned about "other people" and culture through "interaction", "sharing" past experiences, "listening" to what people say and think and "asking" questions. Interaction also occurred while waiting for the lecturer to arrive. One participant explained how her identity after coming to university changed from Tribal or ethnic to more Kenyan based on her interaction and Friendships with people from other countries and Nationalities. She still identified with her Tribal identity, but her National identity was more central.

**Doing School Work.** Students talked about doing their school work, referring to assignments, exams, homework, studies, and term papers. Using the computer and the Internet, reading books, and going to the library were associated with doing school work.

*Using the computer and Internet.* Eleven participants referred to using a computer or Internet to access different types of information, including audio, graphic, pictures, text and video. Eight participants photographed a total of 10 images in which a computer or laptop appeared. Participants described how they used a computer or Internet in their daily lives. Uses included news, music and

songs, videos and movies, storage, books and comics, games, school work, and communication. Seven times, use of computer or Internet was implied by references to iPod, Blackboard, and Facebook.

Three participants specified website as the subject of their image. One website was sponsored by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and recommended to or referenced for students as attendees of a Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) conference, sponsored by the United Nations (UN). Another website referenced was used because the participant liked how the source provided pictures of the expected outcome. One participant mentioned using the Internet to access online videos to learn how to play a guitar.

Three participants either implicitly or explicitly referenced Facebook. One image captured a computer screen shot of a digital album accessed via Facebook. One participant stated "people on Facebook really commented" on a self-portrait she had posted. Another person mentioned how Friends who cared about her remembered her birthday "without Facebook".

Three participants photographed an iPod, a music device used to store music downloaded from a computer or the Internet. An online learning platform called Blackboard, or Bb, appeared in one photograph of an electronic display screen, and the slogan "Bb Revolution" was displayed on the screen. The subject was technology and the screen, but Blackboard was mentioned and discussed as a thing affecting Students, as well as lecturers.

***Getting information from the Internet*.** Two women described computer as a thing that is used for other means, such as to learn, for school work or to

communicate. One participant perceived computer as a source of information, and types of use, including Internet access, were implied by statements like, "it's my source for news". Of note, participants did not distinguish between computer and Internet for every situation. Computer and Internet were almost entirely metonymically related.

Perceptions about Internet's nature were not consistent but not necessarily opposing. Internet was seen as having information. However, Internet was described both as a way to get information and as a place for information. For example, Internet was how one participant got information about something. One participant communicated with people via Internet. Two women described website as a place where information was or that had information. One of the same women described Blackboard as a thing that was used. Blackboard was not synonymous with Internet, but language used regarding Blackboard might be similar to the language associated with Internet. In other words, if Blackboard was a thing that is used, then, perhaps, Internet would also be a thing that is used.

***Internet as a quick source.*** Two participants referred to the Internet as a fast or quick resource, and the belief was not contested. Participants did not further explain the meaning, in context, of quick or fast. Possibly, Internet might have been considered quick because participants could physically access Internet more quickly than other types of sources, such going to the library or finding an expert to ask. Or, Internet might have been perceived as quick due to their levels of comfort or skill with Internet compared to other sources. Internet was also identified as reliable and as having both secondary and primary sources.

***Needing access to a computer or Internet.*** Another belief about computer or Internet was everyone has access to a computer. One participant said she could not do without her computer, which she uses for many things, and did not think anyone else could do without a computer, laptop, or thing like it. One participant said, "I guess everyone uses it [Internet]" and wondered what people would do without Internet. A point brought up in discussion was that all Students are required to use the computer for assignments.

***Books as knowledge.*** Seven participants photographed a total of 12 images of a book, course text, or textbook to represent how they get information. In most cases, books were knowledge. Two metaphors used to describe books are "books are knowledge" and "shelf of knowledge". The latter was in reference to a photograph of books on a shelf in the library. Students said books "give knowledge and information" and help Students with their assignments, majors, and what they are expected to know. In contrast, one Student said she "loves that there is no need for a television and books anymore" because she used her computer for everything. Another contradiction was, "you know how people say books are knowledge? Well, I tend to believe people have more knowledge than books. Information has more impact on you when you hear it from somebody else than when we read it in our books".

Participants also associated a book with culture and religion, and one participant referred to a book as a way to relax. Books associated with culture were a course textbook on intercultural communication and a set of foreign language study books which were also associated with education.

***Library as a place for knowledge and education.*** Students associated the library with knowledge and education. Library, as depicted twice by photographs of the library's exterior, was identified as a place where students did school work and got an education, books to read and entertainment. Students described the library as having "all the knowledge you want" and "where we get most of our stuff on education, for like terms papers and everything". When discussing where she got information on her major, one Student said she got all her information from a favorite website and "of course the library".

One photo of the university library's biometric fingerprint system was associated with technology, "the necessary evil". The participant described the system as frustrating when fingerprints were not read properly and resulted in entry and authorization problems. Showing a Student identification card was not an authorized form of identification, and security guards did not have to allow entry to Students with only a card. Sometimes, she explained, the frustration caused a Student to not come to the library at all.

Many special events have been hosted in or in front of the library. For example, the outdoor graduation ceremony took place directly in front of the library's main entrance, with honorary guests seated at the top of the stairs. Two students photographed things at a special event which took place inside the library. They did not explicitly refer to the library, but the experience was tied to the location.

**Money.** Money was experienced by Students as (a) a basic need for all activities, including housing, fun, fashion, and transport; (b) directly related to business; (c) a

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barrier to education; and (d) a result of education. Students described needing to buy basic items, distinguishing between a need and a want, paying bills, and spending money on transportation. They associated money with business, in either selling clothes or getting a degree in business, also associated with finance and budgeting. Students also expressed the difficulty of getting basic education without access to good health, living, and learning facilities. People who had poor housing and living conditions had less "hope" of "excelling" and "tend to be left behind when it comes to education". Some statements about education and money were (a) "money is the basic thing. The world basically revolves around money"; (b) "the concept of money started from my mom, and I think from her that's where I got the basic idea of coming to university and doing a degree in International Business"; (c) "is it a need or a want? That's one question that leads all my financial activities"; (d) "*matatus* will be there, and you don't have to spend a lot of money on taxis. You just pay a little money, and you'll be able to come to school on time"; (e) "you must not be a millionaire in order to survive because not all of us are lucky enough to be educated. You could sell second-hand clothes and, of course, take your children to school and live an ordinary African-man life"; and (f) "people say that rich people have good education. But these people don't even have the facilities, the books. If they had, I think they would be just as equal. They would be at the same position as the rich kids".

**Poor conditions and the government.** Participants' associations of poor living and road conditions with the government were connected to their role as Student in at least three ways. First, poor learning conditions in one school located in a slum area was described as "congested", and the Students "didn't even have classes. They learned in

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containers". They associated the lack of space to the government, who "offered land for constructing the school" which was very small. In addition, the Students did not have enough teachers. Second, on the way to school, Students experienced poor road conditions. They "wished" and "hoped" the government would provide "proper" roads. Two participants associated road conditions to "Vision 2030", the short title of Kenya's social, political, and economic policy. Third, as a Student, they learned about their nation and development issues in classes and at conferences. One participant learned from "listening to a lecture" about Kenya's development compared to another more developed nations. Based on what she heard in class and observed on the way to school, she felt "it's about time" for Kenya to develop its infrastructure.

**Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being a Student**

**On education in Kenya.** The purpose of education in Kenya has been primarily economic and social, tending toward human resources development. Prior to independence, professionals were trained to meet colonial needs in the religious, technical, and agricultural sectors. After colonial rule, the focus of education expanded to include social development, or education for personal enrichment and gain. Rharade (1997) has suggested the shift was inspired by human capital theory, "which held that education is a productive investment at the level both of the individual and of society as a whole" (p. 164). National education and training policy has continued to frame education as training for national human resource development (Lutta-Mukhebi, 2004). Kenya's higher education sector has integrated national economic policy into education discourse, which sets goals and standards for all accredited private and public institutions of higher education in Kenya (Mathenge, 2010).

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Initially, education reform for social and economic development emphasized structural change, reorganizing the number of years students spent at each education level. The goal was to increase the number of students who would attend secondary school and, at the same time, to focus secondary curriculum on skills necessary for profitable employment in the formal job market (Kivuva, 2002). The highest performing secondary students would apply to post-secondary education. Over the next two decades, national and local authorities modified curriculum and reallocated funding, but the overall promise for education to impact social and economic development had not been realized. In 1985, Kenyan adopted an 8-4-4 education structure, based on eight years of primary education (Standards 1-8), four years of secondary education (Forms 1-4) and four years of university or college education. At this time, basic technical skills for paid employment were emphasized during primary education, which would now function as a terminal stage for most students (Rharade, 1997).

Education has also been used to foster national identity. For example, Maeda (2009) has described the common practice of raising the national flag and singing the national anthem each morning at school. A portrait of the President has been hung in each classroom, also related to the observation that "nationalism was probably synonymous with a loyalty to their president…for 24 years until 2002" (p. 343).

**Education as knowledge-transfer.** Two experiential themes, 'gaining knowledge' and 'getting an education', were similar to the philosophy of education as Knowledge-Transfer. Experiences beyond the two statements were compatible with the philosophy. For example, one Student said she needed to find information about 'what we were expected to talk about' at an up-coming conference. The literature on Kenyan

education has suggested the knowledge-transmission style of teaching, as well as strict adherence to prescribed curriculum and textbooks, has been characteristic in many developing countries (Oplatka, 2003). The style has been accompanied by classroom climate, remnant of colonial rule, led by "an authoritarian teaching style focusing on memorisation and discipline" (Odhiambo, 2008, p. 418). As a result, students have adopted a receiving attitude toward formal education. Using a related metaphor, Chege (2009) has portrayed the Kenyan education style as similar to the "banking" concept of education. The popular metaphor is attributed to Freire (2004/1970, p. 72):

> Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing, the deposits.

**Authority.** Regarding authoritarian teaching style, Johnson and Miller (2002) have described the Kenyan power relationship between Student and lecturer as vertical, manifesting in the Student showing deference or respect to the lecturer. They have associated the vertical relationship or power distance with several observations. First, teachers' preferred teaching method has been lecturing or writing, verbatim, on the board what students should know for exams. They have described lecturers' stereotypical behaviors, such as rarely showing up for class or writing on the board without interacting with Students. In my study, only one stereotypical lecturer behavior was referenced. Specifically, two Students described moments when they were waiting for the lecturer.

One Student took an opportunity to photograph her Friends from class while waiting for the lecture, "who was late as usual". Another participant had someone take a photograph of her listening to music on her iPod in class which would normally be inappropriate but "was okay, I think, because the lecturer hadn't come yet".

**Lifelong learning.** To be fair, Chege (2009) has admitted education practices to be less stylistically oppressive under the Kenyatta regime than previous regimes. In support, the Student information practices women have described resemble a combination of learning models the World Bank (2003) has identified as traditional learning and lifelong learning. In traditional learning, Students receive knowledge from the teacher, who is trained and is the source of knowledge. Learners work individually, accomplish the same tasks as other students, are tested, and permitted to advance based on test results. In contrast, lifelong learning recasts teachers as educators, who guide people to sources of knowledge, develop individualized learning plans, and are, themselves, lifelong learners. In addition, people learn by doing, in groups, and through interacting. Rogers (2004) has criticized the framework for being crude and oriented toward economic development. However, the simple framework sufficiently describes how lifelong learning methods have been integrated into women's traditionally-oriented curriculum. For example, Students described interacting with classmates in class, participating in service learning, and having class in applied settings.

Two additional experiences about education stand out, going to school "to empower yourself" and poor children being "left behind" in terms of education. The phrases, in their respective situations, are similar in language to renowned neoliberal, education agendas devised by powerful, international actors like the World Bank and the

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UN and nationally adopted by many countries, including the USA. For example, empowerment discourse appears in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) *Education For All* (2000), *Lifelong Learning* (Medel-Añonuevo, 2002), and *Information For All* (Longworth, 2006) agendas, which are textually intertwined with information society discourse. Being "left behind" and issues of equality and opportunity is familiar to U.S. education policy, namely the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which specifically states the purpose of related education initiatives to the "disadvantage" is "to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education" (Title I).

**The library.** The USIU library was constructed with the support of a $1,750, 000 dollars through the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) (Ranneberger, 2007). The "fully modern" library has nearly 144,000 print volumes, over 4,600 audio visual recordings, 21 online databases, and Wi-Fi Internet access. At the time of the research, USIU hosted the national Maktaba Award event sponsored by the Kenya Library Association (KLA). Their library was awarded the "best academic and best overall library" (USIU, 2011, "Fact Sheet").

As an accredited institution, the library was "a quiet and convenient place for study and research" (CHE, 2007, p. 9). The library provided "varied, authoritative, and up-to-date information resources" (p. 6). At the campus library, students were expected to maintain proper "discipline" (USIU, 2011, "Rules and Regulations") through respectful use of the spaces and resources and maintaining "good order and silence".

The campus library was presented as the center of academic and university life. Course textbooks were purchased and distributed by the library, and students needed

authorization and to be in good financial standing to access textbooks and other collections. Special events were held inside and outside, facing the library. For example, graduation ceremonies took place outside the library, where officials and distinguished guests were seated in rows at the top of the stairway entrance, opposite to graduates at the bottom of many, polished white steps.

**Impacts of the text, computers, and people.** Students' perception about books appeared contradictory. Books were viewed as central to education, and Students 'used course texts all through' their education. Participants used books, supplied by the library, for most of their classes and associated their textbooks with their classes and education. However, one participant made the comment that books were no longer necessary because she uses the computer for everything. Another line of inquiry left unanswered by discussion was the impact of format on the learner. For example, one Student argued people have more knowledge than books. Her experience was associated with attending a UN conference and hearing UN department experts talk about development issues. She had read about the issues on a UN website and in various publications and considered these resources valuable. However, she believed information had more impact when heard (from another person) than when read in a book.

**Exam orientation.** One participant photographed a group of Form 4 Students who lived and went to school in one of Nairobi's slums. She emphasized the fact they "learn in containers" rather than classrooms and do not have enough teachers. Her role was to teach them "learning techniques" to enable them to excel and pass their exams. Another role was to "give them hope" that they "can make it", just as others from their situation have made it. I interpreted part of the impact of her interaction to be the

importance of them passing their Form 4 examinations, which determines their eligibility for further education. Specifically, at the end of Form 4, Students must pass the Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination to be eligible for post-secondary education, including vocational training, technical training or university/college. Advancement from primary to secondary to higher education has been based solely on Students' examination scores and has been highly competitive (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007). Furthermore, based on social and economic factors, only about 10% of students who passed the KCSE entered university or college (MHEST, 2008). In summary, her helping them pass their exams was related to their ability to change their situation, to "make it" out of the slum, and to have an opportunity for upward socioeconomic mobility.

**Time consciousness and time management.** One participant also photographed a watch, a gift she was given by a friend from the USA when she was in Form 4. She recounted the importance of the watch in helping her to be on time to class and when timing herself. Both activities were associated with her ability to excel. Being on time to class was a recurrent theme in her, and one other Student's, role as a university Student. The ability to be on time was also directly related to her role as a Traveler to school. Another participant photographed a watch she associated with being "time-conscious", taking advantage of the time we have because we do not know when our time will end.

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**Being a Family Member**

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**Content Associated With Being a Family Member**

Eleven participants referred to their role as a family member. The word family occurred in 24 documents. Family and specific family members were mentioned in 88

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documents. Dad, mom sister and parent were mentioned most often, followed by cousin, brother, aunt, grandmother, niece or nephew, uncle and grandfather. Eighty-eight documents were coded as Family. The number of documents in which the word and the identity role appeared was equal, but actual documents varied. Often, family co-occurred with Love (26%) and two other identity roles, Traveler (26%) and Friend (25%).

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following things were also associated with Family: Connection (64%), Traditional Attire (67%), Love (66%), Tribal (52%), Wedding (50%), City (50%), and Support (50%).

Often, documents associated with the following things were associated with Family: Employment (46%), Hard Work (42%), Interact (38%), Home Place (37%), Friend (31%), Traveler (25%), Money-Related (27%), and Encourage (25%).

**Experiential Themes on Being a Family Member**

**Sensing a connection or bond.** As Family, participants felt a sense of connection or "bond: with Family. One participant felt certain Family members were "a constant" because she always saw them. She explained, "the bond we have…it's like they'll always be there…they've always been there". She "can count on them for stuff". Another participant described how her brother interacted with her niece – he "was there during birth", "loves his daughter very much", and 'he has that, that bond between father and daughter". She wanted a partner like him. Another person shared a picture of her father holding her as a baby and said, "it shows the special bond that I have with my dad". He "grounds" her, and the photo reminded her about his role in her life and her Family. One of her keywords was "love", but she did not use the word love in her description or discussion. One participant shared a photograph of her Family, and used the keywords

"sharing", "family" and "unit", although she did not use "unit" in her written description or group discussion. One participant photographed a bush to represent different types of relationships, including marriage, Friendship and adoption. She used the keyword "unity" and the metaphor, "no man is an island". She added, "in life…you interact with people of all kinds…to have so much interaction and still breathe represents unity", and "it being green, to me, means that they help you grow".

Participants associated Family with home, or the variable Home Place. Similarly, participants referred to Friends with whom they lived as Family. For example, Students who lived at school and were separated from their parents, siblings, and extended Family members considered their closest school Friends to be their Family. In some cases, their closest Friend was their roommate. Participants who considered their Friends to be like Family also associated the relationship with love, support, and encouragement. For example, about her two closest Friends, one participant said, "I love them because they're like my sisters". One of the Friends was actually her similarly-aged cousin.

**Learning by imitating or modeling.** One participant photographed her Family, both "immediate" and "extended". She said, "I think our family teaches us a lot about love because…they're the first people we interact with and a lot of what we learn is from them. And, we imitate what they do". Another participant entitled a photo of her sister, "role model". Her sister had "many ups and downs, troubles", but she was "patient and strong at heart" and "managed to finish her degree course and graduate". Participants associated "wisdom" with Family and religion. They considered their parents to be wise, and their Families wanted them to have wisdom. One participant considered her parents to be "the wisest people on earth", and she learned from their mistakes so she did not

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"fully repeat them".

**Learning about money.** Participants learned about money and finance from their parents, and their parents also paid their school fees. One participant associated poverty, or her inability to understand poverty, with Family, saying, "the fact they are Kenyan, a woman, someone's sister or mother doesn't even affect us. When did other human beings become irrelevant and invisible because of poverty?" In her discussion, she also mentioned telling her mother about what she had seen and thought. In another instance, a participant consulted her dad about the undesignated dumping sites she saw on the way home. She did not understand why people dumped their garbage or why the government does not clean up such sites because "we pay taxes".

**Working hard.** Working hard was a value. Participant admired their Family members who worked hard, and associated working hard with school and employment. One participant distinguished between working hard at school and resting at home. One participant entitled a photo of her mom, "Superwoman". Her mother was "hard-working", "passionate", "loving", and "caring", and she "could make a way out of no way, a way out of jungle…she's a superwoman in her own way".

**Practicing tradition and culture.** Family traditions and cultural traditions were both mentioned. The traditional attire associated with Family was correlated with wedding. In other words, when participants mentioned wedding and Family, they also mentioned traditional attired. Family and Tribal identity were also associated in the same context as weddings and traditional attire. Tribal identity was associated also associated with Family when discussing cultural objects and using a Tribal language.

**Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being a Family Member**

While all social institutions are naturally dynamic, the role of Family in various aspects of social life has undergone moments of rapid change, both during and after colonization. For example, Chesaina (2004) has suggested the introduction of a new, European education system significantly diminished the important role of Family and community in imparting and instilling values to children. Instead, children spent most of their time at school learning new models of behavior, which were crucial for future employment, and adapting to new social institutions. Wanting their children to prosper, mothers had "preferred seeing their children reading in the evenings rather than recounting and listening to stories" (p. 166).

However, the value of family has persisted. McCormick, Omosa, and Alila (2008) have identified Family's role in developing and maintaining social networks for employment and business opportunities in Kenya. They explain one reason Family continues to be a central force is the collectivist characteristic typical in Kenyan culture. Collectivism, in contrast to individualism, elevates group over individual interests. For Kenyans, the first collective group, or "we", learned is Family, from immediate to distant relatives. The concept is supported by one participant's observation, "the first people we interact with" is Family. Over time, a collectivist mindset expands and adapts to accommodate new types of community, such as school or workplace (Hofstede, 1997). As McCormick, Omosa, and Alila have pointed out, Hosfstede's definition of collectivist mentality is similar to the widespread African notion of *Ubuntu*, a philosophy usually interpreted as "I am because we are". The many interpretations and applications of Ubuntu philosophy are related but not limited to the popularization of the concept by President Thabo Mbeki and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who framed Ubuntu as a

mechanism for national reconciliation and unification (More, 2004).

## Being a Friend

### Content Associated With Being a Friend

Fourteen participants identified as Friend. Seventy-two text documents were coded as Friend. As a word, friend occurred in 68 documents. Often, Friend co-occurred with the identities roles Family (31%) and Student (28%).

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following things were also associated with Friend: Trust (87%), Support (67%), and Ask (50%).

Often, documents associated with the following things were also associated with Friend: Fashion, (47%), Happiness (47%), Indian (44%), Realize (44%), Society (43%), Encourage (37%), Love (37%), Roommate (37%), Stress (37%), Tribal (34%), Class (33%), Muslim (33%), Togetherness (33%), Interact (31%), Schoolwork (27%), Hope (27%), and Family (25%).

### Experiential Themes of Being a Friend

Most commonly, a participant's identity as Friend was represented by an image of a person whom the participant considered to be a Friend. The identity was also represented by a sentimental object, such as a gift. Actions associated with Friend were being with, encouraging, loving, interacting, supporting, and trusting. The importance of Friend was related to daily interaction with Friends and, sometimes, with new people and having help with school and in new situations.

**Friends becoming Family.** As Friend, participants were taught "how to deal", "how to cope with different people, different characters", and given advice about life. Friends were a source of support and encouragement who shared problems and helped in

stressful situations. One participant explained, "you can't share some problems with your parents because they aren't with you. You are always with your friends in school. You can share your problems with your friends". Participants referred to their close Friends as Family, as teachers of love, trust, patience, and cheerfulness. Friends they considered to be Family were people with whom they practiced love and trust. "Friends are important in the sense of it is with them that we practice what we have learned about love from our family and through our early years", and a Friend "is someone who you don't have to love but you grow to love". In several cases, participants described their Friends as "sisters" and associated the relationship with love.

  **Realizing new identities.** Meeting new people and becoming Friends with other Students gave participants with different cultural and National identities various opportunities to interact, ask each other questions, and realize new perspectives. Through interaction, one participant explained, she has "learned how we are all similar and different in terms of culture". One participant discussed how, prior to university and still, her parents expected her to have only Friends from her Tribe, although she always had Friends from other Tribes. After coming to university, she explained, "now I have, it's like nationality. I have friends of nationality not of ethnicity".

  Another participant explained her experience as Friend with someone she met during her first year as a university Student. Being a Friend with a Student from a different Tribe and having positive experiences changed her and also her mother's beliefs about the Friend's Tribe. A group member asked, "let's say your mom has the mindset that another tribe or whatever is bad, is that what you thought, as well, before?" She agreed and defended her mother's concern by explaining, "it is understood…it is not my

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mother only. I believe also they [people from her tribe] have that mentality." However, after becoming Friends and visiting her Friend's home, she realized she had been told "a myth", and her mother was "losing that mentality, slowly".

**Students becoming Friends.** Participants mentioned several experiences about becoming Friends with classmates or other Students. Friendships were made when "coming to university", and their Friendships continued. Students met new people in class and had many opportunities to interact during class, while waiting for the lecturer, or in other situations. One experience contained an unexpected element. One participant and her Friend were sharing stories while traveling to school on the bus. She explained how they just started talking that semester because they were desk mates in class. In discussion, she referred to him as classmate and Friend, and her written description was focused on Friend. She discussed the experience of him telling her "his experiences with family". She said, "it was so amazing" because, prior to their discussion, she had chosen Family as her concept for the project that week. "He gave me so much advice on how to better relate with my parent", and "it was really nice learning from a Friend stuff I really didn't think I'd ever get from him". I categorized the experience as an indication of becoming Friend because Friends normally give advice, even about Family, but she was surprised. I recognized the surprising situation, coupled with her referential use of classmate and Friend, as finding herself in a situation which required considering a new identity with the person as Friend.

**Being affected by Friends**. One participant noticed a poster on her Friend's wall and explained, "it was quite. big. So, I was like, who is this? Because I didn't know him. So, they're explaining...they're telling me the way he really inspires them". Their

explanation "touched" her, and she shared a photograph of the poster with the group. In several cases, participants photographed things their Friend showed them, and the attributed meanings were based on statements from their Friend.

**Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being a Friend**

Friends comprise a significant portion of Students' peer group. Especially when Students live at school, their Friends help them cope with emotions, handle stress, and inspire different ways of dressing (Thuranira, 2010). These characteristics were typical of participants' experiences. The collective sense of "we" described as part of Family identity is useful interpretation of the described role Friends play, especially as Friends become more like Family. In contrast to the vertical power relationship Johnson and Miller (2002) has described as typical of Students and lecturers, the relationship between two peers is horizontal. The horizontal relationship facilitates equal interaction.

<div align="center"><b>Being a Believer</b></div>

**Content Associated With Being a Believer**

Thirty-two documents were coded as Believer, comprised of Religious references. Words coded as Religious were Bible, Church, Faith, God, Pray and Religion, and any reference to Holy Scripture or Supreme Being. Forty-five documents were coded as Religious, and 32 of the documents which conveyed a personal Religious belief were coded as Believer. Documents coded as Believer were also coded as Beauty (37%), Book (34%), and Believe (37%).

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Believer: Bible (82%), God (77%), Church (71%), Wisdom (57%), and Unique (56%). Often, documents associated with Book (25%) wer also associated

<div align="center">90</div>

with Believer:

**Religious.** Thirty-one percent of documents coded as Beauty and 29% as Book were also coded as Religious. At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also coded as Religious: Uniqueness (67%) and Wisdom (57%). Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Religious: Book (29%), Painting (29%), Beauty (27%), Hope (27%), and Believe (26%).

*Beauty.* Of the documents associated with Beauty, 31% were associated with Environment, 29% with Nature, and 27% with Religious. At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also coded as Beauty: Uniqueness (67%) and Jewelry (50%). Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also coded as Beauty: Color (45%), Nature (44%), Classroom (43%), Painting (43%), Religious (31%), Poster (29%), Shape (29%), Future (28%), Art (27%), Community (27%), Story (27%), and Environment (26%).

*Nature.* Of documents coded as Nature, 56% were also coded as Environment, 44% as Beauty, 38% as Color, 38% as Uniqueness, and 32% as Campus. The word tree was associated with 53%. The most common Color was Green. At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also coded as Nature: Plant (75%), Grass (67%), and Tree (58%). Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also coded as Nature: Conservation (50%), Natural (50%), Flower (46%), Color (45%), Uniqueness (44%), Wild (36%), Preservation (33%), Environment (31%), Beauty (29%), Classroom (29%), and Shape (29%).

**Experiential Themes of Being a Believer**

**Believing in something.** In general, participants believed everyone believed in something and in a Supreme Being, "whoever we perceive our Supreme Being to be". For example, one participant who chose the concept God said, "I bet you all have an understanding of it. Whatever religion you are, you all believe in a Supreme Being". In addition, having something to believe in was important. One participant stated, when people have no one, "they just turn back to the one thing that is above everything else". She believed, "we all need something to believe in, you know? Like, you have to believe there's something above all this". Only one participant said people who did not believe in her God were unbelievers.

**Believing in purpose.** Participants believed God made humans and things "differently for different purposes". Uniqueness or unique characteristics were special, purposeful, beautiful and "amazing". Sometimes, unique characteristics were shape or color. Things associated with nature were often described as being unique and beautiful.

**Worshipping somewhere.** Participants got information on a Supreme Being or Religion from a "place of worship" or "house of worship". One participant associated an image of a church with having faith, which helped her "continue in life" when she had problems. Photographs of a church and of stained glass in a church represented places of worship. Participants said temples and mosques were also places of worship and were places where people got information. One participant said she got information about what people believe about "their Supreme Being" from the inscriptions on the buildings, or the writings on the wall. Another participant said she got information about religion from being in the church and following the "protocol" during mass, which included "reading of

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holy scripture and singing praise songs". She added, "I like to think of it as a place where all are accepted, none rejected. A place of reflection and mediation". One participant also shared a photograph of her and her Friends "chillin" at church.

**Listening to and singing music.** Participants believed people got information about Religion from gospel, worshipping, and praise music. For example, one participant said, "I think every religion has some form of worshipping music that they sing during their ceremonies", including weddings and funerals. They believed music had the power to bring together people "of all walks of life" or "different race, religion, and culture". Photos of praise CDs and iPods represented music. One participant referred to singing songs from a hymn book.

**Reading religious texts.** Participants believed people got information about religion from religious texts or holy books, including the Bible, Torah, Quran, and Gita. Several participants believed every religion had a book to which they subscribe. Holy books were described as a thing that "dictates their lives", "gives them direction and perspective", "guides", 'encourages", and "gives hope to those who have none". They were "read", "followed" and "lived by". Participants referred to the Bible, also called the Holy Bible or Holy Scriptures, as a sign or symbol of faith or religion. One participant associated reading the Bible being filled with wisdom and understanding. She was encouraged after reading about people in the Bible who had difficulties "but they have overcome them and got solutions".

One participant photographed a poster with an excerpt from the Bible printed across the bottom. She discussed the image and liked how the "Bible verse" described the poster "in a really unique way". She specified the book, chapter, and verse but did not

quote the verse.

**Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being a Believer**

**The belief in a Supreme Being.** Participants believed all people believe in a Supreme Being. The belief is compatible with a proclamation Mbiti (1970/1969) has made:

> Because traditional religions permeate all the department of life, there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated, he takes religion with him to the examination room at school or in the university; if he is a politician he takes it to the house of parliament. Although many African languages do not have a word for religion as such, it nevertheless accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death. (p. 2)

Mbiti has focused attention on the African's experience of traditional religious beliefs, for reasons to which he alluded. However, I referred to his interpretation because it conveys a common thread between the modern experience of "traditional" religious beliefs, not mentioned by participants, and the practice of predominantly non-African religions, which is that such as Islam, of  in Africa are not. The common thread being, everyone believes in a Supreme Being. Not believing is not conceivable.

**Religion and Text.** Religion and text have become inseparable. Stock (1983) has traced the emergence of religion as a textual community. The recognition that ideological

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beliefs could be recorded, stored, and disseminated coupled with the recognition that competing ideological communities could do the same, gave rise to a mass output of religious textual documents. The power of the text as a form of social control was quickly realized and was particularly evident in colonization efforts.

Commeyras and Inyega (2007) have provided a brief historical context of reading in Kenya as associated to colonialism, through the administrative function of reading and to the role of European missionaries in both religious instruction and teaching reading. In examining the social impact of missionaries in Kenya, Sifuna (as cited in Commeyras & Inyega, 2007) has explained, as a result of missionaries' role in spreading reading, Christian identity became linguistically synonymous to reading. For example, "in the language of Ekegusii someone might ask, '*nomosemete*?' ('Are you a reader?'). This is the same thing as asking, 'Are you a Christian?'" (p. 261).

## Being a Traveler

### Content Associated With Being a Traveler

Seven women lived on campus, five lived with their family and were not required to pay rent and eight indicated they did not live with family and did pay rent. Ninety-two documents were coded as Traveler, comprised of references to travel, transport, road and mode of transportation. All occurrences of the words travel and transport were coded as Traveler. The word travel occurred in seven documents. Transport, as in mode of transport or transportation, occurred in 11 documents. In addition, most references to road, street and highway were coded as Traveler. Any mode of transportation was coded as Traveler. Most common modes of transportation included *matatu*, walking, car, bus and motorbike. 39% of documents coded as Traveler were also coded as Student, 25% as

Family, and 28% as School.

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Traveler: Safety (76%), Nation-State (44%), Diversity (50%), Land (50%), Home Place (50%), and Construction (50%).

Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Traveler: Clean-Dirty (47%), National Government (44%), Conference (43%), Development (40%), Kenyan (39%), Parent (38%), Kenya (38%), Money (37%), Hope (36%), Environment (35%), Class (33%), Indian (33%), Slum (33%), School (31%), Hostel (29%), Tree (29%), Community (27%), Traditional Clothing (27%), United Nations (27%), Housing (25%), and Stress (25%).

**Environment.** Sixty-two documents were coded as Environment and included documents identified by participant as pertaining to Environment or contained the word environment. Thirty-four percent were associated with Traveler, 31% were associated with Nature, 29% were associated with Campus, and 26% were associated with Beauty. 47% of documents contained a reference to Clean or Dirty, including the words bin, clean, cleanliness, dirt, dirty, dust, dusty, dump (site), garbage, rubbish, sanitary, sanitation, trash or waste. Ninety-one percent of all references to Clean and Dirty were associated with Environment. All occurrences of conservation and preservation were associated with Environment, and 32% were associated with a Tree.

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Environment: Community (64%), Tree (64%), Land (62%), Classroom (57%), Housing (57%), Slum (50%), and Wild (50%). Of the total number of times the word tree occurred, 64% were coded as Environment.

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Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Environment: Construction (40%), Natural (40%), Flower (38%), Safety (35%), Campus (34%), Grass (33%), Human (33%), Beauty (31%), Employment (31%), Development (29%), City (25%), Poor (25%), and Roommate (25%).

**Experiential Themes of Being a Traveler**

Traveling to class and school and around town was a significant aspect of participants' everyday life. Most women who paid rent lived in hostels or apartments located within about 1,000 meters from school. Participants usually combined modes of transportation to reach off-campus destinations. They primarily traveled via five modes of transport: bus, car, *matatu*, motorbike, and walking. Experiential themes that emerged as they described being a Traveler were (a) being in crazy traffic, (b) sensing a lack of control, (c) having a concern for their own or other people's safety, and (d) hoping or wishing for development.

**Being in crazy traffic.** One person drove her personal car around town. Another person mentioned her dad driving her to school. Other participants mentioned they drive, but not in town. Driving in Nairobi was described as "horrible. I'm always in traffic. I always just waste my fuel just sitting in one place, like, waiting, because there's always traffic". One participant photographed a major highway, and she remembered when she used to sit in traffic on that highway every day on the way to school. Other people doubted the highway in the picture was the highway she claimed because of the absence of traffic. She assured them and said the photo was taken on a Sunday, when there was less traffic. The absence of traffic and how "pretty" the highway was "without all the cars" gave her "hope" that they "were going toward Vision 2030".

**Lacking control.** Lack of control regarding the *matatu* industry was a common theme. *Matatus* were the most common mode of transportation. However, one participant who said she would always take *matatus* also described them as a "menace". She explained, the "touts are mean and want to put their anger on you, but you just survive. It's Kenya!" She also stated that mataus were hectic but did not explain why, and the claim was not challenged. Rather, the claim seemed to be shared by the group.

In general, participants described *matatus* as fast, convenient and relatively cheap. They were available 24 hours a day, and "you just pay a little bit of money and you'll be able to come to school on time". One person challenged the claim about *matatus* being cheap because the touts, who collect passenger fees, practiced authority to arbitrarily hike prices, resulting in prices as high as "50 bob" or "80 bob". When doing so, *matatus* became inaccessible to the "average Kenyan", who would not or could not afford to use a taxi. In other words, taking a *matatu* was the most probable or only option in some situations, and the fare did not always reflect this reality. Instead, touts have abused their authority

**Concern for safety.** One participant shared a series of photos on "transport culture". Her first photo was about Kenyans boarding *matatus* before the bus stopped, and her image depicted a passenger boarding or alighting while the *matatu* was still in motion. Another photo showed a man hanging on the back of a truck on the highway and represented how passengers without fare travel. One participant showed a photo of Kenyans traveling on the top of a moving train, and she described them as not taking their lives seriously. Another participant shared an image of a traffic accident caused by a *matatu* that over sped. She characterized the action as adversely affecting development

and biodiversity.

Students who lived near campus used motorbikes to travel between school and home. Students also used them for transport to the nearest *matatu* hub. Motorbikes charged more than university shuttles. They were faster in road speed and more convenient, as one did not have to wait for a shuttle to fill with passengers. During the timeframe of the project, a university student died in an accident while she was traveling as a passenger on a motorbike. Her death affected participants' perceptions of the safety and actual convenience of motorbikes. Her portrait was displayed in the cafeteria for a period of time, approximately two weeks, accompanied by a short biography about her and a brief description of the fatal event. Two participants indicated they had been friends with her. One person criticized people for taking motorbikes when running late because they take a risk when boarding. "We have seen people have lost their lives. Instead, we should cherish life by arriving on time, and also by using other modes of transport, like a *matatu*, cab or walking".

Two participants referred to using the university bus, which transported students to and from campus, stopping at pre-determined stops throughout the city. Another university bus shuttle service was designated to transport students between the school and the primary, off-campus hostel, which was less than 1,000 meters from the school's main gates. Two smaller shuttle services charged a small, set fare to transport students to a nearby residential area or to the nearest main road, located near a *matatu* hub. Most students used the shuttle bus in combination with another mode of transportation.

**Wishing and hoping for development.** Participants photographed and described things that represented their commute or that they saw while commuting. For example, 1

participant photographed a long, dirt road between the university and her hostel. She

entitled the image "dust" and wrote, "signifies journey home". She used the road every

day when traveling to and from school. The road was "always dusty". Dust got in her hair

and covered her feet, which she described as "irritating" and "embarrassing". She wished

the government would redo the road. Another participant wished the government would

provide better housing for "the majority of Kenyans living in slum areas".

One participant described a conversation with her dad. Although she usually took

the bus, he drove her one morning. He was shocked by the condition of the main road,

which had holes everywhere. She agreed and said the holes were always in different

places, and she could just "imagine the bus falling in one day". She was dissatisfied with

the pace of development and blamed the government. She hoped for two things, that the

roads were actually completed and that Vision 2030 would become a reality "rather than

a myth". Another participant shared a road clear of traffic, which was surprising. She

said, "I think it's really pretty now, minus the cars…I think we're going towards Vision

2030". Some people rolled their eyes or giggled. She responded, "hey, I have hope".

**Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being a Traveler**

**On development.** One way participants experienced development was in their

role as a Traveler to school and school events. Two Travelers referred specifically to

Vision 2030, and several other travelers associated things in their surroundings with

development and the role of the government. Many of their experiences with

development as Traveler were associated with the physical infrastructure, especially the

condition of the roads.

Kenyan's national development plan included goals for economic, political and

social development. The precursor to Kenya's current national strategic plan was the

Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation, 2003-2007

(Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2003). The recovery strategy formed the

foundation of the government's commitment to creating a modern, market-oriented

economy, becoming "a working nation" (p. v) and achieving the UN Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs). Vision 2030, the nation's long-term strategic plan, was

adopted in 2008, and aimed to transform Kenya into a modern, globally competitive,

prosperous, middle-income country by (Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2007).

The vision had

three pillars:

- Economic: "To maintain a sustained economic growth of 10% p.a. over the next
  25 years" (p. 2).

- Social: "A just and cohesive society enjoying equitable social development in a
  clean and secure environment" (p. 2)

- Political: "An issue-based, people-centered, result-oriented, and accountable
  democratic political" (p. 2)

Vision 2030 was segmented into 5-year, medium-term plans, the first of which

was implemented for the 2008-2012 timeframe. The objective of the first medium-term

plan was "to realize a higher and sustainable growth of the economy in a more equitable

environment, accompanied by increased employment opportunities" (Ministry of State

for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, 2008, p. viii). One of fifteen areas

the coalition government promised to pursue was Physical Infrastructure, which included

"strengthening the institutional framework for infrastructure development; raising the efficiency and quality of infrastructure as well as increasing the pace of implementation of infrastructure projects so that they are completed within the specified time frames" (Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030, p. x).

      **Economic development and transportation.** Travelers discussed several aspects of the transport industry. *Matatus*, including the actual van, drivers and touts, were one area of concern. Travelers described touts as aggressive and hiking fares arbitrarily. During the research project, fares varied according to route and time-of-day and usually ranged from ten to forty shillings. Travelers talked about touts raising fares from 20 Shillings to 50 or 80 Shillings. As a side note, a non-participant explained touts were required to pay a set fee, based on work-shift, to *matatu* owners. Any money the tout collected in excess of the set amount was divided between the driver and tout and was considered their salary. In addition to unpredictable fares, *matatus* notoriously oversped, and passengers boarded and alighted at non-authorized stops. Overall, Travelers conveyed a general lack of control over the industry and concern for their safety. At the same time, one participant expressed a sense of connection with the matutu industry, which I have also explored.

      After independence, the *matatu* industry emerged as an inexpensive means of transportation for urban commuters to travel to work. In 1973, President Jomo Kenyatta declared *matatu* drivers and touts to be hard-working entrepreneurs, important for economic development, and he excused them from licensing restrictions. They became the primary mode of transportation and accounted for 80% of public transportation in Nairobi (Mulama, 2004, February 23). Over time, social constructions of *matatus* as

entrepreneurial expanded to include violent, unruly and associated with organized crime (Mutongi, 2006).

As a private industry, *matatu* drivers and touts set their own fare, which increased and fluctuated drastically to as much as two-hundred-seventy shillings in 2004 (Mulama, 2004, February 23, 2004, February 7). To Kenyans and tourists, alike, *Matatus* had a reputation as being dangerous and risky (Mutongi, 2006). Mulama (2004, February 23) reported, "Kenya's public transport system is characterized by unruly touts, violence and robbery", and people were "used to touts abusing" them when they boarded. Over time, *matatus* became associated with vigilante groups, or *mungiki,* who allegedly charged *matatus* fees for driving or parking in certain areas (Mutongi, 2006).

Without regulation, the privatized, market-driven passenger vans, carried more passengers than physically possible, and bodies hung out open doors and windows. They notorious played loud music and drove at "life threatening speeds" (Mulama, 2004, February 23). In effort to "restore sanity" as well as "discipline and safety", the government instituted laws to regulate passenger load and speed and standardize appearances (Mulama, 2004, February 7). Furthermore, boarding or alighting at non-authorized stops was an illegal and enforceable by fine but frequently occurred.

*Matatus* were associated with popular, urban or youth culture (Mutongi, 2006). They were known for unique, exterior paint designs, such as graffiti, and other unique, interior features including stereo and video equipment to entertain passengers with loud music. On the exterior, *matatus* were "highly individualized, with paint jobs ranging from somber black to a Rubik's cube assortment of colours, or the sort of airbrushed creations normally reserved for prison tattoos or subway graffiti" (p. 550). Sheng, Swahili or

English sayings, including proverbs, biblical references and misogynistic statements, were painted on the exterior or appeared on stickers displayed inside. Of these characteristics, Sheng and loud music were most attributed to popular culture.

One participant loved taking *matatu* industry, as "hectic" as they were. She thought they were "convenient and relatively cheap" and said "I will forever take *matatus* to wherever". In discussion with the group, she alluded to the irony, "as horrible as it may seem, I…I…I do love them. I do love Kenyan *matatus*". She liked their convenience and inexpensiveness, "even though the touts, they're really mean at times, and they're always angry at something, and they want to just put their anger on you, but you still, you know, you just survive. It's Kenya!" While she was the only participant to "love" *matatus*, her experience was supported by widespread popularity and tolerance of *matatus*. Mutongi (2006) observed passengers supposedly hate *matatus*, "and yet they continue to employ this creature whenever it is convenient" (p. 549). The dissonance of *matatus* as 'thug' or 'entrepreneur', he suggested, was deeply-rooted in Kenya's transition from a colony to operating as an independent nation. Mungai and Samper (2006) explained *matatu* culture as predictable and predetermined. One result was the creation of the *matatu* tout as a stock character, "like the hare or the hyena, which behave in predictable patterns in Kenyan folktales" (p. 55). The interpretation of the tout as a stock character, as "just another one of those" (p. 55), made the recounting of horrible events and eventual future encounters with touts easier because passenger, in effect, practiced detachment and depersonalization of the event.

**Development and the environment.** Environment was associated with the Traveler identity. Participants' discussions about environment and nature overlapped.

For example, beauty, trees and flowers were associated with both discourses. However, they clearly differed in several ways. For example, conservation and preservation were always associated with environment, and only associated with nature about half of the time. Nearly all references to things being "dirty" or "clean" were associated with environment and hardly ever associated with nature. Construction, employment, development, city, and poor were all associated with environment, but none were associated with nature.

The differences between environment and nature were compatible Banerjee's (2003) critique of the discourse on sustainable development, embedded in development discourse, and the creation of environment as a thing that could be managed and dominated. Benerjee has summarized a trend explored in more depth by Macnaghten and Urry:

> The transformation of nature (depicted in European traditions as a 'wild, untamed', often hostile force) into environment (more 'manageable' and goal directed) is one of the hallmarks of modernity, in which domination of nature becomes a key indicator of human programs rather than a transformation the relationship between humans and nature. (p. 152)

## Being an African

### Content Associated With Being an African

Eleven participants identified the role of African. Twenty-nine documents were coded as African. All documents in which the words Africa or African occurred were coded as African. Of the documents coded as African, 58% were also coded as Culture, 38% as Tradition, 31% as Traditional Attire, 28% as Kenyan, and 28% as Cultural

Objects. Cultural Objects were material things representing culture not including attire.

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with African: Modern (83%), Traditional Attire (82%), Market (75%), Cultural Objects (73%), Western (60%), and Pride (57%).

Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with African: Tradition (48%), Painting (43%), Wedding (43%), Clothing (41%), Jewelry (40%), Culture (29%), Shape (29%), Society (29%), and Education (25%).

**Culture**. Fifty-eight documents were coded as Culture. I coded a document as Culture if the words culture or cultural occurred or if a participant identified the document to be about the concept culture. Of documents coded as Culture, 34% were coded as Tradition, 31% as Food, 31% as Tribal, 29% as African, 29% as Kenyan, 26% as Event, and 26% as Student.

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Culture: Classmate (100%), Modern (100%), Western (100%), Tradition (87%), Event (83%), Traditional Attire (82%), Indian (78%), Attire (74%), Literature (67%), Muslim (67%), Dance (62%), Painting (57%), and Market (50%).

Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Culture: Rural (43%), Society (43%), Community (37%), Song (36%), Story (36%), Diversity (33%), Food (32%), Shape (29%), and Jewelry (27%).

*Food.* Fifty-six documents were coded as Food. Documents in which the words food, dinner or lunch occurred were coded as Food. Documents in which a specific food was mentioned were also coded as Food. Ugali and cake were the most commonly referenced Food. Seventy-eight percent of the time, Ugali co-

occurred with Culture. Cake most commonly represented a special event, such as birthday or wedding.

**Experiential Themes on Being an African**

In the majority of situations, participants' experiences of being an African were associated with culture. One exception pertained to discussion of a book about "dead aid" in Africa. One reason she said the book was relevant to her was because the book was about Africa, and she was African. Another participant experienced being Black as part of being African.

Culture was experienced as African, Kenyan, and Tribal, which often overlapped. Participants described culture as a thing people "share", "pass on", "maintain", "instill", "value", "adopt", "copy", "let go of", "forget", or "lose'. A person who was "proud" of their culture "showed it off" and "represented it". People who did not show their culture did not appreciate their culture. In addition, culture was something that "happened every day" but "changed over time".

**Instilling culture.** Photographs of food, especially ugali, represented culture. Five participants shared a total of six photographs about ugali, a staple food in Kenya and other parts of Africa. Ugali "represents African culture" and is "part of the African culture". They explained, "most African societies eat ugali", and "eating the traditional black ugali for African…is part of instilling your culture and valuing your culture'. In Kenya, ugali has "no barrier on whether you're rich or poor because it's quite affordable".  For a Luhya, "ugali is considered, like, the most important meal"; "some food are appreciated more than others", and ugali was "like culture in terms of food'.

Ugali was associated with culture at a deep level, and not liking ugali was like not

liking one's culture. Initially, one participant said, "I don't like it…because I was forced to eat it in high school, non-stop, almost every day". Then, she quickly added, "I love ugali' because "it's part of the African culture". Another participant said, "I like ugali because I'm Luhya".

**Seeing culture.** Many things participants identified as representing culture were aesthetic. Clothing, beads, shoes, and other cultural objects, like gourds and pots, represented traditional culture. Traditional attire included *vitenges* and *lesos,* and even animal skin. Traditional attire was associated with special events, especially weddings. Women photographed wore bright, colorful, fitted *vitenges* which represented African style. *Vitenges* were traditional, but one participant said adding a hat in place of the traditional coordinating headband made the outfit modern. Another participant said, "that culture, that dressing, is very cool on ladies. It's really smart. I like it, and I admire it'". Notably, the women photographed were older than the participants. When seeing a young woman wearing a *kitenge,* a non-participant commented, "I wouldn't be caught dead in one of those".

**Adopting, appreciating, and representing culture.** One participant shared a photograph of Japanese and African students. She said, "in the modern culture, we no longer wear traditional clothes". In everyday practices, "most people have adopted the modern culture", represented by jeans and T-shirts. Muslims and Indians were portrayed as appreciative and proud of their culture because they wore traditional attire daily. One participant observed people carrying *kyondos,* or hand-woven African bags, and interpreted them as "actually starting to appreciate our own culture, trying to adopt it, show it off, being proud you're African". Another participant photographed a *kyondo,*

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saying it was the first African thing she ever owned. When she carries the bag, many people comment using phrases like, "I like your Africansim", "artistic", and "African woman". Both participants received their *kyondo* as a gift from their dads.

**Locating culture.** Locating culture geographically, in time, or in relation to other people was a primary experiential theme. In general, the idea of African culture was placed in stark opposition to Western culture when discussing cultural attire and practices. Participants associated African culture with traditional, rural, backwards, up-country, back in the day, before and then. Western culture was associated with modern, nowadays, today and now. African as "Other" to group members appeared through references to "we/they" and "us/them" and, also, by using African to denote "tradition". Notably, the distinction was not fixed, and "they" became "we" and vice-versa. One participant's description of African and "tradition" was

How people dress is part of their culture, or representing their culture. Today, Africans are trying to keep up with [represent] their culture, and show it is something. Western culture seems to have colonized us to the extent that we tend to forget about our culture. Nowadays, Kenyans are copying Nigerian dressing just to maintain their African culture. Western culture has kind of taken African culture away. Indian people dress in their cultural attire every day. Indian dressing is part of their culture, gives them their culture. Indian people will not forget their culture, in singing, food, dress, and everything they do. Indian people are proud of their culture. Kenyans have to keep practicing African culture, dressing, each day and on special occasions to maintain and pass on our culture.

In the excerpt, she referred to African, and Kenyan, culture as both "their culture" and

"our culture". She did not distinguish between African and traditional culture. Instead, she used African or Kenyan as counter to Western. She perceived adopting Western dressing as forgetting African culture. Essentially, adopting Western dressing was experienced as not being authentically African.

Two participants distinguished between African culture and traditional African culture. First, one participant photographed a painting of a traditional African woman fetching water with a child on her back. She confessed, "when I took the photo, I actually had nothing in mind. I just took it, but as I was writing about it, I starting to think…" She wrote, the "African culture, especially the traditional one, was really beautiful and it showed the togetherness of the community". With the group, she talked about women in Africa changed and pursued new roles, like "looking for jobs and still handling careers", and they "still have time to go back up-country, still farm". She did not discuss the change in women's roles as making them "Other" to African. In the second discussion, the participant referred to "traditional" culture and people "back in the days". She used "modern" to contrast "traditional".

**Being Black.** One participant described how the black color on the Kenyan flag symbolized the black people or skin of Africa. She explained that black people were discriminated in other nations. She was proud of her skin, and to be Kenyan. Other participants discussed having black skin but not as African. One participant remarked on being the "only Black one" in a photo of students who travelled to Egypt. She did not say if the other Students were African, but some were probably African. The third discussion about having black skin was in the context of Tribal identity, in which the participant was black and not brown, like people in another tribe.

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**Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being an African**

**'The West and the Rest'.** The central theme in development discourse is the positioning of the "West" as a dominant, central force by which the "Rest" of the world is measured and ranked (Hall, 1992). Implicit in development discourse is a chronological, progressive model of allegedly modern social, political, economic, and technological institutions. As clearly assessed by Lushaba (2009), development discourse "negatively defines Africa as a historical, underdeveloped, pre-capital, unindustrialized, pre-modern" entity and has pre-ordained Africa's future, "that future being capitalism, industrialization, development, in a word, modernity" (p. 13). In development logic, Africa discursively exists as a function of the West.

**What modern looks like.** Modern or modernity has been controversial and difficult to define concept, especially in colonial studies and critiques of development and progressivism. Rather than carving out a definition or, alternatively, using the term without regard for meaning, I have taken advice from Cooper (2005), who has suggested scholars "should listen to what is being said in the world. If modernity is what they hear, they should ask how it is being used and why" (p. 115). Participants used 'modern' to describe culture. Situations in which 'modern' was used were associated with African, Tribal or Student identity and dressing, a painting or a stool. Modern was associated with "now", "Western" and "not how it is anymore" and contrasted with "tradition", "back in the day", 'before" and "years ago". Essentially, participants experienced modern by observing the visual aspects of culture.

In a critical analysis of one post-colonial modernization projects, Schneider (2006) has explored the combination of development and "Western conceptions of what

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modernity does, and does not, look like" (p. 105). Schneider has focused on Tanzania's post-colonial efforts to 'modernize' the Masai and how a specific project, called the "Masai Progress Plan" or "Operation Dress-Up" mixed aesthetic cultural cues with progress and development. Traditional huts had been viewed as in need of development rather than practical, and the *lubega*, or toga-like dressing, had been interpreted as poverty rather than comfort and practical. Development had paired "absence of material means" with poverty and had disregarded the Masai's "often ample wealth" (p. 110). Ultimately, looking a certain way was a "liability" (p. 113). In an aesthetic economy produced by Western notions of development and progress, images of tradition represented the past and were the antithesis of development and progress.

**On being Black.** Several participants mentioned the being black or having black skin. Only one participant associated black skin to being African. I included her experience in the overall context for two reasons. Many people have associated being Black and being African, and many Africans have experienced being Black and being African. Ethnocentric scholars and philosophers (e.g., Jahn, 1961/1958) have observed being Black as a defining characteristic of the African experience, usually in reference to experiences of Sub-Saharan African. However, an important criticism of interpreting Black as African or African as Black has been the exclusion of a significant numbers of Africans who have not experienced being Black.

<div align="center">

**Being a Kenyan**

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**Content Associated With Being a Kenyan**

Fifty-six documents were coded as Kenyan. All occurrences of the words Kenya and Kenyan were coded as Kenyan. In addition, many references to citizen, government,

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leadership, nationality and taxes were coded as Traveler. Of documents coded as Kenyan, 30% were coded as Culture, 27% as School, and 25% as Development.

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Kenyan: Classmate (100%), Indian (78%), Muslim (67%), Nation-State (65%), Housing (62%), Slum (60%), Western (60%), Television (57%), Africa (56%), Construction (50%), and Market (50%).

Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated with Kenyan: City (42%), Development (41%), University (30%), Culture (29%), Rural (29%), Safety (29%), Talent (25%), and Wedding (25%).

### Experiential Themes on Being a Kenyan

**Feeling national identity.** Participants referred to themselves as "Kenyan" and as part of Kenyan "society". Feeling national identity was associated with geographical territory, citizenship and the role of the government. Images of the national flag or of things associated with development, such as roads or slum housing, evoked a sense of national identity. National identity was reiterated by "we", "our", and "us". They referred to "Kenya" as simply "the country", and the Kenyan coalition government as "the government". Discussions conveyed a general acknowledgement of representatives of nation-state as a source of government or authority. National identity was also symbolized by common cultural practices and trends. Weddings were common sites of Kenyan identity, as well as Tribal. Participants attributed the wedding practices, including food, dress and rituals, to Kenyan and specific Tribal practices, switching between the two identities with little to no distinction.

*Questioning tribalism.* Tension surfaced regarding two controversial

political topics, independence freedom fighters and post-election violence. One participant was doubtful about whether freedom fighters were fighting for "their country's freedom" or for their own freedom, and she commented on about the fighters' reemergence during post-election violence in 2007. A participant with the opposing viewpoint did not think their intention mattered. What mattered, to her, was their willingness to fight and die to change their position as slaves. She also believed post-election violence was about tribalism but a sense of national identity prevailed.

*Hoping and having hope*. A sense of "hope" was conveyed by most participants who referred to role of the government and binding national policy. They hoped or wished the government would build better roads, housing for poor people and education facilities for poor people. They hoped Vision 2030 became "reality, not just a myth" or had hope "we're going towards Vision 2030".

*Feeling disconnected.* One participant described a sense of disconnection with people living in poverty or who were disabled. She conveyed tension about how society identified with people in poverty and disregarded other possible identities, such as Kenyan or mother. She was confused because "the fact that they are Kenyan, a woman, someone's sister or mother doesn't even affect us. When did the other human beings become irrelevant and invisible because of poverty or disability? Myself, like many others, will excuse ourselves, saying someone will help her or it's not my problem".

**Proud to be Kenyan.** Being proud of Kenyan identity was specifically discussed

in relation food, music and sports as symbols of Kenyan identity. Ugali was a common symbol of identity. One participant explained making ugali for her friend's roommate, who was Japanese and wanted to taste ugali, "because she's heard about it". She taught the roommate how to make ugali, and she "was proud of making it…because it's a staple food, and even foreigners enjoy it". One participant had the opportunity to meet and have her photo taken with a Kenyan musical group that performed songs in vernacular. She said the "group makes me proud to be Kenyan because of their Kenyan songs and their heavenly voices", and she knew her mom would be happy to see the photo. Other discussions included Kenyan artists and support for Kenya's premier football team.

One participant associated the flag, and what the color of the flag meant to her, with pride. She was "proud to be Kenyan, and no one should make me feel like my skin make me afraid of them", and she was proud that, "as Kenyans, we cherish peace". Another participant brought up "post-election", and she attributed "post-election violence" to tribalism. She was confident Kenyans cherished peace because, "at the end of the day, it was sorted out…we still realized the Kenyans still cherish peace". She also associated the flag with love for her country and the independence freedom fighters' love for their country. She defended the freedom fighters' alleged love for their country when challenged by another participant.

*Kenya and the West.* Tension about being Kenyan, Indian and Muslim emerged. First of all, participants criticized Kenyans for adopting Western culture, especially in dressing. One participant said, "Western culture seems to have colonized us to the extent that we tend to forget about our culture. Nowadays, Kenyans are copying Nigerian dressing just to maintain their African

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culture".

*Kenyan, Indian, and Muslim.* Secondly, Kenyans were compared to Muslims and Indians. One person described her Indian friend, who lived in Kenyan but had Indian "roots", as culturally different but "very Kenyan". However, other discussions divided Kenyan identity from Indian or Muslim identity. One participant said, "Kenyans should find their traditional attire". They compared Kenyans to Muslims and Indians, who "appreciate their culture", "are proud of their culture" and "will not forget their culture" because they practice their culture every day in dressing, singing and food. This line of discussion associated being Kenyan with widespread, traditional cultural practices in place prior to Independence and becoming a nation-state. As a result, Indians and Muslims, regardless of citizenship, were excluded from participants' sense of being Kenyan.

**Becoming aware of being Kenyan.** Participants discussed the impact interacting with different people. At school, they interacted with people from different "walks of life", referring to other cultures, other nations and other continents. For example, one student kept a small Kenyan flag in her room at school, "that has people from all walks of the world". The flag reminds her, "I'm Kenyan among so many other people, so I don't forget my identity".

Several participants compared the experiences of being in a school with many Kenyans to being in a school with people from other countries. Going to school with more Kenyans tended to result in a stronger awareness of tribal identity. One participant explained, prior to university, all her Friends were Kenyan, and Tribe was the

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distinguishing factor among her Friends. At university, she had friends from other countries, and Tribe was not a prominent factor. She realized, "when I came to university, now I have, it's like nationality. I have friends of nationality not of ethnicity". In contrast, going to school with more people who were from countries other than Kenya tended to result in stronger awareness of Kenyan identity. One participant explained the impact of her experience of being one of three Kenyans in her primary school. Her non-Kenyan classmates were from different parts of the world. She though it was cool because "that's the only place where someone's Canadian and they were, like, literally born in Canada and then they came here, not like born here then went to Canada then came back and stuff". She said their differences were there but did not matter. Then, "'when I moved from there is when I started realizing that, okay, now I'm in a school and there's many different Kenyans". She learned about different Tribes, "some that don't like each other…some that do". She was sad because she "never knew any of that" until she moved to a school with more Kenyans.

**Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being a Kenyan**

**Nationalism.** Being a citizen, having a nationality, and being bound to a particular government are not natural phenomenon. The concepts nation-state and nationality are products of modern, development discourse. As such, nationality and Tribal, or ethnic identity, especially in culturally heterogeneous places, are often in tension. Mbiti (1970/1969) has explained, "these two levels do not always harmonize, and may even clash in open conflict" (p. 290). Calhoun (1993) has described the cultural paradox of nation-state:

We live in a world-system which is organized into states and which thematizes

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certain cultural differences as constituting "cultures," while others are suppressed as unimportant internal or cross-cutting variations. This world-system makes both nationalism and claims to ethnic identity as problematic as they are imperative, even while it makes it hard to escape enough from the power of received categories to understand why they are problematic. (p. 215)

**On Kenyan tribalism.** Adding to the problem of Kenyan national identity is the lack of a unifying set of cultural themes. In one of Kenya's leading newspapers, Ochieng (2011) called tribalism the "inevitable result of Britain having bludgeoned hitherto independent ethnic entities – with vastly differing fortunes in culture, demography and material accumulation – into a single colonial tyranny called Kenya" (para. 6). The resulting intra-national tribal conflict was a widespread effect of the European-style of forming nations. Attributed largely to the socialist policies and nation-building efforts of the country's first post-colonial leader Julius Nyerere, Tanzania was one of the few African nations to escape tribalism. In contrast, colonial and post-colonial politics in Kenya were based tribalism and the associated unequal distribution of resources. Other writers (e.g., Ikunda, 2011; "No Place for Tribalism", 2010) have opined on the politics of tribalism in Kenya. Instead of promoting a single national culture, Appiah (1996) has suggested a cultural framework of cosmopolitanism would promote a more inclusive and dialogic representation of multiple cultural identities.

**Nation or Tribe?** Many participants identified as both Tribal and Kenyan. When Tribal and National identities conflicted, the issue seemed to be negative perceptions of tribalism, not Tribal identity. For example, post-election violence was attributed to "tribalism", which the participant saw as negative and overcome by a sense of Kenyan

identity. Scholars and national bodies (Ashforth, 2009; Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation, 2008; Lafargue, 2008; Ndungu, 2008) have examined the role of tribalism in Kenyan politics, the 2007 Presidential elections, and the 2007 post-election violence. One participant saw her parents as "tribalistic", and she criticized their expectation her friendships be based on tribal affiliation. During two separate informational conversations, I was told that learning a specific tribal language or using a tribal language excessively was, sometimes, interpreted as tribalistic, rather than cultural, behavior. Ultimately, Tribal and Kenyan identities were not incompatible. However, Tribal identity in the form of tribalism was not viewed favorably.

**Ethnic Cleavage.** Holmquist and wa Githinji (2009) suggested Tribal or ethnic identity in Kenya was the default political cleavage and "rationally embraced by citizens" because of the "absence of other forms of political identities, discourses, and organizational vehicles at the national level" (p. 102). Ajulu (2002) has suggested a similar theme. Prior to the elections in 2007, the international community assumed Kenyan institutions were "moving forward" (Holmquist & wa Githinji, p. 104), especially in terms of economic development. However, weak political oversight during non-election periods and socio-economic disparities dismayed citizens. Disappointed with the leadership's actions after the election, and in the absence of an alternative binding discourse, citizens cleaved to ethnicity to meet their needs.

Initially, KNBS decided not to collect citizens' Tribal affiliation in the 2010 census. They reconsidered after pressure by the international community, who said such data was important for historical purposes. Based on reports from the Director General of KNBS, more than half of the Short Message Service (SMS) texts Kenyans sent regarding

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census results were inquiries about tribe populations ("No Room for Tribalism", 2010).

**Kenyan Culture.** One area of cultural tension is among Kenyan, Muslim, and Indian culture. While one participant has distinguished between cultural background and Kenyan nationality, most participants discuss being Kenyan as a cultural identity separate from both Kenyan Muslim and Indians culture. As a result, when visually comparing themselves to Muslims and Indians, women see themselves as forgetting or not appreciating their own culture. Like African, the dichotomy of modern and traditional is also implicitly bound to the notion of Kenyan culture.

The unspoken assumptions pointed toward the impact of colonization. First, under colonial rule, Kenyans were encouraged to exchange their cultural attire for colony-appropriate attire. Indians received less pressure to do so. Indians and Muslims have maintained many of their visible cultural traditions.  Second, Indians were brought to Kenya for business administration purposes which prepared them for better paying jobs after independence. Third, Indian Kenyans and black Kenyans were socially segregated, and black Kenyans were positioned as the lowest social class. The social segregation has been maintained, to some extent, at the community level.

## On Being a Tribal Member

### Content Associated With Being a Tribal Member

Twenty-nine documents were coded as Tribal. References to the words tribe and tribal and to any specific tribe were coded as Tribal. Tribes referenced were Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Akamba, Luhya, Luo, and Masai Mara. Kikuyu occurred in 66% of documents. Less than 25% were associated with each other tribe. Thirty-two percent of documents coded as Kalenjin were also coded as Kikuyu. Tribal was associated with Family (52%),

Friend (34%), and Student (28%).  Tribal was also associated with Culture (62%),

Society (34%), Tradition (31%), and Cultural Objects (29%).

At Least Half the Time, documents associated with the following concepts were

also associated with Tribal: Nationality (100%), Cultural Objects (73%), Wedding (62%),

Classmate (50%), Dances (50%), Market (50%), and Modern (50%). All documents

associated with a grandparent, 60% about Aunt, and 43% about Cousin were associated

with Tribal.

Often, documents associated with the following concepts were also associated

with Tribal: Traditional Attire (45%), Tradition (39%), Story (36%), Culture (31%),

Jewelry (30%), Clothing (29%), Rural (29%), Society (29%), Song (29%), and Human

(25%). Thirty-three percent of document about Uncle, 32% about Mom, and 27% about

Dad were associated with Tribal.

**Experiential Themes on Being a Tribal Member**

**Hearing about tribal culture.** In discussing how they learned about Tribal

identity, the majority referred to some aspect of hearing about Tribal affiliations or

culture. They heard about Tribal identity directly from Family. They learned about Tribal

identity by relating experiences to stereotypes they "heard" from "people" in society, by

listening to music and from their "Other" Friends, or Friends from another Tribe.

*From family.* Participants heard about Tribal culture from their Family,

especially their grandparents and parents. One participant shared a photo of her

mother, grandmother and aunt, who was also mom's cousin. She explained,

"mostly, I ask my mom about stuff to do, the Kamba culture. Then, when she gets

confused or something, she says, ask your grandmother". She found funny the

fact her mom needed to resort, in turn, to asking her own mom (the grandmother) for answers. Her photo was taken when visiting her grandma. She said, "we sat there, and then she was telling me stuff about Kambas and children and what they do and don't do. It was really nice storytelling. It was really nice".

During discussion, one participant commented on someone's story about learning the Kikuyu name and meaning of a flower. She said her grandfather told her the same name and meaning, and she has never forgotten.

Participants also talked about their parents' beliefs about tribal affiliations or reinforcing stereotypes. One participant said her initial belief about another tribe were based her mother's beliefs and guidance. Another participant was critical of her parents' Tribalism, and she tells "them to their faces". She did not like them pushing her or expecting her to have all friend of the same tribe, and she never did have friends from only her tribe. One participant described her mom as "a Kikuyu, and all of you know how Kikuyus are with money". Everyone laughed. I asked her to explain. She said "Kikuyus are basically people who know how to make money and to spend it wisely". Her mother emulated the stereotype, and she never forgot her first finance lesson, instilled beginning at a very young age, "is it a need or a want".

Another way parents influenced their daughters' knowledge of tribal culture was through passing on knowledge about their Tribal language. Some participants understood or spoke their Tribal language in varying levels of fluency. In two instances, participants described objects their fathers gave them

and used the Tribal language words for the object.

*From "people".* Participants also learned about Tribal identity from stereotypes reinforced among or between tribal members. The source was ambiguously identified as "people say" or implied as general knowledge. For example, 'people say it [*mursik*] has charcoal, but, apparently, it doesn't have charcoal. It's just very tasty". Stereotypes about Kikuyus were most common. For example, "you all know how Kikuyus are with money", and "people of other tribes, like the Kikuyu, are known to be *Mungiki*". Regarding the latter stereotype, the participant also said, "clearly, I found that was a myth".

One participant, a Kalenjin, talked about how she used to be a champion runner. She realized her speed when she went to a Luhya school. She said, '"there's this theory that I was told which explains why Kalenjin people run faster", a phenomenon she said people are trying to explain. One participant brought up a Luhya stereotype about ugali being the main part of meal. I heard the stereotype from other Luyhas who explained a meal without ugali was just a snack.

*From music.* One participant constantly listened to music by a contemporary singer who sang in her Tribal language.

*From "other" friends.* One participant "got this myth" from a Friend about the Tribal name and meaning of a flower. Her Friend was from that Tribe, but she was not. Another participant traveled to her Friend's home for an extended Family event. She was in a photo with the Family. She was from a different Tribe, and, after looking at the photo, she realized she was much darker

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than everyone. She was mad when "everyone was commenting…we can't see you".

**Practicing culture.** Participants also learned about Tribal identity by practicing their culture, by participating in daily practices or attending special events. Weddings were the most commonly discussed site of cultural practice. During a wedding, participants described the role of community, Family, food, clothing and dancing. Participants described weddings as being part of culture, and references to African, Kenyan and Tribal identities occurred. Wedding was said to be about the "culture", the "community", and "society". Music and dancing were described as compulsory, and music without dancing did not occur. Dancing was a sign the community consented to the marriage. Participants emphasized the role of aunts. They greeted aunties of the spouse and welcomed them to the Family. One participant shared about her mother "gate-crashing" at weddings to collect *lesos*, a symbol of traditional cultural attire. At weddings, the bride gave *lesos* to attendees, especially aunts, as a sign of thanking the "community" for taking care of you "as a part of the society".

One participant mentioned practicing Tribal culture daily. Specifically, she linked daily practice to going to primary school and living in the rural area affiliated with her Tribe and being part of her culture. About her culture, she said, "I know much about our foods, what rurals like about their culture and everything, so it's, like, part of me. I don't have to search anywhere. I already have it in me".

## Sociocultural and Historical Context of Being a Tribal Member

**Tribal stereotyping.** Stereotypes were discussed during formal and informal interactions with participants and during informal interactions with non-participants. A

common stereotype was that Kikuyus are good with money. Kikuyus were reputedly good businessmen, which was also associated with many Kikuyus being politicians. I interpreted the stereotypes not as true but as existing in society. Ajulu (2002) has attributed the association of Kikuyus and money to the Kikuyu's traditional location, Central Province, as being the center of capitalist penetration due to colonization. Shaw (1995) has explained the stereotype about Kikuyus being good with money or with business to the Mau Mau uprising. After independence, characteristics generally associated with the Mau Mau, a primarily Kikuyu group of freedom fighters, were transferred to the Kikuyu tribe, at large. Shaw, who lived with a Kikuyu family in the 1970s, quoted the father's stereotype of Kikuyu, "The Kikuyu do business; we make money" (p. 179). The father contrasted the Kikuyu stereotype with one about Mau Mau's main enemy, the Luo, who "are good at school; they go to university" (p. 179). Notably, the Mau Mau was not the only group to fight for independence, and not all Kikuyu who fought for independence were Mau Mau. The roles of tribalism and nationalism in the struggle for independence were controversial and complex. However, they were not the theme of my research, and I have not attempted to uncover or represent the historical pattern of either.

**Community and society.** Participants used the words "community" and "society" in reference to either a group with shared a culture and cultural practices or a group living in a specific location. Participants associated the specified the cultural community group as a specific tribal entity, Kenyan or African group, or a combination of the groups. The cultural group either implicitly or explicitly included Family members. When community referred to people living in a specific location, the community was usually not their own

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community. For example, five of 11 times the word community denoted "community service" events which took place in slum areas. The word "society" did not occur in the context of community service. All but two occurrences were cultural, such as "Kenyan society" and "Kalenjin society". The two non-cultural uses of "in our society" were associated with Students' shared situations at school, including help in new situations and going to class.

**CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

**Significance of Findings to Research Inquiry**

The unifying theme of my research has been to explore how participants experienced objects and communicated the meanings of their experiences to other people. To gain insight about the inquiry, I have asked specific questions of the data:

- What did participants identify as relevant to their everyday lives?

- How were objects related to each other?

- How did participants experience objects?

- What discourses or institutions were associated with or instantiated by interaction with various objects?

Answers to the questions did not appear in neat packages. Instead, I have found participants experienced objects and the relational meaning among objects through multiple, overlapping identities. Although many more identities emerged, I have explored the most recurrent identities, namely Student, Family, Friend, Believer, Traveler, African, Kenyan, and Tribal.

Findings regarding the last question have provided insight into the sociocultural and historical context in which multiple identities were enacted, objects were recognized, and meaning was assigned. A unifying discourse, in which many assumptions were embedded, was development. Development discourse was primarily experienced as a Traveler, a Kenyan, an African, and Student, but the influence reached other identities. The prevalence has confirmed other scholars' (e.g., Banjeree, 2003; Cooper, 2005;

Cowan & Shenton, 1995; Lushaba, 2009;) critiques of development as dominant force in global affairs. Essentially, the instantiation of development across most, if not all, identities has qualified development as a meta-narrative, which Lyotard (1984/1979) has described as an oppressive, totalizing ideology, or story, by which all stories are understood.

In the following sections, I have explored one possible interpretation of participants' experiences, as embedded in development and other discourses. I have outlined how situations, objects, and contexts uncovered various information practices, including sites of practices, legitimate sources of information, and activities.

## On Information Practices: An Overview of the Findings

Women interacted with information through enactment of various identities in situ and context. Many sociocognitive practices McKenzie (2003a) has described, including active seeking, active scanning, non-directed behavior, and by proxy, were observed. I have attempted to indicate such occurrences. For example, one way Believers interact with information is through the cognitive process of active scanning at church. However, as cognitive processes, they were not the focus of my query. Rather, I have aimed to describe the information practices, or recurrent information-related activities, and the social practices in which they are embedded. My research inquiry asks why do Believers seek information at church, and how does the sociocultural and historical context legitimize this recurrent activity?

### As a Student

As Students, participants primarily interacted with information to complete school assignments, find out what they were expected to know, and prepare for or achieve their

future occupational goals. As a secondary motivator, they interacted with information to relax and relieve stress. Students were usually expected to (a) attend class, (b) listen to the lecturer, (c) read course and additional textbooks, (d) go the library to obtain course textbooks, (e) go to the library to obtain additional books required to complete assignments, (f) complete assignments, (g) use the computer to type term papers. For certain classes, Students were expected to (a) interact with classmates, (b) attend conferences, and (c) participate in community service.

Course textbooks, lecturers, experts, websites, Friends, and classmates were legitimate sources of information. Friends were important sources for relaxing and relieving stress. Students found information on schools news, events, and extracurricular by scanning or monitoring messages written on bins, notice boards, and electronic displays. Students listened to what experts, lecturers, and parents said about school-related topics, especially development. Experts', lecturers', and parents' authority was a combination of (a) experiential knowledge of the topic, (b) how well experiential knowledge confirmed or contradicted Students' physical observations of the topic in their own surroundings, and (c) affective impact of the experiential knowledge on Student (e.g., inspirational).

Campus, school-related events, classroom, class, and library were legitimate sites of Student information practice. Entry into the gated campus required authorization, through displaying a university identification card or proving administrative permission. Most Student activities occurred on campus. However, community service events, internships, and conferences took place off-campus. Community service has been integrated into the curriculum (Oanda & Chege, 2008). To fulfill community service

component, Students participated in clean-up activities or tutoring in nearby slum communities. Women's perception of "community" is likely associated with the university's community service learning component. In contrast, women's perceptions of society were tied to shared cultural roles (e.g., Tribal member) or as a Student. As part of a course, women traveled to a conference, sponsored by the UN, on achieving Kenya's MDGs by 2015. Classes were usually held indoors, in a classroom setting on campus. Some class (e.g., Hotel and Restaurant Management courses) met off-campus in an applied setting (e.g., restaurant). Students also worked on assignments in locations beyond the classroom. For example, Students worked on assignments for class at home or at the library.

**Traditional learning and lifelong learning.** In general, the knowledge-transfer or banking style of education was evident. However, Students' full range of experiences resembled a combination of what the World Bank has crudely described as "traditional" learning and "lifelong" learning. Similar to traditional learning models, Students received knowledge from lecturers in an authoritarian-style classroom setting, and all Students completed the same tasks. While engaged in community service, Students related to secondary Students' experiences of stressful examinations, which determined the range of future opportunities and 'making it' in life and, in the secondary Students' case, making it out of their slum. Barriers to secondary Students' learning were (a) lack of school facilities and classrooms, (b) shortage of or no teachers, (c) inadequate health facilities, and (d) no access to books. Learning study techniques would help them excel and give them hope for making it. Other practices Students' identified were indicative of lifelong learning practices, such as active participation through interacting with

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classmates in class, by attending conferences, through community service activities, and by learning in applied settings.

**Discursive perceptions of library, book, knowledge, and education.** Libraries and textbooks were symbols of knowledge and education. Students 'of course' got information from the library, which had 'all the knowledge you need'. Library and book clustered with other concepts, including school, class, university, assignment, and student. For Students, the instantiated cluster had a self-perpetuating type of legitimacy. The experience of one object, such as a textbook, was assigned meaning in the overall context of being a Student, who completed assignment, went class, or went to school. In situ, the occurrence of a textbook, the library, an assignment, a classroom, or a school building instantiated the role of being a Student. The binding elements of being a Student comprised of the role of the individual, how the object should be experienced, and the purpose of the experience. The observation that the library was promoted as the center of academic and university life, prestigious enough to host honorable institutional, national, and international guests, was also indicative of the contextual assumptions of library, as a social institution. Within the discursive cluster, especially the instantiation of the concepts of knowledge and education, Students experienced the library, including its collections and books, as a relevant and legitimate site of Student practice.

In traditional learning practices, textbooks and the library gained legitimacy, by proxy, through Students being required to obtain course textbooks at the library and through lecturers' referrals to obtain additional reading materials at the library. Jefwa (2009) and Ingutia-Oyieke and Dick (2010) have also found lecturers commonly refer Students to the library. The lecturer as an authoritative source has been generally

supported (Johnson & Miller, 2002; Jefwa, 2009; Odhiambo, 2008; Oplatka, 2003). In contrast, Thuranira (2010) has suggested Students and parents' harbor negative perceptions of teachers because teachers receive relatively low salaries compared to other professionals. However, Kenyan university professors received a higher salary and level of social respect than primary and secondary educators.

However, the genre of book was a contested object. In most situations, Students experiences books as knowledge. In one case, the computer was experienced as a replacement for books, and television. The contradiction sparked many questions. How is a book perceived? What is the nature of a book? How is a book used? How is a computer being used in ways comparable to a book?

Women used computers for academic purposes and personal entertainment. As Students, women accessed websites for class and used the computer for assignments (e.g., typing papers). At their university, they were able to access library resources from both on and off campus through Internet. However, findings did not suggest women used computers to access course textbooks. On the contrary, the library purchased and provided course textbooks to Students, who had paid their university fees. Primarily, women used the Internet and computer for videos, music, communication, and news. One participant used her computer to read comic books, and all other occurrences of "book" were physical objects and were associated with school, religion, or leisure. The one overlapping area between the physical book, as a sign, and other perceptions of a book (e.g., comic book) was leisure, more generally, non-academic use. Furthermore, the finding that women read for leisure or non-academic purposes has suggested the possibility of a reading culture in Kenya. A reading culture, as a cross-cutting practice,

has not been previously observed (Commeyras & Inyega, 2007).

Another possible influence on women's perceptions of a computer, books, and the Internet has been the international support and pressure for digital libraries and education (Gyamfi, 2005; Kavulya, 2008; LaFond, 2004). At the women's university, an online learning platform (i.e., BlackBoard) has been introduced and is in its early stages. In Kenya, other online education and library systems have been introduced with varying degrees of success (Amunga, 2011; Ayere, Odera, & Agak, 2010; Ondari-Okemwa, 2002) One Student described the mandatory online learning system as "the worst invention" for Students and lecturers alike, primarily because of the frustrations involved in using the system. Frustrations might be linked to slow network connection, a barrier also experienced in other universities (Ingutia-Oyieke & Dick, 2010). Introduction of ICTs in education, compared to other sectors, is a relatively new movement (Kinuthia, 2009). Students and teachers have not been made aware of how various ICTs can be used to support teaching and learning objectives (Ayoo & Otike, 2002; Kinuthia, 2009; Tilvawala, Myers, & Andrade, 2009).

**As a Family Member**

Legitimate sites of Family information practice included home, en route, and at special events. At home, women interacted as Family with immediate and extended Family members. Women enacted the identify role of being a Family member while traveling en route with Family members and in the absence of other Family members when attention was focused on gifts from Family members.

Participants talked to their parents about the observations they made about their surroundings and while traveling. Things they saw caused them to seek further

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understanding of information, and they integrated their observation, information provided at school (e.g., by lecturer), and their parents' comments. Some interactions with parents resulted from being in the same place, in a car or at home, with parents. In one situation, a father's reaction prompted a participant to merge information she received through enactment of multiple identities. While at home, women talked to their parents about things they remembered seeing or were thinking about. The cognitive process correlated with McKenzie's (2003a) description of connecting and interacting with information through non-directed monitoring.

The idea of unity or unit was associated with Family, and participants felt a sense of connection or bond as Family. Women's experiences supported the theory of family as the first 'we' group, a practice typically manifest in collectivist-type cultures. As Family, women practiced tradition and culture, especially at special events such as weddings, birthdays, and graduations. Special events occurred in public spaces, private spaces, the city, and rural areas. During special events, they connected with immediate and extended Family members, observed and participated in cultural practices, and listened to elder Family members tell stories of "what children do", or what values children were expected to emulate. Women gained knowledge, also called wisdom, from their parents. They attributed their parents' wisdom with making and learning from mistakes in the past.

Chesaina (2004) has suggested the importance of family in teaching values diminished after introduction of European-style education, which separated children form parents for much of the day and introduced new values. My findings have suggested elders, including parents and older siblings, were role models, represented important values, and influenced career aspirations. Women associated their Family with hard

work, strength, and love. In some situations, parents were experienced as a motivator or inspiration for pursuing a specific or desired career. Thuranira (2010) has reported similar findings. Furthermore, Kenyan Students' career choice has been influenced more by their parents than by their teachers (Osoro, Amundson, & Borgen, 2000; Thuranira, 2010).

**As a Friend**

Friends (a) helped with studies, (b) taught and practiced values, (c) shared problems, (d) helped relieve stress, and (e) helped in new situations. Sometimes, Friends traveled to each other's homes. Two primary sites of Friend information practice were school and home, including Family's home. The primary site of Friends' information practice was at school, which included campus, class, and hostels. In class, women either interacted with Friends or met and interacted with new classmates who became Friends. Women interacted with their Friends on campus, where they had lunch between classes, went to the library, or simply were with their Friends. They were Friends and Students with their similar-aged cousins. In most situations, propinquity, especially through physical proximity, was an expressed aspect of Friendship.

As peers, Students were the pool from which they drew Friends, who provided emotional and moral support. Findings supported other research about the influence of peers, especially when Students live at school (Thuranira, 2010). Specifically, their Friends helped them cope with emotions, handle stress, and fashion. At school, some Friends were like Family because they fulfilled similar roles. Classmates became Friends, and their relationship was legitimized through recurrent interaction, sharing new experiences, and supporting each other in ways similar to Family. Encouraging and supportive interactions with Friends helped build trust and respect, and women gradually

incorporated Friends into their collective sense of "we", as explained by McCormick, Omosa, and Alila (2008) and Hofstede (1997).

A primary characteristic of Friendship was interaction. Women interacted with Friends daily, over time, face-to-face, and on Facebook. When they were physically separated, they visited each other. The new collective sense of "we" was indicative of the important role of Friends in women's community or network of relations. They continued to model and imitate the values Family taught them, and they identified and practiced values with Friends, as well. They shared new experiences with Friends, helped each other with shared roles (e.g., Student, Family), and learned about other roles, such as Tribal and Kenyan.

**As a Believer**

Women (a) believed in a Supreme Being; (b) got information about their Supreme Being or learned about religion by going to a place of worship; (c) got information about their religion or 'what they should do' from their religious text, which they read or had read to them; and (d) got information by listening to or singing religious music or songs.

Legitimate sites of Believer information practice were places of worship and nature and/or the environment. Places of worship included churches, temples, mosques, and any other place where people practiced religion. Religious texts and music were not necessarily separate from places of worship because ceremonies and protocol usually incorporated music and readings. Music was perceived as the most powerful part of the information practice. In places of worship, the religious text had a central role. For example, the Bible was a symbol of faith and an authoritative source of direction and guidance. Reading or having the Bible read to Believers gave wisdom, encouragement,

and hope. Symbols associated with a house of worship were a cross and writings on the interior walls or windows. Stained glass also appeared.

In addition to experiences as a Student and Family member, gaining knowledge was experienced as a Believer. Women identified this type of knowledge as wisdom. As a Believer, wisdom was gained by reading the Bible and learning from the ways biblical figures' overcame difficult situations in the past. Furthermore, the fact difficulties were overcome was encouraging.

Unique and beautiful objects in nature, sometimes overlapping with perceptions of the environment, enacted the role of Believer. Objects possessing a special quality to act or exist independently from humans were attributed to God's purpose and confirmed the existence of God. Objects possessing special or unique characteristics, in general or in a particular setting, also enacted the role of Believer.

**As a Traveler**

As Travelers, women were expected to get to and from a desired location and arrive on time, especially if going to class. To meet expectations, women needed to (a) identify a desired location, (b) select an appropriate mode of transportation, (c) assess the risks involved in traveling via possible mode, and (d) plan ahead to ensure timely arrival. Depending on the situation, including which mode of transport is selected, participants might be required to (a) negotiate or possess an appropriate fare; (b) interact with transport operators, verbally and/or non-verbally; (c) select which vehicle to board; and (d) know how to interact with other passengers.

As a Traveler, the primary sites of information practice were en route to and from locations. In addition, the objects and discourses Travelers discussed extend to the

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classroom and home. While en route, Travelers made choices about which mode(s) of transportation to use and which vehicle(s) to board. They observed the conditions of the road, traffic, driving behaviors, and accidents. They observed people living on the street in poverty, piles of trash in undesignated areas, and dangerous construction areas. Inside the mode of transportation, they experienced the condition of roads alone or with other passengers.

Travelers made decisions about mode of transportation based on need, availability, time, money, and safety. Often, women selected a convenient mode instead of a less expensive, less convenient, or safer mode. However, expense was an important consideration. In general, *matatus* were the most difficult and unrealistic mode to control in terms of safety and money, but they gained legitimacy by being available and convenient. In addition, *matatus* were closely tied to Kenyan culture and identity.

In the classroom, Travelers listened to their lecturers in class and compare what they observed to what they heard. They listened to lectures on national development goals, including development of physical infrastructure, economy, and good leadership. As Students, Travelers visited other parts of Nairobi to participate in community service activities and attend conferences. At home, Travelers tell their parents and ask questions about what they have observed en route. At home or en route to school, Travelers responded to their parents' reactions to traveling sights and conditions, consulted them for answers, and asked their opinions.

An example of enactment of multiple identities was the experience of development as a Traveler, a Student, and as Kenyan. When going to school and school events, women traveled on dangerous and unpredictable roads which were incomplete,

inadequately maintained, or, perhaps, indicators of progress toward Vision 2030. Women connected their transport experiences to nationality, national development policy, international organizations, and class lectures. For example, Students attended conferences and community service events sponsored by or affiliated with international actors (i.e., UN). Acronyms and logos of international organizations appeared in women's photographs, were displayed on websites and publications, As such, they were recurrent, even unintentional, reminders of development across situations.

**As an African**

Women experienced being an African at school, home, and public spaces, through observations and listening to people. As African, women were usually expected to appreciate and represent traditional culture. An area of tension occurred when women described the practice of being African. As African, they recognized modern culture as Western and recognized modern culture as not African. Essentially, the experience eliminated the concept of African and that aspect of their identity as authentically modern. However, one participant explicitly described African culture in terms of both modern and traditional, and another participant mentioned how to make traditional culture more modern, basically providing a space for traditional and modern to co-exist.

Women got information about being African from (a) what they heard people say, (b) cultural objects given to them by their parents, (c) observing cultural objects in artwork, (d) cultural attire, and (e) text. An important aspect of being African was culture, especially visual culture. Visually, traditional African and Kenyan cultural attire were contrasted with modern, Western attire. As Kenyan, traditional culture was visually contrasted with Muslim and Indian cultures. Women got information about modern,

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Western fashion from magazines and television.

**As a Kenyan**

As Kenyans, women were expected to (a) identify as Kenyan, (b) distinguish between Tribal from Kenyan identities in political situations, (c) distinguish between Tribal and Kenyan identities when interacting with people from other cultural backgrounds, and (d) represent traditional Kenyan culture through visible cues, such as dress and food. Women experienced being a Kenyan at home, school, and en route to and from school.

At home, multiple identities were enacted as women learned about values and cultural practices. Kenyan was not the primary identity emphasized but was usually enacted as a counter-identity or in cultural practices undistinguished from Tribal or African identity. At school, women participated in school events and curriculum which emphasized Kenyan identity. At school, women were encouraged to identify and unite as Kenyan, despite the role Tribal identity plays in politics and social life. In class and as friends, women interacted with people from different national and cultural backgrounds. Often, visual cues that countered conceptions of traditional Kenyan culture, such as Muslim or Indian attire, prompted the enactment of Kenyan identity.

Through observation, women saw development needs and goals not being met, or not being in a timely matter. They identified the government, from municipal planners to general leaders, as the responsible agent. They hoped or they had hope that the government would follow through with development goals. However, in the past, Kenyan leaders have failed to meet many of their promises or have even exacerbated social and economic issues. Vision 2030 was perceived as a myth and joked about as Vision 2050.

Singular experiences or moments of difference enacted an image of going forward, toward the future goal. They had hope they would reach the goal, or they felt "it's about time". As Kenyan, as citizens, women's expectations have not been met, yet. Essentially, that aspect of being Kenyan is experienced, in a way, as a temporally approaching phenomenon.

One participant experienced a disconnection with many levels of identity when interacting with information pertaining to poverty, framed by the current model of development and progress. She explained, "the fact they are Kenyan, a woman, someone's sister or mother doesn't even affect us. When did other human beings become irrelevant and invisible because of poverty?" The situation did not make sense to her, as a woman, Kenyan, or any other identity she possessed. She did not understand what her role was in connected to the poor person she saw. She did not understand anyone's role in connection to *that* person. Based on many possible scenarios, which she listed, there did not appear to be a solution. And, she did not understand how that was possible.

**As a Tribal Member**

Tribal members appreciated and practiced their culture. Sometimes, they were expected to create relationships based on Tribal identity. Knowing Tribal values and traditions required practicing Tribal culture daily, through eating or preparing cultural foods, or on special occasions, such as at weddings, where foods, dancing, music, attire, and other rituals were experienced. Rituals recognized the roles of Family members and community were practiced at special events. Women also interacted with other Tribal members at home, weddings, school, and in rural areas.

Home was where women interacted with older family members, such as parents,

aunts and uncles, and grandparents, from whom they heard Tribal values, traditions, and, sometimes, language. At home, Tribal information practices included listening to older family members. Women received information through storytelling, myths, and proverbs, and were expected to apply the meaning of the stories to their own lives. Tribal members who lived in rural areas were legitimate sources of knowledge and were perceived as more knowledgeable of Tribal culture than some non-rural dwellers. They interacted less often with members of other cultural backgrounds and practiced many aspects of Tribal culture daily.

At school, Tribal identity was apparent among Kenyans, although the influence was not as prevalent, or overtly prevalent, in settings comprised of people from other national backgrounds or heritage. At school, women heard about other Tribes' beliefs and values through deliberate interaction in class and casually as Friends. Women's judgments about the impact of interactions on Tribal identity differed and depended, to some extent, on the demographic characteristics they experienced in previous school settings. For example, some women felt Tribal identity was magnified at university, and other women felt more aware of national identity. Tribal stereotypes also influenced interactions among people from different Tribes, and new experiences served as a means for discrediting stereotypes.

## Implications of Findings for IL

In an overview of women's various information practices, ways in which women interacted with information across identities became apparent. For example, women's opportunities to identify information increased as the opportunities to interact with people increased. I have categorized recurrent opportunities for interaction by statements which

seemed to represent the discursive activity by which certain information activities gained legitimacy. For example, the kind of knowledge women gained from people was distinguished from other knowledge, and I have described some of the social and historical elements of this recurrent information-related belief as "People Have More Knowledge than Books", a statement which embodies possible assumptions.

**"Books Are Knowledge"**

The position of the book as a legitimate source of information was apparent, especially as Student and Believer. Students used course textbooks throughout their education, a social institution traditionally characterized by knowledge-transfer and examination-based. Students went to the library to get books from "shelves of knowledge". As Believers, religious texts were "read", "followed", and "lived by", and inscriptions on church walls provided information. Part of the legitimacy of religious texts was established by the wisdom gained through the hearing or reading about biblical characters' trials and overcoming difficulties.

Students used books to complete assignments, usually term papers. An information behavior characteristic of Students when doing research for a term paper is gathering "just enough 'at random' information to support the requirements of the paper" (Breivik, 1998, p. 35). Jefwa (2009) has observed Kenyan undergraduate Students generally disliked reading and doing library research, for many reasons, one of which was because texts contradicted lecturers' point of view. Instead, they preferred to have lecturers' notes and handouts. Jefwa has recommended teachers "expose learners to different ways of getting information and responding to it" (p. 126). Students' ability to critique information was not necessarily the issue. Warwick, Rimmer, Blandford, Gow,

and Buchanan (2009) have observed similar behaviors. The have found that undergraduate Students usually exhibited the information behaviors known as satisficing or "principle of least effort" when completing assignments. Furthermore, undergraduates, when academically stressed, tended to return to similar search patterns and sources "so they did not have to interpret and work with too many, possibly contradictory, sources" (p. 2410).

Findings have indicated a religious text is a relevant and legitimizing object. Stock (1983) has described the religious community as a "textual community", in which texts "played a predominant role in the internal and external relationships of the members" (p. 89). Legitimacy is garnered not from the fact the text is written but from the social value placed on access to and mastery of the text. Mastery of the text, including sharing an understanding of stories in the text, was a prerequisite for participation in a particular community.

The text-based orientation of education is different from in religious communities, in which a dominant text coordinates social life. In education, mastery of text, in general, is required. Evaluation of texts in an academic practice usually involves consideration of such variables as author's expertise, date of the publication, publisher, and content. For example, one participant mentioned the Internet as reliable and as having both primary and secondary sources. The finding has supported, to some extent, results from other studies in which users evaluated information from new technologies in familiar ways. Additional literature Students accessed were authored or published by internationally organizations considered to be authoritative sources on the topic.

**"People Have More Knowledge than Books"**

Women perceived people as knowledgeable for different reasons. Knowledge was associated with a source's past experience, the source's display of desirable traits, the source's "active" role in the area of expertise, or the role of the source as a giver of knowledge. Findings that people having more knowledge or different knowledge than other sources (e.g., books) have pointed toward a need to research non-academic sources of authority, such as wisdom and role models.

Women saw their Family elders, including parents, as legitimate sources of information based on the sources' past experiences. They listened to Family elders' opinions and advice. Sometimes, elders relayed information by telling stories, myths, or proverbs to convey meaning. Knowledge from parents was also referred to as wisdom, which set apart their knowledge from the knowledge associated with school. In fact, one participant was surprised when she discovered knowledge from school to be applicable to her "everyday life". The type of wisdom women described derived from past experiences. Wisdom was conveyed to listeners who were expected to apply the wisdom to their own situation. In other words, the wisdom was valid, and the receiver was responsible for using the wisdom correctly. As Believers, they received wisdom through hearing about biblical characters' past experiences and overcoming difficult situations. Overall, women's experiences of wisdom were compatible with findings Rowley and Slack (2009) have presented that "there is some level of agreement that knowledge, experience and action are key aspects of wisdom" (p. 110).

Women imitated or modeled the actions and values of their older siblings and parents. Imitating people, as Dewey (2005/1910) has suggested, is usually based on observations, over time, that certain values result in satisfactory outcomes, including

personal and social consequences. When looking up to a younger sibling, the fact he was younger was admitted by the participant as seemingly contradictory. However, she explained, she was impressed by how her sibling always met his goals and even acted as her teacher. Overall, satisfactory outcomes included meeting goals, spending money wisely, loving, being strong, being patient, and working hard. Friends at school played a role in teaching and practicing these values. In a way, these values comprised a set of cultural goals, important in many or all realms of women's lives. A possibly changing value pertained to time, specifically, being time-conscious compared to managing time. Further research on that aspect of culture would be beneficial, especially for IL.

As Believers, women read the Bible or heard readings during church protocol. Based on the specific religion and domination, I assumed the readings were performed either by a priest alone or by the priest in tandem with members of the congregation. A priest, while not necessarily equated with religion or God, is a vested authority as a Godly mediator or guide, one whose interest is assumed to be religious well-being. A priest's authority is reinforced by the reading of the religious text, a legitimate religious practice by which knowledge is gained. By proxy, through the reading of the text, the priest is a giver of knowledge, as a master of the religious text (Stock, 1983). Authority was also strengthened by the wisdom imparted to Believers through hearing about biblical characters' past experiences. A priest might also have legitimacy as an expert, a person who may have personal wisdom about religious matters.

At school, Students explicitly labeled two types of experts, speakers who worked at the UN and a self-employed person whose work "actually" made an impact. Both types of experts were people who had first-hand experience working in a particular area and

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were identified as "actually" working in a particular field. In contrast, Students' descriptions of their lecturers led me to interpret the source of lecturers' legitimacy as vested in their positions as educators, as givers of having knowledge.

**"Information from People Has More Impact"**

The statement was made in reference to the affective component of the legitimacy of people's past experiences. Specifically, hearing someone speak about their experiences had more impact than when similar material was read in books or on websites. Women were "inspired" when they listened to people who were "actually" doing things, rather than offering prescriptions or outlining possible solutions. In relation to non-experts, women talked about being emotionally distressed or encouraged by people's comments, which were transmitted face-to-face or through Facebook.

Women's interaction with information was influenced by physical interaction with people. At school, the shift toward lifelong learning has helped to legitimize interaction among people as an acceptable class practice. Interaction provided more opportunities to learn (e.g., about culture) by encouraging Students to ask each other questions and, in turn, share their own experiences. During the process, they became aware of similarities and differences. They were also able to practice communicating in meaningful ways with people from other cultures and as people who also possessed many identities. One participant mentioned watching movies in class and interacting were appealing deviations from the standard practice of writing and reading. In a way, they were neither passive receivers nor trained givers of information. Rather, their interaction was equalized through each other as having expert knowledge (e.g., as a Kenyan, as a Tribal member, as an African).

As a result of becoming a Friend, the number of opportunities to experience other cultures increased. Friends traveled to each other's homes, sometimes in rural areas, where Tribal members possessed legitimate cultural authority. The impact of experiencing culture as a Friend helped to break previously held, and common, stereotypes (i.e., Tribal) and provided a different perspective based on personal experience, perhaps even considered wisdom.

**"You Are Always with Your Friends at School"**

Physical proximity to a source increased the number of opportunities to interact with the source and establish the source as legitimate. One participant explained, "you can't share some problems with your parents because they aren't with you. You are always with your friends in school. You can share your problems with your friends". This statement described not only the role of Friends in providing support but the significance of Friends being physically near to each other in school. In one sense, the nearness helped facilitate a growing sense of connection, bond, or "we" initially experienced as Family However, for some women, the number of opportunities to interact with Friends was greater than with Family, and the number of opportunities to share new experiences and practice values was greater with Friends.

**The Internet, "Which I Guess Everyone Uses"**

As a preface, when women said computer they usually implied Internet. However, the association does not imply women were unaware of the difference between the two entities. Women used the Internet for academic, entertainment, and social purposes. Due to limited bandwidth, the university enforced policies to restrict access to websites categorized as social, such as non-university electronic email accounts and Facebook.

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Sometimes, women accessed social websites at Internet cafés or with an external modem.

One way Students used the Internet was to search for information for class and conferences they were going to attend. One Student shared her favorite website which she loved because it contained recipes, people's comments about their own experiences using the recipes, and pictures of the desired end-product. The website was an internationally renowned baking site, with mobile access and social media outlets. Other websites Students used were sponsored by or affiliated with the conference host (i.e., U). A picture of a computer used to represent accessing online tutorials for learning to play the guitar featured a picture of Bob Marley on the screen. One woman mentioned the occurrence of both primary and secondary on the Internet. The reference to Internet source content type is connected to standard practices for evaluating books.

Women used a computer for many everyday activities, including news, video, music, and communication through electronic mail and Facebook. They also used iPods, not referred to as a computer, to access music, and iPods were actually a symbol for music. The computer introduced a counter-discourse to the status of television, which was a source of information about fashion and culture, used for entertainment, and was also identified a social object which brought Friends together in one place. Another use of the television not mentioned was news. Overall, similarities in function and use of the television included the Internet as a social object and as a source of entertainment, while television, magazines, and people remained the primary sources for fashion and culture.

Surprisingly, the computer was also a counter-discourse to the book. However, the way women used computers was largely different from the way they used books. Students used computers and books for academic purposes but not in the same way or for

the same content. Non-academic use of computers and books overlapped in two cases, reading comic books and a book read to relax. The majority of computer use was for non-education purposes (e.g., personal entertainment, socializing), and the majority of book use was related to religion and education. The counter-discourse has also appeared in the literature, an observation Gunkel (2003) has reviewed and criticized as paradoxical.

The Internet was also described as a place, a channel, and a thing. Savolainen and Kari (2004) have reported similar findings about the difficulty in defining the Internet, including experiencing the Internet as a place. Madden (as cited in Madden, Bryson, & Palimi, 2006) has explored the type of place (e.g., bar room, library) an Internet is perceived to be. The type of place is related to how people use the Internet, such as to preserve, share, or store information. For example, if the Internet is a place, then research about how users interact in different spaces is important (Pomerantz & Marchionini, 2007).

**"On the Way"**

On the way to and from locations, women enacted the role of Traveler, a person who relied on her own abilities, developed over time and based on Friends' and Family members' past experiences, to minimize risk, negotiate fares, and get to places on time. However, the legitimate source of authority in travel was usually not the Traveler. For example, when driving, Travelers sat in "horrible" traffic. While aboard *matatus*, Travelers boarded negotiated prices, over which the taut had final authority. *Matatus*, characteristically, out of control and routinely over sped and reputedly caused accidents. The history of Kenyan *matatus*, however, is bittersweet, and, ultimately, they are a sign of Kenyan culture.

Familiarity with the modes of transportation and routes was important. Travelers relied on unspoken cues by paying attention to non-verbal communication and by recognizing what Lloyd (2009) has referred to as environmental cues. The potential risks and consequences involved in making misinformed choices are great enough that "the wrong bus syndrome" has been used as a metaphor for framing community problem-solving throughout Africa (Maathai, 2009). A Traveler may end up on the wrong bus because

> He or she fails to ask for directions and does not seek all the necessary information; someone accidentally or deliberately misinforms the traveler; the traveler is incapacitated through mental illness, drug abuse, alcoholism, a state of distress and confusion, or genetic impairment of the mind; the traveler has a misplaced sense of arrogance and adopts a know-it-all attitude; the traveler cheats him- or herself and trivializes the implications of making the wrong decision; the traveler is fearful, intimidated, cowed, and lacks confidence and self-assurance, or the traveler is simply ignorant. (p. 168)

Importantly, community members must admit they are, indeed, on the wrong bus, and they must board the right bus. Then, community members are in a position to take responsibility for their having boarded the wrong bus and "begin to choose differently" (p. 170). Maathai has used the common metaphor to engage people in a reflexive practice, a practice of *kujijua* in Kiswahili, or to know oneself. The concept is similar to the notion of critical thinking.

# CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Understanding IL requires an understanding of the sociocultural and historical practices in which an individual performs a range of information-related activities. Information policies should support and enhance relevant, local information structures and support people's personal, social, occupational, and educational goals. The exploratory nature of the study drew broad attention to many phenomena, as personally experienced by a group of twenty women at a private university in Nairobi, Kenya. However, recommendations might be applicable for similarly-situated groups. More narrowly focused, in-depth research about a specific phenomenon would provide a stronger basis for informational or policy recommendations.

Kenyan IL policy has been narrowly defined in terms of ICT and has limited broader interpretations of IL. Gitonga (2010) has voiced a similar opinion. Findings have suggested ICT was only type of resource women used when interacting with information. Relevant ICT included (a) computers, used for Internet access, music, photos, videos, news, communication, assignments, and books (i.e., comic books); (b) iPods, used to store and listen to music; and (c) television, used for fashion, entertainment, and as an object to prompt social interaction. Cellular phones were also popular but not specified by women as relevant. Furthermore, ICT was used in areas of life beyond education, including communication, social networking, personal entertainment, and news.

The notion computers have replaced books was espoused, but the belief was not confirmed by actual practice. Women's uses of books and other printed material were most relevant to their roles as Students and Believers. However, the way they evaluated

text in education and religious settings differed. An interesting observation was one Student's comment about the Internet being "reliable" and having both primary and secondary sources. Her evaluation of the Internet, as Student, paralleled the standard practice of evaluating academic print books. While her experience is not considered a pattern, the observation warrants further study about how Internet sources are evaluated, as a Student and in other situations, in the Kenyan context.

Women used computers differently from the way they used books. Certain social information practices, beyond Student, affected how women recognized these resources as informational. Women equated books with knowledge, especially in the context of religion and education. Internet was seen as something "everyone uses", something widely practiced but not equated with knowledge. In fact, women primarily used the Internet for non-academic purposes, including entertainment, news, and communication. Related findings have also suggested a possible reading culture, or reading for leisure, among women. Reading for personal entertainment was apparent in print and electronic form. How computers foster, or might foster, a reading culture in Kenya does not appear to have been addressed in the literature.

As past researchers have suggested (e.g., Ayoo & Otike, 2002; Ingutia-Oyieke, 2010; Ondari-Okemwa, 2002; Tilvawala, Myers, & Andrade, 2009), more research on Kenyan undergraduates' informational needs, uses, and especially preferences pertaining to electronic and print resources is needed. Research and policy should address behaviors and practices beyond the academic setting. However, physical and financial barriers to accessing and integrating various informational systems, including ICT, perhaps hinder the feasibility of extending policy in such a way.

Critical thinking will not be enhanced by increased access to resources, alone, or by limiting conceptions of IL to ICT or to the educational setting, although the educational setting is an ideal place for learning to think critically about information and how information becomes so. A holistic information policy should recognize the relevance of people and interaction to IL. How people are recognized as sources of information differs across situations. For example, interacting with classmates and Friends at school was especially relevant for cultural understanding. Continuing to encourage the interactive aspect of lifelong learning is especially relevant for cultural learning. The proximal nearness of information sources was important and further supports the need for face-to-face interaction between or among people.

A less expensive means of promoting information literacy and critical thinking is the concept of "living libraries", which draw on expert knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom was accredited to a source's past experiences and required the receiver to interpret and apply the value of the sender's past experience to their own life situations. Expert knowledge, based on direct and active involvement in the topic of knowledge, had an affective (i.e., motivational, inspirational) impact. Women were exposed to wisdom from elders and through religious institutions, and they gained knowledge from experts at conferences. More opportunities for exposure could be facilitated by integrating the concept of "human" or "living" libraries. Interacting with "human" books would expose Students to people who have past experiences in various aspects of life, such as a particular illness, religious background, sexual orientation, or traumatic experience. Abergel (2005) has helped establish living libraries across Europe to help break stereotypes and sensitize people to various issues. As a cosmopolitan nation with many

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stereotypes at play, the concept of a living library could be implemented at many levels

of society. Garbutt (2009) has offered further explanation of the goal of a living library:

> Whatever the differences being worked with, for example, whether multi-cultural,
> multi-abled, multi-sexed, multi-sexual, or multi-faith, the intended outcome is not
> assimilation of less-powerful positions in society but of findings ways of
> coexisting in our differences. Through the practice of conversation, living library
> participants and organisers are seeking a form of integration that does not leave
> hegemonic positions undisturbed and unchanged, nor one in which all values are
> necessarily shared. I this sense, living libraries are 'laboratories' of multicultural
> cosmopolitan practice worth of greater study and research. (p. 275)

The goal does not have to end at cultural exposure. Living libraries potentially share

knowledge in multiple domains.

Culture was experienced through a variety of resources, including people, books,

traditional cultural artifacts, and television. The visual aspect of culture was particularly

relevant. Space to recognize culture as both modern and traditional or as dynamic would

critically juxtapose the tensions women experienced. Such a space has been supported

through the development of Africana collections. However, the visual aspect of culture

promotes an immediate space for critical thinking and reflexivity.

The physical, as well as cognitive, relations among things affect how people

interact with information. Considering the spatial aspects of how people interact with

information is important for IL programs and research. In some cases, women saw

Internet as a place. Future research into the nature of the Internet, as a place, channel, or

thing, should be explored in the Kenyan context. Savolainen and Kari (2004) have found

users have various perceptions of the Internet, and one perception is the Internet as place. Madden (as cited in Madden, Bryson, & Palimi, 2006) has found people perceive the Internet as different types of places, such as a library and a bar room. Perceptions of place, and type of place, are related to how people use the Internet, such as to preserve, share, or store information (Pomerantz & Marchionini, 2007). Future research on the Internet as place or thing in the Kenyan context is needed.

Findings are not believed to be unique to the Kenyan experience. Replicating the study with people from other nations, such as the USA, would further understandings of how people interact with information in various contexts. As digital technologies continue to develop, exploring the nature of the Internet as a place or thing in a range of settings would contribute to understanding about how users interact with electronic information in digital spaces. Similarly, perceptions of what a book is, how a book is used, and the content of books should be explored as other ways of knowing, beyond print, become integrated into various information practices.

The intertextuality of various national and international documents became apparent. Implicit and explicit references to national and international policies pertaining to education and national development occurred in everyday life situations. The impact of international agendas on Kenyan policy has been observed (e.g., King, 2006). However, further research into how people experience these policies and how they manifest in everyday life would lead to a deeper contextual understanding of how policies physically manifest themselves in everyday objects.

The primary contribution of the methodology was the integration of photographs as structural anchors of women's experiences to the sociocultural and historical context.

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In other words, photographs were explored as a way to bind women's experiences of an object to the historical moment in which the object was originally perceived in a way that could also be transmitted through time. Slow connectivity prevented the exploration of sharing photographs and descriptions with an online international photography forum.

The broad research objective has been to explore social and information practices, instantiated by the relational meanings among things, including events, places, and objects. As a part of the research process, my own relational position among things and intentionality of things was challenged. Participants', whose goals were inevitably different, expressed having a different type of awareness of the normal activities and objects in their everyday lives. Women began to look at usual things differently because of project goals, to identify and capture relevant objects and put words to their normal or routine experiences. Women expressed the desire for other people to see more than "just pictures". They wanted people to see Kenya beyond the media's reports and portrayals. Furthermore, they wanted people to see them, as individuals. Our experiences point toward the value of the research methodology as a fruitful and successful exploration of the phenomenological experiences of being and as Beings in the world.

Recruitment Flyer

# Research Volunteers Needed

*Topic:*
Using photography to explore information literacy among USIU women students

### Eligibility Requirements*:

*Potential participant must be:*
- Kenyan
- a female USIU student
- willing and able to meet once per week for 8 weeks

*Study limited to first 20 respondents

**For more information, please contact me by phone/text at 0735936661 or email at bms5yc@mail.mizzou.edu**

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**APPENDIX B**

Informed Consent Form

I am a graduate student working on a doctoral degree in Information Science and Learning Technologies at University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri, in the United States. I am interested in Kenyan women's information literacy, and I am using photography to explore this topic. The findings will inform policy-makers about information literacy practices. I invite you to participate in this research by agreeing to participate in a ethnographic study that asks you to:

1. After some basic instruction, photograph events or objects that you find relevant to your daily live.

2. Write a short description of each photograph detailing its personal meaning. (Your photographs and descriptions will be shared with other participants).

3. Create keywords based on the descriptions of your photographs.

4. After instruction, upload your images to an online photography community called flickr.com and tag your images with the keywords you previously created for your images.

This project requires that you meet with other women who are participating in the project and me in a classroom setting at least 6-8 times over a 2 month period to receive instruction, discuss the project, and upload images. In order to retain an accurate account of the sessions, each of these sessions will be videotaped and transcribed. Throughout the project, you will also be asked to keep a personal journal log and to be available for personal, in-depth interviews over a concurrent 3 month period to discuss your personal

experiences regarding the project.

If you choose to participate, it is important that you be as honest as you can in your description and discussion of images. The research is not intended to measure any degree of information literacy. What you consider personally relevant to your daily life might fluctuate, so I would like you to photograph the most relevant events and objects at the time of the project.

This informed consent statement will be retained in my files for up to five years, but your name will not be connected in any way with the information you choose to keep private or confidential. Your participation is voluntary, and you may discontinue participation at any time. The risk of participation is considered minimal.

If you have any questions about this project, you may contact the Brooke Shannon, the primary investigator of the study, at bms5yc@mail.mizzou.edu or 735936661. For any other information regarding human participation in research, please feel free to contact the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board Office at 1-573-882-9585.


If you are willing to participate in this research project, please sign below and return this informed consent to me.

_____

Name                                                                                          Date

## APPENDIX C

Unstructured Interview Question

General:

Can you describe to me what your typical week entails, including what activities you normally do and who you normally interact with?

Tell me about a particularly important event or occurrence that occurred recently, within the last month.  Can you tell me why it was important?

About photographing events:

What is your experience, in the past, with photography?

In the beginning, what kinds of things did you want to photograph? / Can you tell me what kinds of things you photographed?

Are there things you wanted to photograph but did not want to share?

How did you feel and what did you experience while you were taking photographs/throughout this project/while engaged in collecting photos for this project?

About describing and developing keywords about photographs:

How would you describe your favorite photograph(s)?  Why is that photograph/those photographs your favorite?

What kinds of things do you want other people to see or understand about your photographs?

How well do you think your keywords describe your photographs?

About uploading images:

One of the tasks during this project is to upload photos to the internet. Can you share with me some of your thoughts about this task?

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