

STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:  
A STUDY OF YOUNG WOMEN IN KIBERA, KENYA

by

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## ABSTRACT

Research on gender-based violence in the developing world is finally beginning to get serious attention. But that research is, unfortunately, still overlooking violence to women in the burgeoning slums and informal settlements around the globe. The current study is one of the first to address the issue of gender-based violence in slum communities by presenting both qualitative and quantitative data from Kibera, Kenya—the largest slum in sub-Saharan Africa. Qualitative data were derived from the diaries of twenty women between the ages of 18-30 living in Kibera. Diary data were collected from 2007-2010. Quantitative data were derived from a survey administered to 200 Kiberan women in December, 2009. Results of the study's qualitative component show that women in Kibera use three main coping strategies to deal with gender-based violence. Although none of the strategies guarantees a cessation of violence, the *endurance and faith* strategy appears to be the most frequently chosen strategy and the one most effective in keeping women safe. The study also reveals a parallel between coping strategy and narrative style among the diarists, raising provocative questions about the relationship between journal writing and women's agency. Survey results show a higher rate of gender-based violence among women in Kibera (84.5%) than was measured among the general population (39%) in the KDHS (2008). The study also reveals that, although both diarists and survey participants appear to *endure* gender-based violence more often than they rebel against it, their attitudes toward gender-based violence are anything but accepting. Instead, both diarists and survey participants report that they do *not* believe gender-based violence is justified and that they are angry and upset over the amount of violence they experience.

This dissertation is dedicated to the women of Kibera, whose lives are an ongoing source of  
inspiration.

In Memory of Elizabeth Nyambura

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For the past two decades, research on gender-based violence has focused primarily on North America; however, the *international* study of gender violence has recently become the subject of growing concern. This shift in focus was highlighted in two special issues of the journal *Violence Against Women* (Gondolf, 2004a; Gondolf, 2004b), which point to the current need for both transnational and cross-cultural research. These kinds of investigations help “sort the universals associated with various forms of gender violence from the particulars of different nations and cultures” (Gondolf, 2004a, p. 705). Although concern still exists that international gender violence research lags behind epidemiological studies on physical disease, gender violence researchers are currently “identifying the issues that need to be addressed” in order to conduct more sophisticated transnational prevalence surveys and intervention studies (Gondolf, 2004a, p. 706).

But despite the increased methodological sophistication of international research, such studies have still been primarily conducted in industrialized nations, thereby “leaving out whole continents and societies” that comprise the developing world (Gondolf, 2004b, p. 858). Some scholarship is beginning to fill this gap. In Africa, for example, the last decade has seen an increase in country-specific studies of gender-based violence, especially relating to South Africa (Jewkes et al., 1999), Nigeria (Atinmo, 1997), Tanzania (McCloskey, Williams, & Larsen, 2005), and Kenya (Mugisha & Zulu, 2008). Furthermore, multi-national surveys, many of which have included African countries (WHO, 2005), as well as surveys specific to African countries (DHS, 2003; DHS, 2008) have provided important data for cross-cultural comparisons, as well as in-depth statistical analyses. Other research has focused on interventions, such as the

development of “alternate masculinities” (Sathiparsad, 2003) or programs to preclude honor killings, dowry murders, female genital mutilation, or imposed HIV-infection (Jewkes et al., 2002; Leach et al., 2003; Phaladze & Tlou, 2006).

Such ground-breaking research has contributed much to knowledge about gender-based violence in developing nations and is to be commended. However, little is known about the experience of gender violence in the planet’s growing mega-slums, informal settlements of more than a million people, which are growing on the periphery of major metropolitan areas in the developing world. By 2020, experts estimate that more than 100 million people will live in these “informal” communities (UNEP, 2003; Davis, 2006), where population density is comparable to “cattle feedlots” (Davis, 2006). The few existing studies of slum-based gender violence concern themselves primarily with *interventions* among specific populations of women. Few studies determine the demographics and prevalence of the problem and fewer still address the important topic of women’s perception and experience of gender-based violence (Lutomia, 1999; Swart, 2008). The current study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing the daily diaries of twenty young women between the ages of 20-30 who live in Kibera, Kenya, one of the largest slums in Africa. It will also analyze the results of a survey administered to 200 Kiberan women between the ages of 20-30, the peer group cohort of the diarists.

Because the subject of gender-based violence is taboo in Kibera, women usually do not discuss it, even with one another. An analysis of women’s diaries, therefore, provides a unique and heretofore unavailable lens for describing Kibera residents’ unique experience of gender-based violence, as well as their strategies for coping with it. But strategies are not always solutions. Many times, diarists acted hopefully on a strategy, only to find that nothing changed. One writer remarked, after having fallen short once again of independence from violent men,

“Now I am back to square one....now I will start from the roots again” (Dee, April, 2008). The current study analyzes women’s accounts of their daily lives as they developed, discarded, and deployed strategies with which to confront the global epidemic of gender-based violence.



## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *International Research on Gender Violence*

Country-specific studies of domestic violence have been common for the last four decades and were especially prominent during the 1990's (Alexander, 1993; Lupri, Grandin, & Brinkerhoff, 1994; Johnson, 1996; Grandin & Lupri, 1997). The international study of domestic violence, however, is a recent phenomenon. The journal *Violence Against Women* (Gondolf, 2004a; Gondolf, 2004b) has stressed the need for both transnational and cross-cultural research, which may help discern the nuances of difference across a wide variety of contexts (Gondolf, 2004a). Currently, domestic violence scholars are prioritizing the development of more sophisticated transnational prevalence surveys and intervention studies, ones that will utilize consistent definitional and methodological tools (Gondolf, 2004a, p. 706).

Recent scholarship, for example, has stressed the need for standardized measurements which will enable reliable comparisons among national and cultural prevalence surveys while, at the same time, devising procedures that are sensitive to cultural variation in both measurement and administration. Saltzman (2004) has posed solutions to problems that occur in transnational surveys of domestic violence by proposing the adoption of standardized transnational definitions and measures. Others have discussed how training and methods of specialized interviewer selection can increase reliability and validity in multinational surveys (Jansen, 2004).

Current research has also addressed the issue of adapting domestic violence intervention programs and policies to national differences. While acknowledging the “unease” with which US-based programs might be appropriately applied to other nations, current scholars have, nevertheless, agreed on certain fundamental principles that can be shared and applied cross-

culturally (Gondolf, 2004b). For example, Shriwadker (2004) discusses the development of cultural modifications for administering intervention measures across national and ethnic boundaries among Asian women living in Canada. Others describe multi-country comparison studies of psychological intervention programs using, for example, cognitive behavioral therapy (Gondolf, 2004b; Cousineau et al., 2004).

Historically, few studies have discussed the developing world. But studies are now emerging to address issues of partner violence, particularly in South Africa (Jewkes et al., 1999), Nigeria (Atinmo, 1997), and Tanzania (McCloskey, Williams, & Larsen, 2005). Some researchers have interpreted data from national surveys or multi-country comparative studies (Kishor & Johnson, 2004), providing important contextual background for ongoing work across the continent. Other studies have focused on culturally-based interventions. For example, Sathiparsad has suggested confronting the cultural construction of “masculinity” as a strategy to address gender-based violence in South Africa. Other research on the African continent has focused on key issues related to domestic violence in developing nations, such as female genital mutilation, dowry payment, honor killings and imposed HIV-infection (Phaladze & Tlou, 2006; Leach et al., 2003; Jewkes et al., 2002).

Variations of these tribal and cultural traditions are specific to Kenya. Ellsberg (2001) has discussed the relationship of gender violence to the payment of bride-price in Kenya and the likelihood that this financial transaction is interpreted as tacit payment for husbands’ unconditional sexual access to their wives. The agreement may also imply permission for husbands to discipline wives by beating. Similarly, Were (1967) has described the ethnic and tribal customs which presume that a husband’s practice of disciplining his wife falls within societal norms. Others have pointed to the conflict between traditional/tribal norms and current

Kenyan Constitutional law as being a factor in the ongoing treatment of women as “second-class citizens” (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008, p. 334). Rape, for example, has been recently criminalized in Kenyan Constitutional law, although it is not considered a crime in many regions, where tribal laws informally supersede hard-fought national legislation (UN-AIDS, 2006). While this conflict remains unresolved, Kenyan women are frequently considered to be the property of their fathers before marriage and of their husbands after marriage. Exacerbating this situation is the socialization of women to tolerate or accept family violence, which is heightened by the stigma attached to victims of rape in Kenya (Amnesty International, 2002). Women fear blame, social condemnation and ostracism if they admit being sexually violated (Amnesty International, 2002). Further, studies have shown that women who *do* report sexual attacks often encounter uncooperative police and prosecuting officials, who maintain that the complaining woman must show proof of her lack of consent (IRIN, 2007).

Recent national surveys and reports by non-governmental organizations have provided important data for research on domestic violence in Kenya. In 1997, a study on women and violence was conducted in Nairobi and Kajiado, a Rift Valley province south of Nairobi, by Kenyan Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-K, 1997). The study found that 94% of the 1,000 randomly selected community members who were surveyed reported violence toward women in their communities. In 1998, a survey by the Women’s Empowerment Centre found that 75% of married women surveyed in the Kangemi area near Nairobi had been physically assaulted by their husbands (Kanyago, 2001). In 2003, the Kenyan Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS), a USAID-funded survey of 11,000 randomly selected Kenyan households, became the *first* survey in Africa to include a module on domestic violence. That survey revealed that 40% of married women had experienced some form of domestic or intimate partner violence (KDHS,

2003). In 2006, another study by UNAIDS, revealed that 49% of Kenyan women experienced violence in their lifetime; 83% reported some form of abuse during childhood; and only 12% of those who had been physically or sexually abused reported the abuse to an authority (UNAIDS, 2006). The KDHS (2008), which again administered the Domestic Violence Module, revealed that 39% of women surveyed had experienced violence from an intimate partner in her lifetime.

Kimuna and Djamba (2008) used KDHS (2003) statistics to describe correlates of physical and sexual wife abuse in Kenya, finding relationships between gender violence and household income, religion, type of union, and husband's abuse of alcohol. The number of children a woman had was also a predictor of gender violence, since the number of children increases economic dependence on a husband or male partner, which may also increase a woman's likelihood to tolerate violence (Ellsberg et al., 2001; Kimuna & Djamba, 2008).

Although this research has provided vital information on family violence and its correlates in the general Kenyan population, the KDHS does not include slums and informal settlements. Consequently, little is known about the experience of domestic violence in Kibera, a sprawling mega-slum adjacent to the city of Nairobi. The existence of Kibera is illustrative of a major demographic shift on our planet, whereby a majority of its six billion inhabitants now live in cities (UN-HABITAT, 2003; Davis, 2006). Of these, more than one-third live in slums. This "slumification" of the planet has spawned its own vocabulary, with the term mega-slum now being used to refer to the merging of once-separate shantytowns and squatter communities into seamless belts of slum dwellings on the periphery of major metropolitan areas (Davis, 2006). Although Kibera is only about the size of New York's Central Park, experts estimate that between 800,000 and one million people currently live there (Sartori, Nembrini, & Stauffer, 2002; Davis, 2006) and that population density is "comparable to cattle feedlots" (Davis, 2006,

p. 92). Typical families in Kibera live in one-room, mud-walled huts, without secure or regular access to water, sanitation, electricity or privacy (Davis, 2006). Although referred to as “houses,” these single-room dwellings usually serve as kitchen, living room and bedroom for five or more people. Overcrowding and poverty are key factors in the production of high rates of violence and crime in Kibera (Davis, 2006). Unfortunately, the slum lacks an official, reliable police force and law enforcement is commonly carried out by mob rule (Davis, 2006; Erulkar & Matheka, 2007).

Researchers seeking to describe the problem of domestic violence in Kibera have been thwarted by the lack of a population census in that area. Adding to the difficulty is the low-priority given to the slum by advocacy organizations, which face great odds even to assess and treat the problem of domestic violence in the general population. Nevertheless, some general surveys among *segments* of the population are beginning to emerge. In 2002, the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) conducted a cross-sectional survey of Nairobi’s four major slums and informal settlements to assess health and livelihood needs of adolescents. Kibera was included in the study, which utilized a sample of adolescent boys and girls. Although the study did not collect data on domestic violence, it nevertheless yielded the first comprehensive report on specific slum conditions which are often correlated with gender-based violence, such as risky sexual behavior, drug and alcohol abuse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and sanitation (APHRC, 2002). In 2004, Mugisha and Zulu relied on data from this survey in their study of the influence of drugs and alcohol on adolescent sexual relationships (Mugisha & Zulu, 2004). Their research revealed that the use of alcohol and drugs increase the likelihood of rape and violent sexual acts.

In 2007, another survey of adolescents in Kibera (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007) reported high rates of violence among married and cohabiting adolescents. One out of six married girls reported being beaten or hit within the past three months, mostly for “talking rudely” to their husbands, disobeying them, or failing to adequately fulfill domestic duties (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007, p. 19). Forty percent of girls reported that they were unable to refuse their spouse sex and, despite high rates of male-partner infidelity, only 37% of girls were able to insist on condom use during sex (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007). Girls reported that they feared violence for demanding a condom or for refusing sex. Such studies raise questions regarding situational responses to gender violence, which can, perhaps, be best understood by *grounding* the current study in scholarship pertaining to gender construction as a social process.

### *Gender Construction and Maintenance*

The current literature on the interactional nature of gender construction is indebted to George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, whose symbolic interaction perspective posits that meaning arises in social situations and is modified through social interaction (Blumer, 1969). Goffman (1959) builds on Mead’s theory and applies it to the understanding of gender as something that is “done” rather than something that is inherent in an individual. Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective focuses on interaction as a performance (Goffman, 1959), which, while shaped by both environment and audience, is constructed to “provide others with impressions that are consistent with the goals of the actor (Goffman, 1959, p. 17). According to Goffman, then, in order for an individual to possess a gendered identity, a person must present a believable performance of that identity, convincing others of its genuineness and legitimacy.

In their 1987 article on “doing gender,” Candace West and Don Zimmerman elaborate on Goffman’s basic assumption, concurring that gender is not something we *are* but something we *do* (West & Zimmerman, 1987). However, they go beyond traditional role theory to describe that “doing” as an ongoing activity of “managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.127)—that is, it is an “emergent quality” that describes “the interactional work involved in ‘being’ a gendered person in society” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127).

Since the “doing gender” idea was introduced in 1987, others have interpreted and interrogated it, extending its use and expanding its base. Thorne (2002), in a ground-breaking study of primary school children, illustrates gender as a dynamic process, varying from situation to situation. She writes, “As individuals, we always display or ‘do’ gender, but this dichotomous difference... may be more or less relevant, and relevant in different ways, from one social context to another” (Thorne, 2002, p. 29). Likewise, Connell describes masculinity and femininity as “projects” that are accomplished differently in different social contexts (Connell, 2002):

Gender is, above all, a matter of social relations within which individuals and groups act. Gender relations do include difference and dichotomy, but also include many other patterns... It is not an expression of biology, nor a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern (Connell, 2002, p. 9).

Patricia Yancey Martin concludes that

... women and men routinely practice gender—as masculinities and femininities—in embodied interactions that are emergent and fluid, grounded in practical

knowledge and skills, and informed by liminal awareness and reflexivity... Only by asking how, when, where, and by what means—both narrative and physical—gender is actively practiced can we gain insights into ‘saying and doing’ dynamics. To this end, research and theorizing about the twin dynamics of practicing gender and gendering practices are needed (Yancey Martin, 2003, p. 359).

One of the most important aspects of “doing gender” is the implicit assumption that women have a say in the matter. That is, gender is not handed to women only through a top-down structural process. Instead, women have agency in gender construction and participate on the interactional level in its contextual construction. Connell remarks that any account of how we “do” gender must “recognize both the contradictions of development, and the fact that the learners are active, not passive (Connell, 2002). People growing up in a gendered society unavoidably encounter gender relations, and actively participate in them” (Connell, 2002, p. 79). Yancey Martin points out:

Some gender scholars imply that people who exercise agency relative to gender consciously intend to practice it/or are aware of practicing gender when they do. Others suggest that they do so in non-intentional ways or unconsciously (Yancey Martin, 2003, p. 355).

Lucal, for example, discusses agency as a very conscious process when she writes that “if gender is a product of interaction, and if it is produced in a particular context, then it can be changed if we change our performances” (Lucal, 1999 p. 795). Williams, on the other hand, in her study of adolescent girls, sees gender as a “trying on” process, with women exercising their agency in “anticipating, experimenting, retreating, and resisting” (Williams, 2002, p. 30). Similarly, Silva



(2008) discusses how female ROTC cadets negotiate the tension between masculine military culture and traditional femininity (Silva, 2008). Deutsch adds to the dialogue by changing the language in which it is couched, reminding us that “we need to reframe the questions to ask how we can *undo* gender” (Deutsch, 2007, p. 106). She remarks that:

If we take a social constructionist position seriously, we must examine resistance to gendered social interactions as a source of change. By examining the effects of subversive action on its audience, we may be able to identify the conditions under which those actions change normative conceptions of gender, and how and when these new conceptions can take advantage of or even drive institutional change (Deutsch, 2007, p.120).

Furthermore, Crawley et al. (2008) in one of the most sophisticated and clever analyses of gender construction, describe it as a feedback loop of ongoing performance, surveillance, and resistance. In their words, it is “an interactive, swirling, everyday process of social inputs and body practices that builds humans and societies” (Crawley et al., 2008). The current study will be informed by this ongoing discussion about gender construction, paying particular attention to the agential choices and strategies of the Kiberan diarists. It will also explore the ways women diarists “do gender” in their daily lives, particularly in regard to strategic stances toward gender-based violence.

### *Narrative Data*

The history of narrative data collection and analysis in the United States can be traced to the Chicago School of sociologists. Thomas and Znaniecki’s *The Polish Peasant* (1918/1927) is commonly cited as the “first significant sociological use of life history” for sociological analysis

(Chase, 2005, p. 653). However, it was the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s that popularized the use of personal narratives, diaries, and autobiographies as “essential primary documents” for research (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 4). Such autobiographical and diary data allowed researchers to access “previously silenced voices” and to “challenge knowledge about society, culture, and history” (Chase, 2005, p. 654). Issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality were given prominence as “central aspects of women’s lives” (Chase, 2005, p. 654) and studies of women’s diaries and autobiographies gained academic prominence in the 1970’s and 1980’s (Ruddick & Daniels, 1977; Jacobs, 1979; Babb & Taylor, 1981; Hunt & Winegarten, 1983). These works contradicted the previous use of narrative data as being “primarily useful for gaining knowledge about historical events” (Chase, 2005, p. 654). Instead, feminist scholars were “interested in women as social actors in their own right and in the subjective meanings women assigned to events and conditions in their lives” (Chase, 2005, p. 654). Stimulated by this burgeoning feminist research in the social sciences, literary analyses of women’s diaries also began to appear, exploring the relationship between women’s inner selves and their public roles. Schiwy (1994) posited that women may use diaries to advance unconventional thought (Schiwy, 1994; Swart, 2008) and Culley (1986) explored ways in which diaries may provide emotional and psychological support to their writers (Culley, 1986; Swart, 2008). Currently, women’s blogs constitute a new kind of narrative data, one which is alive and produced in situational contexts—in *relationships* between writers and readers (Riverbend, 2005). Clearly, the field of narrative data analysis is expanding to include new territory and unconventional definitions of what constitutes “narrative.” The current study is indebted to previous narrative scholarship and has found in this body of work a home-base from which to launch new explorations.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A SOCIAL ISSUE IN KENYA**

Gender-based violence is a personal, social, and political issue for Kenyan women. In order to understand the multi-layered contexts in which gender-based violence occurs, it is useful to review the general status of women in Kenya, as well as the history of social policy regarding gender equality and gender-based violence there.

There are about 20.6 million women in Kenya, comprising about half the total national population of 41 million. The median age for a Kenyan female is 19 years of age. About 80% of Kenya's women are literate and their life expectancy is about 60 year (CIA, 2009/2011).

In Kenya, women live with longstanding and deeply embedded "societal norms of male superiority" (Lawoko et. al., 2007, p. 780). In domestic situations, men are usually undisputed heads of households, making key decisions about everything from finances to family planning. In the macro world, men hold most positions of power relating to government, finance, and law. Patriarchal standards and attitudes pervade every level of Kenyan society and are especially debilitating for women in the areas of education, employment, access to credit, and property ownership. These factors combine to create a general atmosphere of economic disempowerment for Kenyan women, making it difficult for them to overcome a network of interconnected constraints that inhibit access to political and economic independence.

According to recent reports (IEA, 2007; AFROL, 2008), the gender gap in education has become smaller during the last decade at the primary and secondary levels of education. Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls achieve primary-level education in Kenya (86.5%), while 23.3% of girls achieve secondary levels, compared to 26.7% of boys. But the gender gap widens egregiously when it comes to the transition from secondary school to

university-level education. While 85% of male secondary school graduates go on to study at a college or university, only 38% of women make that transition. This lack of higher education means that women are often locked out of the most highly-paying jobs in the Kenyan economy, such as those related to technology, engineering, medicine, and finance.

Women also lag behind men in the area of property ownership. Most property in Kenya is male-owned. Even marital wealth that is jointly created by a husband and wife “belongs to the man” (IEA, 2007, p. 44) during the marriage and subsequent to it, should it end in divorce or widowhood. In case of divorce, women are not protected by laws that ensure their post-marital economic sustenance or survival. Many women are left destitute after divorce. Similarly, widows often inherit nothing and their in-laws frequently refuse to allow widows to remain in their homes or on their husbands’ property after he has died.

Post-marriage destitution is amplified by women’s lack of access to credit in Kenya. Although nearly half of Kenyan women currently have access to some form of “informal savings mechanisms and micro-finance” assistance (IEA, 2007, p. 44), this credit often does not “assist women to vertically expand beyond the micro-level” (IEA, 2007, p. 44), in part because women lack managerial skills, as well as contacts that would assist them in expanding local businesses to national and international levels. Consequently, most women’s businesses remain “small and informal” (IEA, 2007, p. 44), enabling women to survive but not to flourish.

Such a web of interconnected social inequalities means that women have a hard time attaining public or political power in Kenya. For example, it is difficult for a woman to run for political office. Socialized gender norms encourage women to remain in the home. Many men scorn and ridicule women who resist these norms. Attaining education or running a small business may not rock the gender boat enough for women to experience retaliation. But running

for political *office* exposes women to social derision and physical danger. In the 2007 general elections, for example, 269 women gained the nomination ballots necessary to run for political office. Of these only fifteen were elected (IEA, 2007, p. 43). Voting patterns, reflecting traditional patriarchal beliefs, consistently favor male candidates. They also leave female candidates vulnerable to public humiliation, insults, threats, and violent retribution for defying the social norms surrounding womanhood. In 2007, many female candidates running for Parliament were publicly heckled, humiliated, and threatened while campaigning for office. One female candidate was killed by a mob at an election rally (IEA, 2007, p. 43). Attempting to wrest even a vestige of political power away from male leaders is dangerous for women in Kenya. The fact that many of them still do so is a tribute to women's deep-seated dedication to social policy change.

*Convention on the Elimination of all Form of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*

Policy and advocacy about gender-based violence in Africa had its impetus in 1979, with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the UN General Assembly. The Convention had immediate world-wide impact because it defined what constitutes discrimination against women and set up "an agenda for national action to end such discrimination" (CEDAW, 1979, p. 2).

According to the Convention, discrimination against women is:

. . . any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and

women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, civil, or any other field (CEDAW, 1979, p. 2).

Any country which accepts the Convention, through a national ratification process, commits itself to codifying a list of measures to end discrimination against women. Those measures include:

. . . incorporating the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolishing all discriminatory laws, and adopting appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women; establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure the effective protection of women against discrimination; and ensuring elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations, or enterprises (CEDAW, 1979, p. 3).

However, acceding to the Convention does not necessarily ensure the implementation of its measures. Although nations accepting the Convention are legally bound to move toward putting its applications in place, there are no enforcement procedures associated with the Convention. Unfortunately, this situation has resulted in the on-paper acceptance of the Convention by many countries, which have subsequently refused to pass into law legislation that would domesticate the Convention's anti-discrimination principles.

As of 2010, thirty-two African nations have acceded to the Convention, although fourteen of those have done so on-paper only, having implemented no enabling legislation in their parliaments or legislative bodies. Further, two nations—Ethiopia and Mali--have taken a “reservation,” indicating they will not comply with the Convention's language on female genital mutilation (FGM). But, although there is no enforcement of CEDAW implementation, there is accountability. Each signatory to the Convention must submit a national report no less frequently

than every four years to the CEDAW advisory committee of the United Nations. This report must delineate what measures, legislation, or policy enactment have (or have not) taken place to implement the CEDAW Convention and must include local, regional, state, and national measures. Thus, CEDAW provides a means by which to ascertain progress, or lack thereof, in all nations which have become parties to the Convention. In Kenya, only one piece of legislation, the Sexual Offenses Act (SOA 2006), has been passed to implement the Convention. While CEDAW is not considered of high importance by the Kenyan Parliament, women's advocates, nevertheless, take CEDAW reporting very seriously. Reports on lack of CEDAW implementation by the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-K) and by the Centre for Legislative Information Concerning Kenya (CLICK) are presented not only to the international CEDAW advisory board but also to the Kenyan Parliament, where they serve as educational and advocacy tools for policy development.

*Introduction of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act (2000)*

In 2000, women's advocacy organizations in Kenya prioritized the drafting of national legislation that would implement CEDAW policy in the area of domestic violence. These first legislative efforts resulted in the drafting of the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) bill in 2000. Representatives of FIDA-K wrote:

Although Kenya has ratified the CEDAW convention, it has not domesticated this convention as required... The result has been that women in particular have not been able to benefit from the convention; as far as the protocols are concerned, non-ratification has meant that Kenyans cannot access some of the mechanisms for seeking remedies at the international forum. Being dissatisfied by the

government's apparent lethargic approach, between the years 2000-2002, the women's civil society organizations started to agitate for and to draft gender-friendly laws such as the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Bill, that would give effect to the provisions of CEDAW (FIDA-K, 2007b, p.16).

However, despite the fact that Domestic Violence (Family Protection Act) was introduced into Kenya's parliament in 2000, it has not yet been enacted. In fact, it has, since its inception, been the subject of public and Parliamentary scorn and derision (Ndung'u , 2006; FIDA-K, 2008). No Parliamentary action was taken on the bill until 2007, when it was allowed to come before the full Parliament as a "motion." After debate, the bill was tabled for "future consideration" (FIDA-K, 2007; Kimuna & Djamba, 2008), an action which implies the relegation of the legislation to what amounts to a Parliamentary rubbish bin.

#### *The Sexual Offenses Act (2006)*

In 2004, the Sexual Offenses Act (SOA) was introduced in the Kenyan Parliament by female Parliamentarian, Honorable Njoki Ndung'u. The purpose of the legislation was to "address the rising problem of rape and sexual assaults in Kenya" and to "introduce stiffer penalties for offenders" (Ndung'u, 2006). Until that time, legal allusions to *rape* were spread through the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Criminal Amendment Act, and the Evidence Act. Such diffusion of definition and penalty made rape difficult to assess and punish. The Sexual Offenses Act (SOA) united all rape law under one act and redefined rape as a crime which not only included "forced sexual intercourse" between a male and a female (SOA, 2006) but also "male-on-male rape, child pornography, statutory rape, child trafficking, deliberate infection of HIV/AIDS, gang rape, and drug rape" (Ndung'u, 2006). The final version did not,



unfortunately, include the criminalization of either domestic violence or marital rape (FIDA-K, 2006). Although references to both domestic abuse and marital rape had been part of the original bill's language, references to both issues were reluctantly removed in January, 2006. The Bill was passed into law in July, 2006, becoming the first gender-related Act ever passed in the Kenyan Parliament.

### *Ongoing Advocacy*

The Kenyan Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-K), along with other advocacy organizations, has continued to lobby for the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act, as well as to educate women about their rights under the Sexual Offenses Act (SOA). As of 2008, FIDA-K has conducted dozens of workshops on gender-based violence throughout the country (FIDA-K, 2008). The organization has also published numerous reports, including a police training manual on *Gender and Human Rights* (FIDA-K, 2008), which attempts to educate police about gender-based violence, including what acts are criminal under Kenyan law; how to enforce the law; and how to handle survivors of gender-based violence.

### *Relationship between Research, Advocacy, and Policy*

Policy advocates cite one reason for the difficulty of implementing gender-related legislation in Kenya. Although Kenya acceded to the CEDAW convention in 1984, no research or data on gender-related issues existed that could be utilized for policy formulation. Frustrated policy advocates began demanding not only policy itself but the data that would make policy possible (FIDA-K, 1998; 1999; 2001). In 2003, the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) secured funding to conduct a survey to assess the “health and livelihood needs of residents of informal settlements in Nairobi,” and, by so doing, quantified for the first time

many factors that relate to gender-based violence. The study discussed poverty and made the link between income-level and domestic violence (APHRC, 2002). For example, the authors commented that

Slum dwellers contend that the little and unreliable income, and the difficult living conditions limit their access to basic services, thereby exposing them to a variety of problems, such as illnesses, domestic violence and diseases (APHRC, 2002, p. 9).

The report cites one interview with a wife and mother in the slum. She says:

It (domestic violence) is mostly due to the husband not having a job and the result is lack of food in the house and so the wife blames the husband because he is supposed to provide food but he is unable and that is where the fight begins (APHRC, 2002, p. 9).

In 2003, the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS, 2003), a general population census conducted nationally every five years, became the first survey instrument on the continent of Africa to include a module on domestic violence. The survey also streamlined and expanded data collection in other areas vital to women, such as rape, reproduction, nursing, and women's health. The KDHS (2003) made domestic violence and other women's issues visible and measurable for the first time. However, although advocates cited the APHRC (2002) survey as making important contributions to the passage of the first gender-related legislation in Kenyan history and the integration of gender concerns into the machinery of the Kenyan government, the KDHS (2003) domestic violence module seemed to have little positive effect on advocates' ability to lobby for domestic violence or marital rape language in the SOA (2006). The data were not convincing to Parliamentarians.

In 2006, the United Nations released the results of a survey entitled *Violence to Women and Girls in the Era of HIV and AIDS: A Situation and Response Analysis in Kenya* (UN-AIDS, 2006), which reported that 49% of Kenyan women experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime and 83% reported some form of sexual abuse during childhood (UN-AIDS, 2006). The purpose of the study was to “mainstream” the understanding of gender violence and to make data available for policy makers about the important link between gender-based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The study also paid specific attention to domestic violence, saying:

In many Kenyan cultures, husbands are deemed justified in beating their wives and marriage is considered blanket consent to intercourse. These cultural conditions are so ingrained that two out of three women agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife. Tragically, no law exists on preventing domestic violence in Kenya and abused wives have no viable means of recourse. Wives also have no guarantee of protection from rape by their husbands, as there is no law prohibiting spousal rape (UN-AIDS, 2006, p. 2).

The results of the UN-AIDS report were released in June, 2006. The report, nevertheless, appears to have had a significant effect on policy. The Sexual Offenses Act was enacted the following month (July 14, 2006), becoming the first and, so far, the only gender-related law in Kenya.

### *Research and Policy Enactment*

Research, in the form of country-specific surveys and multi-national comparisons, is vital for policy implementation in Kenya. Such research externalizes the problem of domestic violence, which is often hidden due to cultural stigma attached to the reporting of domestic abuse

(Amnesty International, 2002). Without research, it is impossible to point to the prevalence, extent, or public impact of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based abuse. Kimuna and Djamba remark:

There is a lack of information on accurate estimates of the magnitude of physical and sexual violence against women in Kenya due largely to violence being unreported; and in most cases, those reported are not recorded by authorities....Also because of the stigma attached to sexual abuse in many Kenyan cultures, women blame themselves and fear that they will be ostracized from society if they admit to being sexually abused. Thus, they continue to suffer in silence (Kimuna & Djamba 2008, p. 341)

The analysis and interpretation of already-existing data are also imperative. Policy makers are often disinclined to devote staff time to the sifting of particular statistics from masses of data. Nor are they able to apply statistical programs to the interpretation of these data. Academic researchers using available data sets are, therefore, crucial to providing information for both advocacy and policy-making. For example, Mugisha and Zulu interpreted statistics from the APHRC (2002) survey on the health and livelihood needs of residents of Nairobi slums (Mugisha & Zulu, 2004). Their study showed the positive correlation between substance use and rape, as well as a connection between gender-based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The paper also heightened the call for more research, which was carried out in 2006 by the United Nation's Commission on AIDS.

Other scholars' analyses of data from the KDHS (2003) survey have likewise been important. For example, Lawoko used these data to predict attitudes toward intimate partner violence (IPV) in cross-cultural situations (Lawoko, 2003). The study recommended the

construction of “need adapted interventions tailored to fit” particular cultural contexts (Lawoko, 2003, p.1056). Kimuna and Djamba also used the KDHS (2003) survey to interpret the correlates of physical and sexual wife abuse in Kenya (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008). Results of the analysis indicated that 40% of married women had experienced some kind of intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Multivariate analyses revealed that income level, religion, alcohol use, and type of employment “significantly increased the wife’s risk of physical and sexual abuse” (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008, p. 333).

#### *Post-Implementation Research and Surveys Needed*

Baseline research and the secondary interpretation of those data are vital to policy-making activities. But *post-implementation* research is also needed to monitor the mechanics of administration and service provision of the Sexual Offences Act (SOA). Recent journalistic reports have shown that women attempting to report sexual assaults have sometimes suffered from a subsequent sexual assault at the police station itself (FIDA-K, 2008). Others have been required to pay police officers to ensure that their case will be officially reported (HRW, 2003). Consequently, a second level of research is necessary, which can analytically evaluate the effect of policy implementation and provide documentation of its failure. Kenya’s association of women lawyers, FIDA-K, for example, has attempted to assemble statistics on the lack of service provision for women reporting rapes. However, because FIDA-K is a non-governmental organization (NGO) operating on a very small budget, its efforts do not provide national figures in this area. Advocacy organizations have appealed to the World Health Organization (WHO) and to the African Population and Health Research Council (APHRC), whose budgets may permit them greater scope, to conduct such post-implementation studies.

*Post-Election Violence 2007 and its Aftermath: Implications for 2012*

In December, 2007, progress toward eliminating gender-based violence in Kenya was derailed by post-election violence that spiraled out of control into a national, political, and humanitarian crisis. The trouble began on December 27, 2007, when incumbent President, Mwai Kibaki, was declared the winner of the hotly-contested Presidential election. The electoral contest had been closely watched, commanding the attention of the nation for months before its actual occurrence. In the eyes of many citizens, Kibaki represented the party and tribe of the elite—the Kikuyus. His opponent, Raila Odinga, a member of the Luo tribe, was commonly thought to be a man of the people. Sentiment among the poor was overwhelmingly for Odinga, although many poor Kikuyus, especially those in slums like Kibera, maintained their tribal loyalty to Kibaki. The election was expected to be close but, according to polls and public opinion, Odingo had the lead and was considered to be the likely, although narrow-margin, winner.

But on December 30, the electoral commission declared Kibaki the winner and, as night fell, the incumbent President took his oath of office in a secret behind-closed-doors ceremony and was sworn in for another 5-year term. Odinga charged that the election results were manipulated and demanded a recount or a new election. When Kibaki refused, the country exploded into ethnic violence which, by February, 2008, had left approximately 1,500 people dead; 600,000 displaced; and 42,000 homes and shops looted or burned to the ground (Reid, 2008). The violence ended only when former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan traveled to Kenya for mediation talks with Kibaki and Odinga (UN, 2008). These talks resulted in the creation of the National Accord and Reconciliation Act, which formed a coalition government, headed by Kibaki as President and Odinga as Prime Minister (UNHCHR, 2008). Since its

inception, however, the coalition has been an uneasy one. Both Kibaki and Odinga plan to run for the Presidency again in 2012, when another resurgence of ethnic and tribal violence is expected. In fact, according to a recent BBC report, both sides are already arming themselves with AK-47's and G-3 rifles (BBC, 2009). With weapons caches already in place for 2012, it is likely that violence, if it erupts, will be much more deadly.

The post-election violence hit Kibera and other Nairobi slums very hard. Sentiment in the slums was overwhelmingly for Odinga and orange-colored Odinga posters and banners temporarily brightened the mud-walled shacks of the slums during the months before the vote. In Kibera, which falls within the boundaries of Odinga's Parliamentary constituency, Odinga enthusiasm was so fiercely held that in early December, a teenaged boy wearing a Kibaki t-shirt was beaten and killed by an angry crowd (UNHCHR, 2008). Such pre-election violence, however, paled in comparison with the post-election riots in Kibera. As one commentator put it, Kibera "saw some of the worst violence, some of it ethnically-motivated attacks, some simple outrage at extreme poverty, and some the acts of criminal gangs who took the opportunity to enlarge their territory" (BBC, 2009). According to this BBC report, the violence continued sporadically from December, 2007 through February, 2008, with running battles, looting, burning of homes, and gang rape becoming common on Kiberan streets. Many residents fled. Those who did not were often barricaded in their homes for days at a time with no food or water. Women were raped and beaten in their homes by roving gangs. They were also attacked at so-called check-points when trying to shop for food or retrieve water.

The Kenyan post-election violence of 2007 is relevant to the current study for two reasons. First, although the violence had its base in political and ethnic conflict, there was a gender-based component that affected women on both sides of the political divide. Rape and

gang-rape were widespread and occurred despite women's tribal affiliations. Second, because the data for this study were being collected during the time of the riots, the diarists commented vividly and sometimes excruciatingly on this violence in their personal journals. The gender-based components of the 2007-08 political violence discussed by the diarists include: 1) personal experience of rape and/or beating; 2) witnessing rape/beating of relatives and friends; 3) death of friends and relatives; 4) personal experience of displacement and refugee status; 5) ongoing fear and suspicion of (particularly) male neighbors and associates.

Although the descriptions of post-election violence in women's diaries did not relate to familial or partner-violence, they, nevertheless, provided important insights into the ways in which gender-based violence was embedded in ethnic/political conflict. Women described ways that political violence became a cover for a generalized war on women, a war that included kidnapping, rape, gang-rape, and murder that had nothing to do with the ethnic battle in which Kibera was embroiled. As one writer remarked, "There was so much trauma that, until the day I kiss the grave, I will never forget those days" (Catherine, May, 2010).

Gender-based violence in Kenya is a social problem of the first magnitude. Legislation to deal with gender-based violence is stalled at the macro level because of the taken-for-granted patriarchal values on both the mezzo and micro levels. If values and traditions are not changed at the micro-level, it seems impossible to enact policy that will be enforceable. At the same time, without enforceable policy, it is difficult to change micro-level beliefs and behaviors. Kenyan women, especially those in Kibera, are caught in the crux of this dilemma. As Kenya moves into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, policies and attitudes about gender-based violence remain volatile, dangerous, and urgent.



## CHAPTER 4

### KIBERA

Kenya is a country about the size of the state of Nevada. It consists of nine provinces and a total area of 224,962 square miles (See Table 1). However, a large and growing proportion of the nation's population is concentrated in the province and city of Nairobi, in which more than two million people currently reside. Nairobi contains sixteen major slums, some of which are inside the city limits. Others are part of the city's urban sprawl but are *not* considered part of the city proper. Kibera is one of the latter, a burgeoning informal settlement on the outskirts of the main metropolitan area. It is the largest slum in Nairobi and also holds the dubious distinction of being the second largest urban slum on the African continent (Davis, 2006). A formal census has never been done in Kibera but experts estimate its population to be between 800,000 and 1.5 million people (Davis, 2006; UN-HABITAT, 2003). Although Kibera is only about three miles from Nairobi's downtown city center, it is as different from that hotel-studded metropolitan neighborhood as night is from day. Poverty is extreme in Kibera and basic necessities--such as sanitation, garbage removal, and running water--do not exist. This teeming city-within-a-city began as a soldiers' community and has grown to be one of the most notorious shantytowns on the planet.

#### *History of Kibera*

Kibera began as a settlement for Nubian soldiers who had served the British government during World War I. In return for their services, these soldiers were given plots of land on the outskirts of Nairobi. Because the land in those days was still covered with trees, the Nubians called it Kibera, or "the forest." The colonial British government, which governed Kenya at the

time, let the informal settlement continue to grow for the next five decades, during which time other tribes moved in and rented land from Nubian landlords. But in 1963, when Kenya achieved independence from England, Kibera was declared an unauthorized settlement by the new Kenyan government. Nevertheless, people continued to live there, simply because they had no choice. They could not afford to pay rent in the mainstream part of the city but *could* afford the \$10-20/month for a mud-walled hut in the slum. The population has continued to increase until the present day, despite the fact that the city maintains its refusal to “recognize” Kibera as a legal part of city of Nairobi. For that reason, Kibera receives no municipal services or public utilities. All services provided in Kibera are private and, thus, expensive. As one resident of the slum has remarked, “It is expensive to be poor” (J. Muhoro, personal communication, December, 2008).

### *The Growth of the “Post-Modern Slum”*

According to UN experts, our planet has recently undergone an unprecedented demographic shift. The majority of the world’s six billion inhabitants now live in cities and, of these, more than one third live in slums (Davis, 2006; UN-HABITAT, 2003). Davis has described the rapid and voracious urbanization of the planet:

The earth has urbanized even faster than originally predicted by the Club of Rome in its notoriously Malthusian 1972 report *Limits of Growth*. In 1950, there were 86 cities in the world with a population of more than one million; today there are 400, and by 2015 there will be at least 550. Cities, indeed, have absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population explosion since 1950, and are currently growing by a million babies and migrants each week...The global countryside, meanwhile, has reached its maximum population and will begin to shrink after

2020. As a result, cities will account for virtually all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 10 billion in 2050. Ninety-five percent of this final build-out of humanity will occur in the urban areas of developing countries (Davis, 2006, p. 1-2).

Such burgeoning urban growth has given rise to the term “mega-city.” Mexico City tops the list of mega-cities in the developing world, with a population of 22.1 million, closely followed by Sao Paulo, Mumbai, and Delhi. But a city doesn’t have to be a mega-city to have a mega-slum attached to it. In fact, slum growth everywhere in the global “south” has outpaced urbanization *per se*. Davis explains that:

In the Amazon, one of the world’s fastest-growing urban frontiers, 80 percent of city growth has been in the shantytowns largely unserved by established utilities and municipal transport, thus making ‘urbanization’ and ‘favelization’ synonymous....The African situation, of course, is even more extreme. Africa’s slums are growing at twice the speed of the continent’s exploding cities. Indeed, an incredible 85% of Kenya’s population growth between 1989 and 1999 was absorbed into the fetid, densely packed slums of Nairobi and Mombasa (Davis, 2006, p. 17-18).

With a population of approximately one million people, Kibera is a mega-slum, whose booming population can be attributed not only to a high birth rate but also to such factors as rural droughts, climate change, tribal conflict, and wars in bordering countries that create refugee populations. Whatever the cause of migration, though, settlers often find there is no going “back.” In fact, informants participating in the current study have written that they or their families have tried to go “home” to rural areas, only to find that the land is parched, newly-built

dams have dried up rivers, or the weather is no longer favorable to farming and cultivation. Such families are forced back to Kibera, seeking sustenance in urban squalor. Unfortunately, Kibera is illustrative of what Davis describes as the urban trend for the next millennium:

Thus, the cities of the future, rather than being made out of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay (Davis, 2006, p. 18-19).

### *Population*

Indeed, both pollution and people are burgeoning in Kibera. Experts have called Kibera one of the most crowded places on the planet. Although it is only about the size of New York's Central Park (1.5 square miles) the slum has a staggering population density of about 1250 people/acre (See Figure 1). Unfortunately, though, all population statistics—both numeric counts and density ratios—are estimates. There has never been a thorough census in Kibera, although current NGO projects aspire to that goal (Map Kibera, 2010).

The population of Kibera is extremely diverse. Although some ethnic enclaves do exist in Kibera—Mashimoni holds the largest Muslim and Nubian populations, for example, and Laini Saba is almost exclusively Kikuyu—the population of the slum is not for the most part ethnically stratified. Instead, it is remarkably fluid in terms of ethnicity, tribe, and religion. Because Kibera experienced tribal violence in 2007-2008, however, some of the current study's informants have reported that residents are intentionally moving to areas of the slum where their particular tribe is

dominant. That is, Kikuyus are moving to Laini Saba and other Kikuyu-dominated streets or neighborhoods. Luos, the other most prevalent tribe in Kibera, are likewise situating themselves in Luo-dominated areas. Such intentional relocation within the slum may produce a degree of ethnic and tribal stratification that has not heretofore existed in Kibera.

### *Geography*

Kibera is located along the southwestern edge of Nairobi and its southern border is bounded by the Nairobi River, which flows into the Nairobi Dam (see Figure 2). On the north, it is bounded by the Mbagathi Highway and by the upscale Royal Nairobi Golf Course. The Uganda Railroad runs through the center of the slum, adding to the pollution and noise of the settlement. Because residents' shacks are built up to and almost touching the railroad track, train accidents and car derailments are disastrous, with derailed train cars sometimes crushing Kibera residents in their shacks (*Daily Nation*, 2009). Because of the slum's river-basin location, it is frequently flooded, especially during the rainy season. Being in a valley also means that paths and alleys through the slum are often on steep inclines, causing mud slides and making paths treacherous for pedestrians. In fact, water pours right into and through Kiberan "houses" when it rains. One resident has remarked that "when it rains, no one sleeps in Kibera. Everyone must stand up for the night, leaning against the wall with his possessions, especially his mattress, beside him" (J. Muhoro, personal communication, December, 2009).

Kibera is divided into twelve villages (see Figure 3), the borders of which are indistinct and permeable. The villages include (from West to East) Kianda, Soweto West, Raila, Batwekera, Kbumu Ndogo, Kambi Muru, Lindi, Bilanga, Soweto East, Laini Saba, Mashimoni, and Makina. There is currently no reliable map of Kibera and the lay-out of the slum changes

constantly, partly because there are no paved streets in the slum, only mud paths and alley-ways. One expert has called Kibera “a jumble of garbage-strewn streets and alleys, the exact lay-out changing from week to week. Finding a path through the shantytown presents a constant challenge even to locals” (Underhill, 2010). However, this situation may soon change for the better.

### *Map Kibera Project*

In 2009, an innovative project was initiated which attempts to “map” Kibera and create a user-friendly depiction of the slum’s lay-out. As envisioned, the map will contain “all the information that the inhabitants—rather than the authorities—need for survival” (Underhill, 2010). In fact, the map will show

. . . the location of a range of landmarks and facilities from water pumps, latrines, schools and health clinics to shops, churches, and mosques. But the map is intended for much more than navigation. Its backers see the project as part of a wider drive to empower slum residents, providing the data they need to deal with the authorities and take control of their own future (Underhill, 2010).

The Map Kibera project received initial funding from the US-based organization Jumpstart International and partnered with several Kenyan-based NGO’s. Project leaders then trained a team of cartographers armed with basic GPS devices to “pinpoint the sites they considered important, then upload the data onto the computer” (Underhill, 2010). Organizers hope that the benefits to the Kiberan community will be two-fold. First, the map will provide a better understanding of Kibera’s geography and will “help NGO’s to fill the gaps in basic services—whether it’s sanitation or electricity—that the community badly needs” (Underhill,

2010). Furthermore, the project is utilizing Kiberan students and residents to help create the map, thereby providing jobs and expertise, as well as “spreading technological know-how” (Underhill, 2010) among residents of the slum.

### *Environmental Degradation*

Map creators, however, face a difficult battle as they attempt to navigate environmental conditions in the slum. Not only does Kibera have problems with overcrowding and with the existence of other negative stimuli, such as noise. It is also heavily polluted by garbage, human and animal waste, smoke and soot. Because there is no municipal garbage removal in the slum, huge mountains of garbage surround Kibera, through which many people sift for food and saleable items. It is not uncommon to see children standing on a mountain of refuse, picking through rotten fruit for bites to eat. It is also normal for the garbage dump to become a person’s “place of business,” since scavenging through these mountains of trash provides a subsistence-level income for many who retrieve wire, paper, and plastic for re-sale.

Furthermore, there is no public sanitation or sewage system in Kibera. Public latrines ooze human waste into the ground water and open sewage runs along alleys and paths throughout the slum. Because water is piped into Kibera at ground level through a spaghetti-like maze of easily-cracked plastic and PVC pipes, ground water often contaminates piped drinking water. Diseases such as cholera and typhoid are common. Although NGO’s and private companies have built a few sporadic cement-block-and-concrete toilets throughout the slum, there is usually a fee for using them. Furthermore, toilets are dangerous places to go at night, especially for women, who risk rape if they attempt to visit a toilet facility (Pflanz, 2011).

Hence, people eliminate waste into plastic bags, tie them, and throw them into a garbage dump or into the street. Davis has remarked that

. . . in Nairobi, the Laini Saba area of Kibera in 1998 had exactly ten working pit latrine toilets for 40,000 people, while in Mathare there were two public toilets for 28,000 people. As a result, slum residents rely on ‘flying toilets’ or ‘scud missiles,’ as they are called. They put the waste in a polythene bag and throw it on to the nearest roof or pathway (Davis, 2006, p.139).

Indeed, Kibera is littered with fetid and smelly plastic bags, which, once the waste has seeped out or dried, linger on the ground and crunch underfoot like ominous dry autumn leaves.

#### *Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP)*

In 2007, in order to alleviate (and eventually eliminate) such squalor, the Kenyan government, in conjunction with the United Nations (UN-HABITAT) and other non-governmental agencies, began the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) in Kibera. The program hopes to “facelift the housing and sanitary conditions” (*Standard*, 2008) of the slum. When plans were originally laid out, it was thought that the upgrade would take approximately nine years to complete and would re-house all one million Kibera residents in new housing adjacent to or on the site of the current slum. As envisioned by its planners, the new community would include schools, markets, and playgrounds. On September 16, 2009, the first group of 1500 Kibera residents were moved from their mud shacks into 300 newly-constructed apartments in what looked like a very successful beginning to the new enterprise.

However, problems soon began to arise. First of all, poor families who moved from the slum into the new high-rise apartments were soon found to be sub-letting the new places to



middle-class families and moving back to Kibera. Further, it soon became clear that three other significant factors will delay—if not defeat—the planners’ vision. For example, building materials cannot be left unattended on-site without a substantial portion of them being stolen. Second, the lack of proper building foundations makes new construction unstable and dangerous. Because much of the ground upon which Kibera sits is literally garbage, many new structures collapse when the slum experiences flooding, which it does regularly. Finally, the overcrowded and cramped conditions of the slum make construction extremely difficult. Because there are no paved roads, there is no easy access for construction equipment, such as bulldozers. And much of Kibera is on a steep incline, which makes construction difficult, even if a temporary road is made by demolishing standing structures.

If those problems are not enough, there are also ongoing lawsuits that attempt to stop the upgrade. The most prominent litigation comes from a group of 80 landlords who claim that the land Kibera is built on is theirs and, therefore, the government cannot demolish existing shacks and construct new buildings. As recently as July, 2010, the Kenyan High Court announced yet another delay in upgrade construction and relocation, saying that the project cannot move forward until a high court ruling, which may come as late as October, 2010 (*East African*, 2010). As problems and impediments continue to multiply, one expert has remarked that, at its current rate of progress, the Kibera upgrade will take 1,178 years to complete (*The Standard*, 2009).

### *Daily Lives of Women*

Indeed, with the Upgrade program stalled, Kiberans, particularly women, have little hope of escaping the slum in the foreseeable future. Human rights advocates, recalling Hobbes, have called life for women in Kibera “nasty, brutish, and short” (Warah, 2002). Yet, within the

context of personal, environmental, and political violence, women in Kibera, nevertheless, struggle to make viable lives for themselves and their children. Although unemployment or sporadic employment is the norm for both men and women in the slum, women are even more marginalized than men and must resort to creative strategies to earn money to feed themselves and their families.

### *The Gendered Division of Labor in the Informal Economy*

Women in Kibera routinely market home-based products and skills in order to survive. This “extended organization of domesticity into the public sphere” (Harrison, 1991, p. 183) produces a division of labor based on gender. For example, while men in Kibera seek jobs in day-labor (construction or road repair), scavenging, or drug-selling, women usually market skills having to do with food preparation, household maintenance, child care, personal grooming, or sex. All participants in the current study engaged in one or more of the following activities during the course of the diary project: laundry within the slum, laundry outside the slum, housecleaning, selling cooked food in vending stalls, selling cooked food to vendors by walking from stall to stall, styling/plaiting hair, selling charcoal for cooking, selling fresh produce in a vending stall, selling packets of nuts on the highway, or performing childcare for working women.

Of course, these jobs do not always produce enough money for a family’s needs and every diarist said she also needed male support in order to survive. Furthermore, the work is extremely arduous and time-consuming. For example, if a woman chooses to do laundry, she also must buy and carry the water necessary to wash the clothes. That likely means that she must carry several 20-liter jerry cans of water from a water point, which may be as much as a

kilometer away from her residence. The cost of the water, of course, must be subtracted from her daily earnings. Similarly, if a woman chooses to sell vegetables at a kiosk in Kibera, she must not only pay rent on the kiosk, she must also travel daily to a market in the city center to purchase fresh items. The cost of the transportation, in money and in time, must be subtracted from her resources. A woman's difficulty is increased if she has young children. With child care virtually non-existent in the slum, a woman must either leave her children with family or neighbors—or the children must accompany her to work. One widow, Wilbroda Wandera, who lives in Kibera with her ten children, has remarked:

I have sold mandazi (donuts) and worked as a cleaner at the Catholic church nearby. One time, I got lucky when the local chief allowed me to build a kiosk near the road; I used the front part as a salon, where I plaited people's hair and lived in the back with my children. However, this was demolished in 2007 to pave way for the Kibera slum upgrading programme. Now I live near the river, where I have built a mud structure. We mostly live on one meal a day. This is hard, especially on the children. I have learnt to make meals for the whole family even when I only have 40 shillings (.49). With this, I will buy maize flour for 20 shillings, sugar for five, paraffin for ten, a lemon or two and water for three. This will make a pot of porridge and everyone can get a cup. That takes us to the next day (IRIN, 2010).

Unfortunately, the daily life described by Wandera is not unusual. According to the United Nations Office of Humanitarian Affairs, the per capita income in Kibera for women is about 100 shillings (about \$1.22) or less per day (IRIN, 2010). Spending the full 100 shillings on food would produce a healthier and more satisfying meal, one that might include vegetables

and/or corn meal dumplings (ugali). However, it is risky to spend the entire daily income on food and water because rent (\$20-30/month) and school fees must also be paid from the accumulated daily wages. Although primary schools are theoretically free in Kenya since 2002, many Kiberans find that free government schools are too far away from the slum for their children to attend. Therefore, slum residents often find themselves paying for private primary schooling in the slum, another way in which the poor pay (or pay *more*) for basic services than do people in the general population.

Such expenses lead some women into lives of crime, engaging in such illegal activities as brewing illegal alcohol, known as changaa; selling drugs, such as glue or marijuana; or prostitution. These activities are often paired for maximum economic gain. A woman or team of women may brew and sell changaa from their place of residence, permitting their customers to drink the brew on the premises, where they may also purchase sexual favors from the women. It must be noted, however, that there is more than one kind of prostitution in Kibera. There is an active commercial sex industry and some women engage in prostitution in their homes, as described above, in cheap Kibera brothels, or in Nairobi night clubs, hotels or discos. Some work independently; many are managed by pimps, especially in the tourist areas of Nairobi. However, there is a second kind of commercial sex, known in the slum as “survival sex,” through which women will agree to sleep with an acquaintance or a neighbor for a fee. The fee is often 100 shillings, just enough to feed the woman’s family for a day. Survival sex is largely condoned and sometimes even respected in the slum because it is understood that a woman has no other choice than to exchange her body for enough food to survive. Women, such as the diarists in the current study, make a distinction between prostitution and survival sex. In fact, they often write in their

diaries that they are not prostitutes and that they regret exchanging sex for money. As one diarist writes, “Poorness forces me to do so” (Marya, May 2010).

Indeed, “poorness” forces women in Kibera to make difficult choices about many things, as they negotiate daily survival within the bounds of stark slum reality. Thus, everyday interactions-- in their homes, their work, and on the street--determine whether they will succeed or fail—whether they will live or die.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### *Theoretical Framework: The Ecological Model*

The current study attempted to describe the lived experience of twenty young women in Kibera, Kenya, particularly in relation to how these young women coped with gender-based violence. Because the aim of the study was to describe the multi-dimensional daily reality of the writers, an ecological model was chosen to provide the study's framework. This model made it possible to describe and analyze how gender-based violence pervaded various levels of the social environment of the diarists. The version of the ecological model used for in current study was adapted by Heise (1998) from Belsky's study of child abuse (1980) and applied to interpersonal violence. Heise's model is based on results from both quantitative and qualitative studies regarding the possible causal factors of gender-based abuse and serves as a framework for understanding the multiple contextual layers within which women experience gender-based violence. These layers--the micro-, mezzo-, and macro-systems of the ecological model—enabled me to analyze women's personal, familial, and societal experiences of abuse and also to understand how these layers of experiences were connected. As illustrated in Figure 4, diarists' lives were rooted in gender-based violence, which was often present in their families of origin and extended through the micro (personal), mezzo (community), and macro (societal) levels of their social environment. The use of the ecological model enabled the analysis of these various levels of violence, as they intersected and interacted with one another and as they related to women's identity and agency.

### *Theory One: Multi-Cultural Feminism*

Two particular theories spoke to the overlapping and interlinking of the different spheres within the ecological model and were used in this study to explicate the multi-dimensional aspects of gender-based violence. Multi-cultural feminist theory was particularly useful in understanding the macro-system that overarched individuals' experience of gender-based violence. In particular, this theory provided a "set of analytic premises for thinking about and theorizing gender" (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996, p. 26). Collins has described the wide range of overarching and interlocking inequalities within which women organize their lives as a "matrix of domination" (Collins, 2000, p. 246), a web through which several fundamental *systems* of inequality work *with* and *through* each other. Baca Zinn and Dill describe the operation of this "matrix:"

People experience race, class, gender, and sexuality differently depending upon their social location in the structures of race, class, gender, and sexuality. For example, people of the same race will experience race differently depending on their location in the class structure as working class, professional managerial class, or unemployed; in the gender structure as female or male; and in structures of sexuality as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996, p. 26).

Multi-cultural feminism attempts to "go beyond the individual visions of singular feminist efforts" (Mendez, 2008) by acknowledging these multiple oppressions and how they are socially constructed into women's communities and societies (Shohat, 2001). It takes into account the "political forces that exalt certain identities of women and allow for the socially constructed roles of these women to become oppressive forces" (Mendez, 2008) and, in so doing,

spotlights the overarching social beliefs, norms, and values that may strongly affect both male and female behavior in the area of gender-based violence.

Multi-cultural feminism also emphasizes the “relational nature” of dominance and subordination, as well as the “interplay of social structure with women’s agency” (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996, p. 27). That is, “within the constraints of race, class, and gender oppression, women create viable lives for themselves, their families, and their communities” (Baca Zinn & Dill, 1996, p. 27) on a daily basis at the interactional level. Such a theoretical approach is particularly applicable to the Kibera study because it can apply within or across cultures (Collins, 2000, p. 248), showing how structural inequalities are mediated through *local* and personal realities:

. . . regardless of how any given matrix is actually organized either across time or from society to society, the concept of a matrix of domination encapsulates the universality of intersecting oppressions as organized through local realities (Collins, 2000, p. 246).

Thus, multi-cultural feminist theory helps explicate the relationship between societal and individual realities.

Chandra Mohanty (1986, 2003) builds on this relational theory by discussing the importance of understanding *where* that theory is situated and from whose perspective we orient our vision. Mohanty (2003) argues that multi-cultural feminism must be cognizant of the ways in which knowledge is produced and the ways in which women’s knowledge, in particular, is often over-shadowed by masculinist discourse. In order to “make effective interventions in the production of knowledge” (Kennedy & Beins, 2005, p. 9), Mohanty maintains that feminists should anchor their “analyses in the poorest of women’s communities, arguing that their



standpoint helps reveal the totality of power relations” (Kennedy & Beins, 2005, p. 9) in a globalizing world. Mohanty writes:

This analysis begins from and is anchored in the place of the most marginalized communities of women—poor women of all colors in affluent and neocolonial nations; women of the Third World/South or the Two-Thirds World. I believe that this experiential and analytic anchor in the lives of marginalized communities of women provides the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice (Mohanty, 2003, p. 231).

She goes on to explain why the situating of perspective among the poor helps explicate systems of interlocking oppression that are often invisible to Western eyes:

Beginning from the lives and interests of marginalized communities of women, I am able to access and make the workings of power visible—to read up the ladder of privilege. It is more necessary to look upward—colonized peoples must know themselves and the colonizer. This particular marginalized location makes the politics of knowledge and the power investments that go along with it visible so that we can engage in work to transform the use and abuse of power. The analysis draws on the notion of epistemic privilege as it is developed by feminist standpoint theorists...who provide an analysis of experience, identity, and the epistemic effects of social location (Mohanty, 2003, p. 231).

Mohanty also emphasizes the importance of stories and story-telling in the creation of women’s knowledge and pedagogy. It is through sharing stories, she believes, that woman can create a new kind of feminist knowledge, “which challenges colonial relations and fosters feminist solidarity across difference” (Kennedy & Beins, 2005, p. 9). Mohanty’s theories have

clear and profound implications for the current study, which attempts to ground its perspective in that of Kiberan women—some of the poorest of the world’s poor—by understanding the stories they construct about their own *lived* experience of gender-based violence.

### *Theory Two: Interaction Ritual and “Doing” Gender*

The concern with interactions at the level of “local realities” makes multi-cultural feminism uniquely compatible with a second theoretical approach-- the symbolic interactionist perspective--with its focus on the specific meaning interactions have at the individual level. According to Herbert Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism is built on three basic premises. First, individuals act toward things based on the *meaning* those things have for the people doing the interacting. Second, meanings are not derived from intrinsic properties of things, nor do they exist as part of the psychological process of specific individuals. Instead, meanings arise through social interaction between individuals and other social actors. Third, although meanings are produced through social interaction, they are constantly modified through an ongoing process of interpretation. Such a theory is especially well-suited for understanding gender in the context of the current study because it makes possible the understanding of gender as an ongoing *process*.

Erving Goffman (1959, 1967) set the stage for understanding gender as something that is “done” rather than something that is intrinsic to individuals. Goffman focused on ways in which human interaction is analogous to the theatre—with a front stage, a back stage, and self-conscious rehearsals for interactive stage performances, during which individuals’ identities are dependent on successful and convincing portrayals. According to Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective, individuals are able to retain their gender identities as long as they commit no grievous errors in their performances to make their audience doubt them.

West and Zimmerman (1987) built on this idea, creating the theory of “doing” gender, in which they describe gender as a routine, methodological, and recurring accomplishment that is undertaken by both men and women “whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production” (West & Zimmerman, 2005, p. 126). “Doing” gender is an interactive process:

To ‘do’ gender is not always to live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity; it is to engage in behavior at the risk of gender assessment. While it is individuals who do gender, the enterprise is fundamentally interactional and institutional in character, for accountability is a feature of social relationships and its idiom is drawn from the institutional arena in which those relationships are enacted (West & Zimmerman, 2005, p. 136-37).

On the micro-level of women’s experience, it is particularly useful to apply the concept of “doing” gender as a means of understanding the ongoing interplay of gender construction and women’s agency. The agential choices women made in relation to their experience of gender-based violence in Kibera helps explain their strategies for coping with such violence—strategies which may have resulted from the interplay of performance and expected gender norms. As Stewart has remarked, the combination of feminist theory with the symbolic interactionist perspective advances the understanding of gender construction and illuminates “the ongoing interaction between self and society, viewing them as mutually influential” (Stewart, 2003, p. 73).

In sum, the ecological model, explicated by two theories, sheds light on the daily lives of the Kiberan diarists and their strategies for coping with gender-based violence. Multi-cultural feminism enables an analysis of the macro-system of structural oppression. Symbolic interactionist theory helps understand the micro-system of “doing gender” on a daily basis. When

women in Kibera “do” gender, they link micro and macro levels of experience through the roles they play in their public lives. By so doing, they negotiate their own survival.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

#### *The Study*

Data for this project were in the form of daily and weekly diaries by twenty women residents of Kibera, Kenya. The diaries were begun in March, 2007 and continued through April, 2010. The “diary project” was originally presented to young women by leaders of a Kibera youth group, in which they regularly participated. The idea was to enlist the young women in pro-social activities, to discourage “street” activities, such as involvement in prostitution and drugs, and to hone their verbal and vocabulary skills. Those women who chose to participate in the journal project could not afford paper or pens, which were provided by the youth group.

#### *Participants*

Participants in the study, referred to herein by pseudonyms, were all born in Kibera and have lived in the slum for their entire lives. They ranged in age from 18-27 (ages given in the text are women’s ages in 2010). During the course of this study, Betta (19) lived with her parents and her baby son; Cara (21) lived with and cared for her mother and her baby daughter. Cathy M. (18) lived in a tense and tenuous household with her brother and sister-in-law. Catherine (22) lived with her family of origin when the project began but was abandoned by them in 2008. After that time, she attempted to support herself and her younger brother through manual labor and prostitution. Dee (27) lived with her father when she began journaling but was forced by her father to move into her mother’s smaller room when she became pregnant with her third child. She subsequently lived with an uncle, with a sister, and on her own. Elizabeth (20) lived with her adult sister. Emma (21) briefly attended secondary school outside the slum but failed to make the

required grades to remain a student. She returned to Kibera where she lived with her family of origin. Gemma (23) lived with her three children. She worked with her mother selling food in a kiosk and made beads to sell on the street to supplement their income. JC (22) lived predominantly with her family of origin but spent some months living with her boyfriend. Jane (19) lived with her family of origin. Janet (20) returned to her family of origin after a brief, unsuccessful marriage. Judy (23) lived with her husband and their baby daughter. Marya (20) lived with her mother and her young child. Sally (18) lived with her aunt and brother. Sarah (20) lived with her mother, several siblings, and her baby. Susanna (19) lived with her husband and their young son. Terry (19) lived with her family of origin. Eliza (25), Ina (22), and Mary (22) lived on the street or with serial male partners. All of the women except Catherine and Emma attended only primary school. Catherine attended two years of secondary school but was forced to drop out because of her family's lack of school fees. Emma attended secondary school for less than a year. In Kenya, primary school is free but secondary school is not, meaning that many children from poor families attain only a primary-level education (see Table 2).

### *Diary Data*

The journal project came to my attention in 2007 while I was working on a study related to street gangs and social networks in another part of Kibera. After returning to the United States, I created a study design and research protocol through which to analyze the journals. When these documents were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I returned to Kibera, met with the diarists, and asked their consent to do a study of their journals. After signing consent forms, twenty-six women shared the contents of their diaries. Although none of the women refused me access to her journals, I chose only twenty to be part of my ongoing research. There

was a wide divergence in both the amount of writing submitted and the quality of those submissions. For example, some women presented as few as two entries. Others had written consistently for several months and indicated a desire to write on a regular basis. Diaries selected for inclusion in the study were chosen on the basis of the *consistency of entry*, in that each diarist's work-- at the time of the study's inception--represented at least six months of continuous accounts. The other selection criteria was *density of narrative*, in that each selected diary showed a degree of engagement with the work that constituted more than a simple listing of daily activities. So that the study might provide insights into both populations, I made an effort to choose from the journals of both *street* and *housed* women, according to which contributions in each category best met the inclusion criteria. Diarists whose work was selected to be part of the ongoing study continued to write until April, 2010, at which time data collection was terminated.

### *Survey Data*

In order to provide supplemental and contextual background for diary data, a survey was administered in December, 2009 to a group of 200 Kiberan women between the ages of 18-36. The survey collected demographic data from respondents, not including the diarists, as well as information about the nature, meaning, and consequences of gender violence respondents had experienced. Survey questions pertained to five general areas. The first section collected *demographic* details, including women's age, birthplace, marital status, living arrangement, and source of income. The second section gathered data on women's *attitudes* toward gender-based violence, including information on whether they ever considered gender-based violence justified and under what circumstances. For example, women were asked if they believed a husband or boyfriend was justified in beating his female partner if she went out with telling him; neglected

their children; argued with him; refused to have sex with him; or burned food. The third section presented questions about the *reasons why women may or may not exert control or agency* in relation to their daily lives and, specifically, in relation to partner violence. For example, women were asked to indicate whether they made agential decisions (to resist or accept violence, for example) based on fear of reprisal from their spouse; on social approval and social norms; or on their own beliefs regarding their partners' behaviors. The fourth section gathered specific and detailed data on the *type and prevalence* of partner-violence, presenting women with eleven different kinds of violence and asking whether they had experienced that type of abuse from a partner and, if so, who had perpetrated it and how often. For example, women were asked if their partners had humiliated, threatened, push, slapped, punched, or kicked them, as well as whether they had ever been attacked with a weapon or raped by their partner. For every "yes," response, women were asked whether that violence had been perpetrated by a husband or a boyfriend. They were also asked how many times such violence had happened—one to five times; six to ten times; or eleven or more times. Finally, the last section asked women about their *coping strategies* in response to gender-based violence and how they felt about the abuse. Women were asked, for example, if they ever talked to anyone about the violence (a minister, family, friends, children, partner, counselor, or no one). They were asked to indicate what helped most to cope with violence. Among the choices were *having faith in God; getting professional counseling; getting husband to change; becoming a better wife; or ending the relationship*. Women were also asked to indicate their subjective response to the violence they experienced—anger, sadness, acceptance, or non-acceptance.

The survey was designed to collect both demographic, prevalence, and attitudinal data among 200 women in the same age range as the diarists. It was my hope that the survey would



provide rich, contextual detail about the age-group cohort of which the diarists were a part. In this way, following Miller, I hoped to provide “a relatively holistic assessment” of how gender-based violence among the diarists was “situated in the wider context of youths’ neighborhoods and in their peer...relationships” (Miller, 2008, p.14).

### *Ethics and Protection of Human Subjects*

Both the qualitative and quantitative components of this study were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Central Florida (UCF). Each diarist participating in the study signed an Informed Consent document, confirming that she agreed to allow her journal to be analyzed for the current project. Diaries were turned in to the youth group director every four weeks, at which point they were placed in a sealed envelope and sent to me via Federal Express. As journals were received by me, they were copied to preserve the integrity of the original documents. They were also transcribed into computer files. All dates attached to the diary texts and transcriptions correspond to the dates diaries were *written*, not the date diaries were received by me. Original diaries, copies, and transcriptions were stored in separate, locked filing cabinet in the office of the Principle Investigator (myself) at the University of Central Florida. A pseudonym was attached to each diary to protect the identity of its author. No identifiers other than these pseudonyms were attached to any transcribed diary or to any quote lifted from a transcribed diary.

Survey participants were recruited via flyers and posters distributed through the offices of Kiberan youth and women’s organizations. The survey was administered by Joyce Ojiema, a Kenyan nurse and women’s health advocate employed by the African Medical, Research, and Educational Foundation (AMREF). (For a complete account of the rationale behind the decision

for Ms. Ojiema to administer the survey, see Chapter 7). Ms. Ojiema met with the Principle Investigator prior to survey administration to ensure that she was able to answer any questions that might be asked by participants. The survey was administered at the Laini Saba YWCA in Kibera, a location that was deemed convenient and comfortable for participants. Before survey administration began, informed consent documents were distributed to each participant, letting them know that they were not required to participate in the study and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were asked to keep the informed consent document for their records. To ensure the anonymity of participants, no identifiers were attached to questionnaires. When informants had completed the surveys, the questionnaires were deposited into a box at the front of the room, which was collected by Ms. Ojiema at the end of the session and subsequently delivered to the Principal Investigator. All questionnaires are stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the Principal Investigator.

#### *Data Coding and Analysis (Diary Data)*

The diaries were transcribed verbatim. The final analysis was performed on 431 single-spaced pages of diary data, comprising 205,104 words. Diaries were analyzed using inductive coding techniques (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), through which they were reviewed and coded to identify patterns and emerging themes, first in regard to the general context of the diarists' lives and later in regard to the specific theme of gender-based violence. This process was begun using *open coding and microanalysis*, through which the diaries as "texts" were examined in a line-by-line fashion, with attention paid to individual statements, specific words, stylistic technique, and metaphors. This analysis was followed by *axial coding*, in which categories and sub-categories were related to one another "to form more precise and

complete explanations about phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.124). Finally, *selective coding* was used to integrate the categories, adding nuance and refinement that enabled theory to be built from the data.

### *Open Coding Process*

I began my data analysis with a line-by-line open coding process, through which I attempted to discover “nuggets” of meaning in diarists’ daily accounts (Glaser & Strauss, p. 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I approached the process as a *questioning* activity, continually asking the same question of chunks of data in a line-by-line fashion: “What is important to this diarist today?” I did not look for closure to that question but, instead, used it to open up lines of inquiry. I wrote key words in the margins of transcribed diary pages and then color-coded the chunks of text where these key themes appeared. I then went through a period of sorting, in which I sought relationships between key words and concepts, combining them into categories and sub-categories.

After I had conducted this process for each diarist’s data for the years 2007-2010, I recorded the core themes for each diarist (See Table 3). This process enabled me to understand the setting in which each individual diary was situated and provided a contextual understanding of the physical and social environment in which the diarist wrote.

After I had recorded the primary themes for each participant, I undertook a comparison of those themes, looking for commonalities of occurrence across the diary data. My analysis revealed seven common themes that were present in the diaries of ALL participants for the years 2007-2010. This process provided me with an expanded sense of contextual meaning for the group of diaries as a whole. I did not, however, dismiss or “throw out” themes that were not

common to all diaries. On the contrary, these themes were very helpful in identifying “negative” and “outlier” cases and were strategic to my later data analysis process. However, as my initial coding process unfolded, an understanding of themes common to *all* diarists enabled me not only to understand how their contexts overlap but also enabled me to understand how and *to what extent* my main area of concern—gender-based violence—ranked among the themes that diarists considered important to their daily lives. Common themes emerging among the data of all diarists were *economic need, work, gender-based violence, family, spirituality, female support, and hope/dreams*.

Themes that were not shared by all diarists included *schooling* (mentioned by nine writers); *tribal violence* (mentioned by eight writers); *personal drug use* (mentioned by six writers); *abortion* (mentioned by five writers); *street life/homelessness* (mentioned by three writers); *isolation* (mentioned by two writers); *aesthetics/art work* (mentioned by two writers); *fear* (mentioned by two writers); *despair* (mentioned by three writers); *duty* (mentioned by two writers); *and partner’s drug use* (mentioned by two writers) (See Table 3).

To better understand the extent to which common themes were stressed in individual diaries, I also created a frequency table (see Table 4), which records the number of times per week each diarist mentioned each of the common themes in the diary data. These themes are listed according to the frequency with which they occurred in the data. The theme of economic need was mentioned more than any other theme. The theme of gender-based violence was the second-highest theme mentioned, followed by work, family, spirituality, female support systems, and hopes/dreams. This frequency analysis was helpful in providing me with a sense of how my main theme of interest—gender-based violence—is situated in the diarists’ daily experience. The discovery that gender-based violence ranks as the second most commonly reported theme,

indicates that the theme is intrinsic to diarists' lives and that more complex analysis of the theme is, indeed, warranted.

### *Axial Coding Process*

My coding process continued as I proceeded to use axial coding to discover codes *around* the single category of gender-based violence. I did not look for common themes but, instead, for all themes, metaphors, and images around diarists' descriptions of gender-based violence. That is, I looked for interactions, strategies, and metaphors that related in any way to gender-based violence and illuminated the context in which that violence was experienced by the writers. Strauss and Corbin (1990) have remarked that axial coding looks for "actions and interactions taken in response to a phenomenon" and "intervening conditions that assist or hinder actions and interactions," as well as the consequences of those interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I used axial coding to gain a fuller understanding of the strategies diarists use to cope with gender-based violence. A case in point was diarist "Dee's" description of an interaction with a former abusive partner. She described that interaction in the following way: "I try to find ways that I will not run into him because I fear him more than fire. Luckily, there are many small alleyways in Kibera and many ways that I may become lost and hidden there. If I cannot hide, I pray" (Dee, April 2007). Through axial coding, I was able to understand the conditions, actions, and interactions Dee used to develop strategies for coping with gender-based violence from this former partner. I proceeded with my analysis by creating two sub-categories of the gender-based violence theme for Dee called *Escape* and *Faith*. As I proceeded with this coding process, axial coding enabled me to identify the "links that created a web of meaning" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) for the diarists as they devised strategies for coping with ongoing gender-based violence.

*Working with Narrative Data: A Mutually Accomplished Story*

Working with narrative data presented unique methodological concerns that had to be addressed during data analysis. For example, I often wondered how my project might have been different had I been conducting interviews with the writers, instead of reading their diaries. There were times when I would have liked to ask the writers to elaborate on something they said or simply to go into more detail about a certain subject. Working with narrative data, however, did not afford me such possibilities. But, although analyzing these narrative texts was not an interaction between two people conversing across a table, it was, nevertheless, a “mutually accomplished story” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 714). And, despite the fact that I was not able to query the writers for clarification or ask them follow-up questions, my narrative analysis was still a partnership—a story that could only be created by the writer in collaboration with me, the reader. Like face-to-face interviewing, analyzing these texts was a dialogue, a relationship between reader and page that took place in a particular situational setting. I found that I had to understand not only what a text *said* but also the *context* in which it was written—the situation in which meaning was made by the author. Indeed, understanding context was crucial to understanding and interpreting these narrative texts from the *writer’s point of view*.

As I analyzed diary data for themes, I became increasingly aware that I needed to be cognizant of the situational reality of individual entries and of the fact that the diary entries were living artifacts existing in both physical and cognitive space. The written words on diary pages were not just flat denotations of past activities; they were living, breathing “speech acts” (Searle, 1969) that could be “read” as situated dramas.

Such an understanding of narrative text as drama was particularly important to my research for three reasons. First, understanding context enabled me to anchor my reading in the

*writer's* point of view, not my own. That is, it helped me to truly *read* the diaries, without reading *into* them. Second, because the diaries were received by me as they were being written—not all at once at the end of the study—I began the project with little information about the writers. When data collection was complete and I began the formal thematic analysis, I had the chronological context of the project itself on which to rely for perspective. But, as I read the early diaries of each study participant, every cue I could pick up from the texts *as documents* was important in helping me situate the writer within her own psycho-social space. Finally, understanding non-narrative cues within the texts was important because diarists' contexts frequently changed and there were sometimes unexplained or discontinuous gaps in narratives. For example, a diarist might write from one place of residence; not write for a month; then pick up writing again from another place without explaining the transition. Such blank spaces in narratives were jarring and, at times, confusing. Reading for non-narrative cues often helped me pick up the “trail” of circumstance that the diarist had not explained.

As I worked with the diaries, I developed a technique that I called “interviewing” the text. I would literally think of each diary entry as a piece of a larger, ongoing drama. I would then “ask” each narrative, “What am I missing because your writer is not present today? How can I understand her diary as a dialogue between her ‘self’ and her social context? Talk to me.”

#### *Decolonizing Narrative Data: Maintaining the Writer's Point of View*

Ethnographic interviewing techniques—particularly those aimed at interpreting *non-verbal* communication in an interview situation—proved particularly helpful to me in analyzing the diary data because they alerted me to non-narrative cues within the narratives. For example, such techniques helped reveal the relationship between the physical act of writing and the

cognitive space the writer inhabited. Furthermore, they helped me identify and understand silences. Finally, because the diaries were hand-written, the techniques helped me understand indicators in script, such as writing style and diary decoration, which provided important clues to personality, strategy, meaning and meaning-making.

Fontana and Frey (2005) remind us that “nonverbal techniques are important in interviewing” and that the interviewer should “carefully note and record respondents’ use of these modes” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 713). As I proceeded with analysis, I realized that it was also important to be aware of the non-narrative (that is, not written on the page) communication of a text and that it was helpful to consider the diaries as “dialogic characters” (Saukko, 2000, p. 303). By so doing, I acknowledged that the narratives were *communicating* artifacts, from which, if asked the right questions, a complex understanding of the four major forms of non-verbal communication might be elicited. This type of non-narrative textual analysis, when used in conjunction with traditional thematic coding, enabled me to uncover hidden clues and cues that would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Ethnographers have defined *proxemic* communication as “the use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 713). Instead of understanding this to mean only a speaker’s use of physical space during an interview, I expanded the definition to include the diarist’s spatial relationship with her actual diary and with her writing as an activity. My analysis of diary data included a consideration, for example, of *when* and *where* a diarist wrote. Considering these variables was helpful to me in understanding how a diarist’s narrative (her cognitive space) fit into her physical space and time. That is, did she write in the daytime or at night? Did she write when she was alone or did she compose, instead, in the company of others? Did she write at home or in a public space? Were the place and time always the same or did they



vary? A diarist's choice of writing-time and writing-place revealed much about the relationship of her writing to her perceived safety, her privacy, and her available leisure time. It also revealed how her writing was viewed by others, as well as how she prioritized her writing in relationship to her daily activities. This was an easy narrative detail to analyze because many diarists described when and where they wrote. Dee, for example, almost consistently composed at home and at night, after her children were asleep. Occasionally, she varied from this chosen time and wrote in the morning. I learned to be alert for such changes and to examine them. In Dee's case, an analysis of changes in the timing of her diary entries provided a minor revelation. I re-read her diaries to see if there was any particular reason for her to switch to a morning writing-time. And, indeed, I found my answer. She wrote in the morning instead of at night when finances were particularly stretched because at such times there was no money for the light—either electricity or candle—needed for night-time journaling. This “proxemic” cue had spoken to me and helped me understand that night-time writing was a luxury, indicating more available funds and less financial stress in Dee's life.

Ethnographers also describe a type of communication they call *chronemic*, which is “the use of pacing in speech and length of silence in conversation” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 713). I expanded this definition and applied it to diary analysis by examining the pacing and length of diary entries, as well as their silences and gaps. For example, I was careful to see if diary entries were short or long. Some diarists wrote long entries that comprised several pages at one sitting and then did not write again for a few days. Others composed entries on a consistent basis—short, daily entries. I took note of the pacing of their writing because it alerted me to periods of safety and non-safety in their lives, periods of privacy and non-privacy in their daily experience. Those who composed at length and then took a “break,” for example, may have been

facing at-home circumstances that prevented them from writing except in gushes. I examined back copies of the diaries of JC (JC, May 2008) and found corroboration for this hypothesis. JC had a boyfriend she sometimes lived with, who disliked her participation in any non-traditional female activities. For example, she was not allowed to attend a weekly youth support group in Kibera. As I looked at her diaries, I conjectured that the timing of her writing “spurts” might be alerting me to days when the boyfriend was away or out of the home for long periods of time. On the other hand, I became alert to the fact that diarists who composed regularly but only in short entries might have safety to write but limited leisure for such an activity. I looked at the diaries of Cara, whose work fit the short-but-regular entry description. Indeed, Cara had safety to write but, because she cared for both her baby and her tuberculin mother, she had little free time. Clearly, my consideration of chronemic non-written communication helped me to understand more about the diarists’ lifestyles—leisure time, male-delimited time, safe time--than what they had written directly on the page.

Furthermore, it is important to note the “length of silence” in conversation or face-to-face interview (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 713). When analyzing narrative, too, it is important to note the gaps or *silences* in diary entries. I learned to be highly alert for what diarists omitted from their accounts. I especially looked for silences that surrounded major or ever-present situations in a diarist’s life. For example, Cara lived with her mother, who was suffering from tuberculosis. However, there was *never* any mention in her diary of the details of the disease or the care that must be administered. Such care was one of Cara’s main jobs, since there was no other adult living with the family. The disease, as it progressed, likely had a fearful and distasteful appearance. Yet for three years, Cara said nothing except a simple declarative statement in an early journal that her mother had tuberculosis. Qualitative experts indicate that silence often

surrounds a subject that is disempowering, hated, or feared (Charmaz, 2005). That was not the case for writers in the current study, who were quite frank about subjects such as hunger, humiliation, physical and sexual abuse. However, they *were* often silent about taken-for-granted realities of slum life that would appall Western readers. For example, the reality of Cara's tuberculin mother is actually the taken-for-granted center of the diarist's life—a huge and gaping reality, all the more onerous for its being treated completely casually by the author. There were similar silences about the lack of toilet facilities in the slum or the frequent contracting of diseases such as malaria or syphilis. Silences around these subjects appeared to indicate that they were so normal and taken-for-granted that they were usually not noted in diaries.

It is also important to consider *kinesic* communication, which includes “body movements and posture” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 713). This may seem like an impossible form of communication to seek from a written text. But actually, the “body language” and “posture” of the writing itself proved to be extremely important. For example, Catherine's writing was tight and tense and became more so as she descended lower and lower into the intricacies of poverty. Cara's writing style was similar and might have been a reflection of the daily, unabated tension, she experienced, even in her own home. Dee's style was big and cursive, especially when she lived with family members and experienced less stress than other diarists and more social support. I also learned to consider writing-style changes from entry to entry. If a writer's handwriting changed from its usual style to a different one, such a change would cue me to be alert for changes in her physical and emotional context. For example, Dee's writing, while always large and flowing, sometimes degenerated into a messy scrawl indicating, perhaps, periods of greater stress and instability. Judy's (Judy, May 2008) consistently pretty writing paralleled her discussion of such things as putting plants outside her door or magazine

photographs on her mud-hut walls. When her writing became scribbled and scrawled, I was alert for signs of familial or financial trouble. The analysis of writing style and spatial positioning of words on a page revealed much information about a writer's mood, her physical and emotional safety, her mental attitude toward her work, and simply her available time-frame for writing.

Finally, *paralinguistic* communication “includes all the variations in volume, pitch, and quality of voice” that can be heard in an interview (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 713). It was also helpful to analyze this type of communication in written texts. For example, underlines, exclamation points, and other means of indicating emphasis were incredibly important in my analysis. For example, Catherine's repeated underlining of the word “my,” in such sentences as “It is my duty to do all the household chores because I am the only lady in the house,” implied perhaps sarcasm or cynicism or rebellion. Although I was unable to ascertain her exact intent, I noted that there was definitely an added importance to the meaning she was trying to convey. I realized that such underlines were, in fact, flags that should cause me to pause and consider meaning in each case in which they were discovered. Indeed, any underscoring or other emphatic punctuation in *any* journal was flagged by me and questioned in an effort to extract the author's meaning. Furthermore, I was aware of other indications of emotive writing, such as drawings in the margins of texts. One diarist, Emma (Emma, May 2008) would occasionally draw a sun at the top of a diary page. Was this a rising sun or a setting sun? Was it an indication of optimism or pessimism or simply a doodle? Another diarist, Ina (Ina, May 2008) sometimes drew cartoon-like caricatures of individuals in her margins. Were these people in her life or did they represent her own changing persona? Certainly, they indicated that she liked to draw and had the talent to do so.

Indeed, “interviewing” the texts and understanding them as daily situated dramas helped me understand the changing relationship between the writers’ physical and mental space; the importance of silence or omission; and the importance of writing style, syntax, and emphasis. Moreover, these techniques kept me grounded and focused in the *writers’* reality—seeing the stories unfold from their perspective, not my own. It was as close as I could get to nullifying my Western perspective and “decolonizing” the data. The application of interviewing techniques to these texts reminded me that I could do more than simply read a diary. I could also “interview” its pages and let them “speak” to me in their own language.

## CHAPTER 7 ETHNOGRAPHIC AUTHORITY AND REFLEXIVITY

Decolonizing my own vision as a researcher was key to conducting the Kibera diary project. Not many white people venture into Kibera. When they do, they usually represent some kind of authority from the outside world. Frequently, whites in Kibera are representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGO's), such as UNICEF, CARE, or Amnesty International. Such individuals are viewed with a guarded respect that is akin to confidence but something less than trust. Although the presence of NGO's in Kibera for decades has done little to mitigate the dire poverty there, such organizations have established clinics and HIV testing centers. Kiberans continue to be hopeful and positive about any help they are offered and, thus, they afford white NGO's a somewhat skeptical welcome. Sometimes, though, the white faces in Kibera belong to journalists, like Mike Davis, who lived in Kibera for several months while writing *Planet of Slums* (Davis, 2006). Moreover, since the filming of "The Constant Gardener" in Kibera in 2005, slum residents have also come to understand that white people in their midst might be celebrities, like Rachel Weisz and Ralph Fiennes. Indeed, film directors still scout Kibera as a possible movie set and a residual aura of "slum chic" continues to hover over the shanties, encouraging some tour operators to include Kibera as part of their larger "safari" itinerary. But, regardless of the reason for their appearance, white faces in Kibera are rare and stand out in a sea of blackness like the full moon at midnight.

Understandably, then, it was impossible for me (a white, Western woman) to be anonymous in Kibera. It was equally impossible not to be seen as a person with power, be it personal or political. The very ability to have traversed the distance between my home and theirs revealed my financial empowerment, regardless of my purpose in Kibera. Luckily, though,

because of my history of grassroots advocacy there, I was accepted and, to the extent that it is possible, I was even taken-for-granted by residents of the particular neighborhoods in Kibera where I conducted my research.

I first entered Kibera in 2006, with a Kenyan female friend who was teaching at a Kiberan primary school. She was loved by the students and my association with her over several subsequent months provided me with instant credibility and esteem. By the time she was transferred to another school a year later, I had established relationships of trust with a core group of Kiberan young people and had helped them get organized to accomplish several tasks. Together we established a youth group, a soccer team, a bead-making project for young women, and a scholarship fund to help primary school girls attend secondary school. Thus, when I first approached Kiberan residents about participating in my research projects, I had already established a degree of “street cred” that served me well. It was social capital without which the current study could not have been accomplished.

Nevertheless, there were several concerns that had to be addressed. First, there was the clear and obvious possibility that the young women with whom I worked wanted to please me. To the women who are writing diaries, I represented a connection to the outside world, through which their voices might be heard outside the slum. Therefore, it was possible that they might consciously try to write what they thought I wanted to hear. To mitigate this possibility, I never discussed my own academic interests with them, nor those of my committee or department. They did not know, for example, that their journals were being analyzed for descriptions of gender-based violence. They only knew that I wanted to read about their lives and that I was interested in the “micro” or interactional-level details of their personal experience. This interest produced

“thick” description (Geertz, 1973) about how these micro-level details related to the social reality of the slum and the larger city and country.

The administration of survey questionnaires to a broader population of Kiberan women introduced other unique problems. In 2008, as part of another project, I had administered a survey to 200 Kiberan women about intimate partner violence. I organized the administration of the survey so that it was conducted as part of a women’s health seminar, sponsored by a local youth group. Nevertheless, my presence in the room and the association of the survey with me may have skewed results. For example, some women may have exaggerated their responses about the amount of violence they experienced, thinking that I was seeking that kind of hyperbolic result. After all, Kibera is frequently referred to as “the biggest slum in Africa,” or the “worst slum” in Africa (Davis, 2003). It is possible that some women provided responses that matched what they thought my perception of them and their situation was—that is, that they were women at the very bottom of every social scale. On the other hand, Kiberan women are very proud. It is also possible that some of the respondents may have intentionally withheld the true facts about their own abuse, not wishing to tell a white woman about their desperate situation.

In order to avoid these pitfalls, the survey administered in December, 2009, as part of the current study was administered by an African woman. As before, the survey was part of a larger presentation on women’s health. This time, a Kenyan female nurse, Joyce Ojiema, conducted the health seminar and subsequently administered the survey. Although respondents were informed (through an informed consent document that had been approved by UCF’s Institutional Review Board) that the survey was part of an ongoing study by me at the University of Central Florida, I was not present in the room at the time the survey was conducted.



In addition to these attempts to ensure the credibility of the diaries and surveys, I also had to attend to my own perspective and how it was “situated” (Harraway, 1988; Bettie, 2003) as I proceeded with data analysis. As I analyzed women’s diaries, for example, I was selecting and interpreting sections of the documents and attempting to attach meaning to them. As Julie Bettie points out, “all perspectives are situated in a place of more or less power” (Bettie, 2003). In this case, I had the power to overarch these women’s journal entries with my own cultural assumptions about their lives and perspectives. Because it was my earnest desire to present these diaries from the *writers’* point of view, I did everything in my power to “unpack” my “knapsack” of white Western assumptions (McIntosh, 1989).

First of all, I wanted to avoid making the assumption that women in Kibera shared my views on gender issues. That is, I did not wish to assume that they wanted to be “liberated” from an unjust patriarchal order or from some portion of that order as it manifests in their individual lives. I also needed to be aware, as Bettie points out, that the population of “others” (the diarists) was not homogenous. That is, I needed to avoid “feminist essentialism,” through which I might be tempted to view the diarists as “all the same” or as “eternal victims, without agency” (Bettie, 2003, p. 23). To a very large degree, the diaries themselves mitigated that possibility, in that the opinions, lifestyles, and political stances of the authors were extremely diverse, presenting a constant reminder of difference within the population. The women presented different kinds of struggles and strategies for dealing with violence—from Julie’s attempt to be “the perfect wife” to Elizabeth’s strategy of exploiting the exploiter—reminding me to focus on the specificity of their unique and individual perspectives and choices. In addition, I tried to remember, as the study continued, that both the diarists and I were changing in the process. As Bettie points out, identity is an “ongoing production, not an accomplished and static fact” (Bettie, 2003, p. 24) and

that goes for both the researcher and the research subjects. Cram also points out that this ongoing relationship should be guided by a “partnership ethic” (Cram, 2009, p. 308), in which I acknowledged “the need to create meaningful relationships with the people and communities affected by the research” (Cram, 2009, p. 221). Such a partnership led to research that was “for” not “on” the women diarists and to an understanding that was *situated* in the knowledge-base of the participants. That is, the research was “sourced from within the community’s own values and beliefs” (Cram, 2009, p. 313).

Finally, I was aware of my own temptation to interpret the writers’ lives—and their relationship to my own life choices—solely in terms of gender. As Bettie remarks, it is important to be cognizant of “forces of domination beyond gender” (Bettie, 2003, p. 24) particularly, in the case of the diarists, of structural inequalities that pervade every aspect of their lives. Fortunately, the theories I employed in my study helped me keep my perspective. Multi-cultural feminism helped me focus on the webs of domination within which women lived and made choices. Heise’s ecological model highlighted the *interconnection* of these levels of experience, showing that every individual choice reverberated on multiple levels of a woman’s daily life.

**CHAPTER 8**  
**QUALITATIVE RESULTS—SECTION ONE: *ENDURANCE AND FAITH* AS COPING STRATEGY**

Julie Bettie’s comments are particularly apt in any discussion of coping strategies in Kibera, where, indeed, “forces of domination beyond gender” stack the deck against women. It might be argued, for example, that the coping strategies discussed in the current study were, in fact, *dual* strategies, created to cope with both gender-based violence and the poverty that propels women into violent relationships with men in the first place. For the purposes of the current study, then, poverty and economic deprivation were understood as pervasive and overarching daily motivations for women in Kibera, where the rigid patriarchal system forces women to seek solutions to hunger in relationships with men. The current analysis of strategies for coping with gender-based violence, then, assumed that structural inequalities—manifested in extreme poverty and the ever-present possibility of starvation—both intensified and magnified gender-based violence. Men, even unemployed slum-dwellers, had greater economic power than did women, who had to engage in some kind of relationship with men simply to survive. This created a secondary level of difficulty for women in Kibera, who had to be skillful enough to survive their chosen means of survival.

The most commonly mentioned strategy among diarists for coping with gender-based violence was the strategy of *endurance and faith*, which was defined as pragmatic acceptance of violence, with recourse to religious faith as a palliative measure. The strategy was used by 12 of the 20 writers. This finding was congruent with the norms of women’s socialization in mainstream Kenyan society, as well as in Kibera—that is, women are socialized to accept gender-based violence as normal in a relationship and to believe that they have no choice but to

endure it. To help them do so, they may rely on their faith in the hope that—when nothing else works—God will help them.

For example, in a recent report on gender-based violence in Kenya, Amnesty International remarked:

Violence against women is widespread in Kenya. Every day, women are physically and sexually abused. Rape occurs in all social and ethnic groups. It is a crime that traumatizes the victim and reflects the acceptance of discrimination against women in Kenyan society. Yet it is largely suffered in silence (Amnesty International, 2007, p. 1).

The report also described some of the social norms that disempowered women in the face of gender-based violence and limited their options in response to it:

Kenya is a patriarchal society, where the husband is the head of the household and women often have little influence in decisions affecting their lives. This extends to sexual relations, where women are frequently unable to refuse to have sex with their husbands. In Kenya, customarily, women do not own property or the land that they work, which causes them economic hardship and places them in positions of dependence....consequently, AI is concerned that some forms of violence have become entrenched. For example, wife inheritance, bride price (in which a man's family pays the wife's family thereby giving men the idea they own their wives), forced marriage, and female genital mutilation are institutionalized through culture. The state does not ensure that women are protected against the acts of violence that these practices either embody or support (Amnesty International, 2007, p. 1).

Similarly, a qualitative study specifically on attitudes in Kibera found that tolerance of gender-based violence was especially prevalent in the slum. The study examined “the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of violence in the context of the social, economic, religious, and cultural setting in the Kibera community” by conducting fifteen in-depth interviews and six focus groups (Community Structures, 2008, p. 1). The study sought to

. . . understand perceptions of domestic violence among the Kibera community, identify relationship formation patterns in this population, and examine how the experiencing of GBV varies across types of relationships in this cultural context. A secondary aim was to conduct a community needs assessment in an attempt to identify innovative strategies to reduce the levels of GBV in Kibera (Community Structures, 2008, p. 2).

The study found that “women in the (Kibera) community express hopelessness and many feel that continuing a violent relationship is better than the alternative of having no source of income if they leave their partner” (Community Structures, 2008, p. 3). Second, the study showed that

. . . there are no awareness campaigns in Kibera that educate the community about sexual violence being a crime in Kenya with the advent of the new Sexual Offenses Act that was recently passed in 2006. The Sexual Offenses Act is a landmark in Kenya regarding its stance against GBV. However, it will have little impact unless the communities suffering from GBV are aware of their protected rights under this new act (Community Structures, 2008, p. 3).

Finally, the study suggested that there needs to be “a strong focus in Kibera on changing the perception that violence is not only culturally accepted, it is a normal part of any relationship between a man and a woman” (Community Structures, 2008, p. 3).

At the same time, though, Kenyan custom and socialization do legitimize participation in and reliance on religion in times of trouble. Kenya is predominantly a Christian country, with approximately 78% of the population identifying with that religious faith (45% Protestant; 33% Catholic), while the rest belong to either Islamic (10%), Hindu (10%) or indigenous (2%) faiths (*Factbook Kenya*, 2010). Furthermore, religion is extremely important to Kenyans. A recent Gallup Poll, conducted on religiosity in 146 countries around the world, asked simply “Is religion an important part of your daily life” (Gallup, 2009). In Kenya, a staggering 94% of respondents said “yes,” as compared to 26.5% in the United Kingdom and 65% in the United States (Gallup, 2009). It was not surprising, therefore, that when women in the current study were confronted with institutionalized and culturally accepted gender-based violence they coped through culturally-accepted religious avenues.

For example, this *endurance and faith* strategy was described by Catherine, who wrote about the violence she experienced and her recourse to prayer. Catherine was abandoned by her parents in Kibera and found that she must support herself and her younger brother. Catherine wrote:

. . . my life has become so miserable. My parents left to go to rural areas and left me and my younger brother. They decided to leave because they had so many debts whereby every day somebody (would) come to our house claiming their money which my mum had borrowed...So what I will do...is to practice prostitution with the men who are around whereby at the end of it they give me a hundred and then I am able to buy food...and call it a day and wait for another day to come....I have lost hope in life and I ask myself why are we poor? ...If I

had gone to college I could have gotten a nice job and our life could change but I hope one day God will hear my prayers (Catherine, April 2008).

Despite her entreaty to God, Catherine did, indeed, enter into a period of prostitution to keep herself and her brother alive. She described the first time she made an arrangement to exchange sex for money:

. . . my brother had left for school without any breakfast because we had not been used to (breakfast) since our parents left. . . I dressed in what I call my Sunday best and went outside our house whereby people are passing by and see if any man will take to me so that I may agree to sleep with him and he will give me a little money. I stood there for about thirty minutes and then there is this guy who was passing and it seemed he liked me and started talking to me. Within twenty minutes, we had agreed he will give me a hundred and I rushed home and closed the door and I followed him. I timed the time when my brother was coming back from school and made sure I was back in the house (Catherine, April, 2008).

Catherine bought food with the 100 shillings and prepared supper for herself and her brother. However, she did not go immediately back to prostitution because the first experience had been painful and traumatizing. The next day she wrote:

This day I am very tired and I didn't want any business with any man because the previous man had did me very tough, claiming that it's his money but what could I say (Catherine, April 2008).

She had endured the rough treatment and did not look forward to another similar experience. She decided, instead, to go with other Kiberan women to wait outside a nearby housing estate to see if any of the tenants would offer work. Such a strategy was a gamble because it involved

waiting—and possibly wasting precious time—for an outcome that was not guaranteed.

Catherine was lucky, however, and was offered a job cleaning house and washing clothes, for which she received 200 shillings. She budgeted this money to last for several days but by the end of the week, it was gone. She wrote:

So here we are again not having anything to eat and no money. In fact, money is the root of all this problem because if we had money I could not be hustling like this. So this time my brother noticed that there was no sign of anything to be eaten so he left to play with friends and here I was left alone. I (didn't) know where to start or end. We had completely nothing...I made up my mind and decided to go to one of our neighbour whom I talked with and I agreed with him to have sex in exchange for money. He gave me two hundred and I was happy to know that I had something at the end of the day. ...So after the act, I returned to the house. No one noticed and I was happy for that (Catherine, April 2008).

Catherine continued to experiment with other strategies for survival—ones that did not involve exposing herself to gender-based violence. She washed clothes, for example, and she borrowed small amounts of money from female neighbors. But her delicate balance of resources was easily tipped. When faced with mounting financial trauma, she inevitably resorted to prostitution again, since it was the one source of income that was virtually guaranteed and was relatively quick to accomplish, despite its concomitant risks. One day, when she had just spent several hours doing back-breaking laundry at a nearby housing estate, she returned home to another crisis:

The lady gave me a hundred and I departed back home only to find my brother had been sent home from school because he didn't have some of his books...he



was hungry since he had not had his (school) lunch. Problem always comes with another problem. Now here I had only a hundred bob. What do I do? In fact, I am very stressed. So I decide to divide it in half and give him half for school and then spend the rest for our supper because I was also hungry since I had not eaten anything throughout the day...I cooked our supper...the darkness had already started...I thanked the almighty father for the day and went to bed (Catherine, April 2008).

The problem was there the next morning, though:

Where to get food and pay rent since it is almost the end of the month? I didn't know but everything I left to my God...I stayed in the house thinking what step I should take. So I decided I will wait for darkness to come and then I will move outside where people are passing by and try to see whether I will get any man who is in need of me just to see whatever he will give me... (Catherine, April 2008).

Thus, prostitution became a part of her survival strategy. Although she survived, Catherine was now at the mercy of her customers who, although they did not *always* inflict direct physical violence, always represented the risk of HIV/AIDS infection, as well as the possibility of pregnancy. Catherine would ultimately abandon the *endurance and faith* strategy in favor of alternate methods of coping.

Another example of *endurance and faith* as a strategy was illustrated by the diary of Marya, when she discussed her relationship with her intimate partner. She wrote:

I feel that sometimes we have to accept that life is like that expesily when your family can't afford your daily needs and other things...So I have to run to get a

boyfriend who can give me some money to buy clothes and other needs...because I can't afford, I have to obey and do anything to be on top like other girls my age. So I always do what my boyfriend ask me to do (Marya, March 2010).

She recognized that his jealousy was one thing she must endure. She wrote that "...sometimes he even beats me when I walk with the girls. He doesn't want me to talk to them" (Marya, March 2010). She also recognized that she had to put up with his infidelity: "Yesterday I went to my boyfriend and I found him with another girl on the bed but I didn't do anything. I just went back home..." She felt that she has no option but "to continue the relationship with him" and "to stay with him until I get another guy" (Marya, March 2010). Even when Marya became pregnant with her boyfriend's child, she had no leverage over him or his affections. In fact, the pregnancy became another excuse for beating her. She wrote that "Last year, I did abortion because of when I told my boyfriend I have (gotten) pregnant, he rejected me and say I have a lot of guys and I am a prostitute and he beat me" (Marya, March 2010). Marya found her only solace in her religious beliefs. She wrote, "We live through hardships in life here...all we have is God and Jesus who died for us on the cross...God bless us all" (Marya, March 2010).

Another example of *endurance and faith* was illustrated in the journal of Terry. She also found that having a boyfriend was an economic necessity because her family could not fully support her. She wrote:

...when he is drunk, he even beats me when I refuse to have sex with him. He takes advantage because he knows that my parents can't afford even the needs of the family....I can't say having a boyfriend is good. But we have to have the thing. Sometimes they treat me well, sometimes bad...any way, here in Kibera,

life is very hard. You can't even get a good boyfriend. Most of them smoke bangi, drink chagua, and even some are thieves and use guns. It's very hard...(My boyfriend) sometimes forces me to have sex with him even when I am in my period. And even things that I can't explain in writing...I don't agree with everything he does to me in bed but nothing I can do about the situation (Terry, April 2010).

Like Marya, Terry found refuge from her ordeals in her faith. She wrote that "life is not always just the way we want it to be but we thank God that we *have* a life...and every day we wake up and pray to our living God" (Terry, April 2010).

A further example of *endurance and faith* in the face of gender-based violence appeared in the journal of Betta. She wrote:

Daily we cook maize and we go around the village to sell...with my child and also my sisters and my mother also. It's a hard business....It's hard because some guys want to take advantage...Truth is that I can't watch my child suffering and no money to pay medicine...I went and sleep with a guy and (he) gave me 100 shillings and he promised (if I do it again) he will give me 200 shillings. But all I buy (is) some medicine and a maize flour and I went and started to cook and we ate. But I am not happy to do this ... life forces me to do so. Hope tomorrow things can change for the better (Betta, February 2010).

Betta's journal showed that her pattern of prostitution continued. The next day, she wrote:

Then about 6 o'clock, I went to see this guy and we did it again...(he) gave me 150 shillings and then I went to buy food and we ate. ...When you read this, don't think I am a prostitute. Only if it was you, what would you do, getting a child, no

money for abortion, no father, no money for yourself or somebody to support you. Already you love your child so much-- may be she or he can become a person to help the family in future (or)...a leader of the country (Betta, February 2010).

Betta, too, found comfort and hope for the future in prayer. She wrote, "I pray the Lord will help and see my child going to school and also my sisters. May God bless this family" (Betta, February 2010).

Similarly, Jane described her own situation, as well as that of other young women in Kibera. She wrote, "A lot of girls suffer because of their boyfriend. They beat them...others are raped by boys" (Jane, March 2010). She saw men as being universally exploitive of women but considered that a normal part of life. She wrote, "But men is just men. They can't even let you grow to be at least a woman with 18 years. They just want to sleep with you now" (Jane, March 2010). She described her current relationship as an improvement on a previous relationship:

This is the second boyfriend I have right now. There are some who help and some who take advantage of the situation. The first didn't even help me or even buy me pads when I am in my period...he even beat me when he smoke bangi. It was very bad days for me...Now I have (new boyfriend) but he don't beat me. He try to help me (and) even my family, like buying unga and milk....So help me God till I see he is stable and marries me (Jane, March 2010).

Yet another diarist echoed the same sentiments about a similar situation. Cathy M. wrote:

Sometimes I have to face hardship with men because in our family, we are so many. I am in a family of ten kids...The only person working is my father who is the breadwinner and we have to depend (for) everything on him.... I have to find

some small coins of my own in order to buy my personal items...and since I am jobless, I have to seek these in men and to attain this, go (through) so many hardships...There are those who misuse me. They demand sex every day and I have to serve them because it is my way of life. Sometimes I blame myself for being born into a poor family whereby we have to struggle with life...In these relationships I go through, I...also get pregnant and if I tell the man he says he is not responsible and I have to go with other men and raise some money and do abortions. I have done three of them. Sometimes I stop this habit but (then) I stay so broke (that) I have no other option and I turn back again (to prostitution) because when I look at my family, my young (siblings) who can't say when they ever had new clothes or a pair of shoes and I say if I can raise a little, I could buy them...God help us now and forever (Cathy M., February 2010).

Women in Kibera did not experience gender-based violence exclusively at the hands of men. Sally, for example, whose parents both died of AIDS in 2004, lived with her aunt, who made and sold illegal liquor. She also used Sally as a servant and prostitute. Sally wrote that her aunt "makes me make love to every man who wants to have me just because she has been given some cash" (Sally, March 2010). Sally lived under constant duress and threat from her aunt:

Every day she reminds me that if I don't do as she wants me to, she will throw me out of the house and that (is) what I fear most because no one else seems to have any interest in me. I have tried to seek help just to stop living such a miserable lyfe but all is in vain. Everyone I tell about my problems either has her own big problems or can't even take time to think of my problems...I don't have any other

choice but to live with my aunt just to ... get a shelter and daily bread (Sally March 2010).

Sally had strong negative feelings, both toward her aunt and toward men in general but had no recourse against either:

It hurts me every day, especially when night comes. I just start to think about who will end (up) with me or what will happen....I don't know what will come today but I pray that today no (man) will show up and I will be able to sleep...I hate men. First the men who come and take advantage of me and then my aunty who loves money so much...how can I get out of this situation? It is bad but I always say I have no choice....May we ask for forgiveness to our Lord Jesus Christ and live with love and peace through the end of our lives. AMEN (Sally, March 2010).

### *Analysis of Endurance and Faith Strategy*

#### *Micro Level*

The *endurance and faith* strategy functioned in various spheres of the writers' lives, not only connecting the spheres but also enabling the women to navigate between/among them. For example, on the micro-level, the strategy provided a subsistence-level survival on a day-to-day basis, enabling women not only to buy food for themselves and their families but also to purchase daily necessities, such as water or sanitary napkins. However, micro level activities associated with this strategy reflected macro level institutionalized values of sexism and violence. Because the strategy consisted of having an ongoing relationship with at least one male partner, it also involved regular sexual activity, which in turn incurred considerable risk. That is,

short-term survival came at the cost of beatings and other violence by the male partner and/or the possibility of pregnancy or HIV infection. Although this strategy might ensure that the victim went on living from day to day in the *short* term, it made no such promise for the long-term future.

### *Mezzo Level*

At the mezzo-level, this strategy formed a bridge between private needs and public activities. Because very limited job opportunities existed for women in Kibera, this strategy both supplemented and became a substitute for a regular job. Indeed, many diarists referred to the process of having a “boyfriend” almost as though it were a job, reflecting their dissatisfaction with the inevitability of the relationship but agreeing that—like a job—“you’ve got to have one” (Terry, March 2010). Among the negative attributes associated with this strategy was its tendency to reinforce complacency in the face of gender-based violence. Informants in the current study commented on their lack of choice in sexual interactions, saying that they saw no way of protecting themselves from HIV/AIDS or pregnancy. Although some expressed anguish about their plight, they also expressed a feeling of acceptance based on lack of choice. One writer remarked, for example, “I take whoever comes and can satisfy my needs. And in this way, life goes on” (Jane, April 2010).

The strategy could backfire, however, leading women to become permanently entrapped in such a lifestyle, with prostitution as the only source of employment. Because women had little or no say in how sexual relationships were conducted—particularly if sex occurred in exchange for money—they could not usually force men to use condoms during intercourse. In a study of adolescents, young women in Kibera reported that they had no ability to force their partners to

have protected sex, even if the woman knew her partner was HIV positive (APHRC, 2002). Consequently, many young women became pregnant without being married and ultimately had more than one child with different fathers. Once a woman was in this situation, she was virtually trapped for life. The more children she had, the more difficult it was for her to find legitimate work. There were few jobs to which a woman could take her children and day-care centers facilities were scarce. Unless she had social support to provide childcare (a mother, sister or friend), there was little left for her but to engage in prostitution to feed her family. Once she reached this point, it was unlikely that any man would marry her because he would decline to support the children of other men. The woman, on the other hand, would be more dependent on men than *ever* because she had more mouths to feed. Continued and increased prostitution was often her only possibility of survival, carrying with it increased risk of more pregnancies which, in turn, entrenched her further into dependency on men. The circle was, indeed, a vicious one.

### *Macro Level*

At the macro-level, the endurance and faith strategy was the avenue through which the informants conformed to the social norms that pertained in both Kibera itself and in mainstream Kenyan society. They accepted—in some cases *expected*—gender-based violence to be a normal part of their relationships with male partners. Indeed, experiencing such violence was part of being a woman. Through this strategy, they acted out the institutionalized oppression of Kenyan society. Although the diarists had little access to television or newspapers and most had not attended school since age ten, they, nevertheless, observed mainstream norms as they were manifested in the cumulative fabric of daily life. Men had power. Women did not. Few if any



residents of Kibera questioned this main, overarching assumption that characterized relationships between males and females.

It must also be noted, however, that there was an essential irony at the heart of the *endurance and faith* strategy. Although the women who embraced this strategy did it in part because they had been socialized to accept gender-based violence, the actual situations in which they experienced gender-based violence represented rebellions from social norms. For example, it was not a mainstream social norm for a young, unmarried woman to have sex with more than one male partner on a regular basis. It was not a mainstream social norm for women to have abortions—indeed, abortion is a crime in Kenya. It was not a social norm for women to engage in “survival” sex or other forms of commercial sexual activity in which money was exchanged for intercourse. Ironically, the women who relied on the *endurance and faith* coping strategy rebelled against social norms and created non-normative relationships with male partners to secure their own survival. However, once engaged in the non-normative partnerships and activities, the women fell back on acceptance of the routine gender-based violence that came with these partnerships. In other words, they stepped far beyond the socially accepted norms of mainstream society in order to survive but then reverted to the patriarchal values of mainstream society because they did not see a path through which to rebel any further. So, although they seem to have hit a wall in terms of exercising their own power, their activities showed a nascent resistance to patriarchal norms that was blocked by economic constraints.

## CHAPTER 9

### QUALITATIVE RESULTS—SECTION TWO: *ESCAPE* AS COPING STRATEGY

Another strategy for coping with gender-based violence in Kibera was the escape strategy. This strategy was defined as a quick, usually unplanned, exodus from a current living or employment situation. Such escapes might happen early, for example, from a woman's home of origin. Or they might occur later, once a woman had already embarked upon a married or partnered life, which became untenable. Escape strategies were often unsuccessful because, although they propelled the escapee to a different *setting*, the gender-based violence she experienced there was often similar to—or worse than—that which she escaped. Sometimes there was a way back to the previous (although unsatisfactory) situation. Often there was not, leaving the victim in a worse situation—one from which she must organize yet another escape. Thus, the strategy usually offered no true relief from gender-based violence but only a circular or repetitive movement from one kind of abuse to another.

For Mary, the violence began within her home or origin, propelling her onto the street, where she faced a different kind of violence. After being raped by her brother in her home of origin, her father accused her of causing the incident. Threatened with punishment from her father and ongoing sexual attacks from her brother, Mary had little choice but to escape into the street, where she lived with a series of male partners. Eventually, she felt she had no choice but to engage in prostitution. Ironically, being wrongly accused of *being* a prostitute by her male relatives led her to actually become one:

It was because my brother wanted to rape me, and when I refused, he came and told my father that I have started sleeping with men. And it was lies. But father threw me out, and he told me never to go to his house again...and because I didn't

have food, I started street life. Until now, I am continuing with this life (Mary, June 2007).

Other women embarked on early marriages only to find themselves in violent relationships. The lucky ones were able to return to their parents. Janet was one of those, reporting that:

I got married once for about a month but I returned back home because this man was mistreating me and he started seeing other girls and he was demanding sex every day and even when it came to (providing) food, he could not satisfy me. So I decided to turn back home (Janet, March 2010).

Susanna also experienced a violent marriage from which she sought escape. But Susanna already has a young child and could not return to her family, who could not bear the additional expense. Susanna experienced a cycle of violence within her marriage, describing a “war in our house” (Susanna, January 2010). Susanna’s cycle was comprised of violence, escape, reconciliation, and resumption/escalation of violence. Although she regretted not making good her escapes, she was passionately in love with her abuser and wanted to believe that he would change. However, aborted escapes only worsened the violence once she returned home.

A typical cycle was reported by Susanna in the following passages. After a good day of sharing laughter and visiting a sick friend, she reported, “...in the evening, we had the same silly usual fights. I had to sleep outside again. What kind of life is this” (Susanna, January 2010). She described waking up in the street because her husband had locked her out for the night. She made an emotional decision to bolt from the relationship:

My son’s voice woke me up...I was shivering with cold. I had slept out. I was sick and tired of always waiting for a man who will never change and neither

shows love and affection toward his wife. I took John (son) and run off. I didn't know whether to go right or left—all I knew (was) I had to run away from that home. We had a long way to go. We didn't even know where we were going...As I was crying like a baby, a very good friend of mine happened to be passing by. She promised to take both of us to her house. She even promised to look for a job for me. I followed her as we had so much to talk about along the way (Susanna, January 2010).

Her friend, Lia, provided Susanna with food and shelter for the night. Furthermore, the next day, Lia returned from her job with news of a possible job for Susanna:

She came home with some vegetables which we used to cook a delicious meal. She surprised me by telling me she had find a job for me in one of the offices in town as a messenger. I felt releved because I knew all my problems were solved. I was amused by how she got a job fast for me and I have to thank her for showering my problems away. We later headed to sleep. I slept like I would never sleep again (Susanna, January 2010).

The next day began hopefully but the hope didn't last long:

The sun's rays were shining brightly like broken pieces of mirror exposed to light...At least now, all I have ever dreamt of was to (come true). Not even one single day (did I) dream of depending on a man for survival. I have always dreamt of catering for myself and for my child...At around 4 pm in the evening we went for a walk around town. What sort of thing ruined my day? I run into John's father but he didn't see us at all. As soon as I saw him, what came to my mind

was guilt. I thought a coward runs away from problems instead of being a very brave woman who stands firm (Susanna, January 2010).

Her guilt made Susanna susceptible to the sudden reappearance of her husband a few days later at her friend's home:

Just as we were about to leave gess who barged in. Who else rather than Sam (husband). He was on his begging knees pleading with me to forgive him. I had no time for such nonsense...He all of a sudden started crying like a crying baby. I felt pity for him. I didn't know that I was about to engage myself to another mistake. If only I knew I would have never listened to him...He told me not even to go to work anymore since all my needs he would take care of them. I thanked Lia for all the facilities and love she had shown me for the few days we had stayed in her home. I don't know whether Sam has charm that makes me go mad as soon as he talks...You know that I threw (away) again my dreams just like that all because in the name of love. I gess he has manipulated my mind and heart which makes me (go) mad as soon as I see him. (The next day) I found myself in my home. I woke up as a good wife is supposed to do, meaning take care of my husband and child. Exactly that is what I did. I can't imagine I lost my job...what was I thinking? Those were the kind of questions I was always asking myself as my husband set off to work (Susanna, January 2010).

The next day went well, although there was an uneasy silence around the evening meal. Susanna wrote, "In the evening I started and prepared a nice delicious meal. That night we eat as a happy family except Sam did not share his laughter with us. We were all quiet...I wish if all our days could be like today" (Susanna, January 2010).

But the violence began again the following morning. She wrote:

Oh, no, another fight again. This time he claimed that why is his breakfast not on the table. I tried to explain that I had not yet set his table because he hadn't finished dressing. He really makes little conflicts to turn up and seem big. It came to the point that he even left without having take breakfast. I kept telling myself that it was nothing I could be blamed for (Susanna, January 2010).

But despite her best intentions, Sam didn't come home for supper that night. Later Susanna found a note he had pinned to the door "saying that he would never come home again until I leave to go to my parents. Tears cascaded down my visage. I could not help myself" (Susanna, January 2010). Things got worse when she realized the following day that her small son was ill and, without Sam's financial presence in the home, she lacked the funds to take the child for hospital treatment:

. . . another tragedy. Why is all this happening to me? John is very sick. How could I take him to the hospital while I had no money. I did not care I just rushed him without caring how or when I will get the money. As John was being treated, I rushed to Sam's place of work. He saw me first and I didn't see him so (he) told one of his friends to tell me that he was not in. He was sent somewhere. I sat down and just cried. I wish the whole world would swallow me alive. The doctors were saying that he (John) was in critical condition and he needed urgent attention, if only I had . . . the money. I tried calling all my friends but they all had some sort of reasons. Luckily Sam came and paid the bills. Later he sped off. He was nowhere to be found (Susanna, January 2010).

Susanna spent the next night without her husband and the following day in the marketplace, securing food for the evening meal. Little did she know that her husband would accuse her of obtaining the food through suspicious or dishonorable means:

I prepared some food. Just as the food was ready my husband arrived. He looked angry. He was not happy that I was cooking food and he had (provided) none. He started insulting me and calling me all cruel words in the whole world. As he was about to kick the food (into) the fire I (pleaded) with him not to as tears cascaded down my visage. I know he felt guilty that's why he left. We were left (alone) to eat to satisfy our bellies but not because we enjoyed our food... (Susanna, January 2010).

As she suspected, her husband did not return home that night. After her morning chores, Susanna looked for daily work in the marketplace. Finding none, she decided to search for her husband.

She wrote:

We decided to go and look for my husband in one of the bars around because that's his hide out. We went in and found him dead drunk. He could not recall anything. I carried him on my back. People were just wondering 'who is she to carry, her son or her husband?' I showed less concern to what they were saying and focused on my burden. Eventually we reached home safe and sound. I had to snatch money from his pocket in order to buy the facilities required (for supper). Besides he is my husband and I have the right to do so since he hasn't been giving me any money (Susanna, January 2010).

The next morning, Susanna was duly punished for what her husband maintained was "theft." She described the scene:

I was woken up by slaps and insults from Sam. He was claiming that I stole from him. I tried to explain how I spent the money but he wouldn't listen. All I could receive was a donkey beating. He left me lying unconscious on the bed. I later woked up. My son John was crying and asking me why does his dady all the time resemble the devil's image (Susanna, January 2010).

Her husband again left her for the day. She used the money left from the previous night to buy medicine for her son, who was still sick. Together they did the household chores and then took a nap. The rest of the afternoon was tense, as they waited to see whether or not Susanna's husband would return that night. He did:

In the evening he came with cooked food for John only. He told me my punishment was to sleep hungry. Seems I annoyed (him) that morning. But I wasn't bothered. My happiest dream was to see John eating (Susanna, January 2010).

Although her escape attempt didn't lead her to a *different* violent situation, as did Mary's, it did increase violence at home. Her husband remained contrite only until she agreed to return to their house. Once home, she was duly punished for running away and her punishment was ongoing, consisting not only of severe beatings but also of food deprivation. The strategy of escape had propelled her back home but into a *more* violent home life than the one from which she fled.

Another example of escape leading to worse circumstances was described by Catherine. Catherine became dissatisfied with her strategy of enduring frequent "survival sex" in order to feed herself and her brother. She realized that this strategy came not only with the risk of beatings and violent sex but also of pregnancy and HIV infection. Yet jobs such as washing clothes did not bring in enough money to survive, nor were these jobs guaranteed on a regular



basis. One day, when she was visiting a friend who also lived in Kibera, they devised a strategy to escape from the need to engage in prostitution:

. . . she told me there was a friend of hers who had told her that there is a nearby bar and they need bar maids so we agreed that we should go no matter what as long as we get money. So we agreed to meet the next day and accompany each other. I told her that I had no food for our supper and she decided to share equally with me what she had to cook. At least I left for home with something to eat and I called it a day (Catherine, May 2009).

Catherine eagerly anticipated the possibility of escaping her current life style in favor of a legitimate full-time job:

. . . The day came up and I had to wake up early so that I may prepare everything for the interview of becoming a bar maid. . . I left to call (on) my friend to lead me. We accompanied each other to the bar place. On arrival, I found the manager there. He greeted us and told us welcome. He didn't even move. He told us he will be paying us (one) hundred each day. So it was our turn to start the job. . . . We stayed there the whole day working and we were sexually abused by most of the clients and whenever you reported to the manager you were told you will lose your job, so you have to give them what they need and the money we were given (by the customers) wasn't ours. It was for the company. . . In the evening, we were given our money and (we) left for home everyone completely tired. The only thing which was ringing into my mind was to continue with it or not. I went home and I called it a day (Catherine, May 2009).

Clearly, Catherine and her friends had not made an escape but had instead gone from the frying pan into the fire. They were now servicing more than one man per day, with the only advantage being that their pay at the end of the day was guaranteed. Certainly, though, it provided no satisfactory alternative to their previous situation. In fact, in many ways, it was worse. Catherine decided not to return, saying, “I didn’t go back in the bar because to me it seemed like I was misusing myself and I was not worthy to deserve this” (Catherine, May 2009). Her dream of escape to a real and regular job had vanished in one day. Catherine returned to her previous strategy of submitting to occasional “survival sex” which she had to endure, or starve.

#### *No Way Out: Long-Term Use of the Escape Strategy*

Each of these women’s accounts provided one example of an escape from a violent situation—from a home of origin, an early marriage, a long-term marriage, and a job. Each attempt was fruitless, leading women into more or similar violence in a *different* setting or continued (sometimes worsened) violence if they retreated to their former position.

Unfortunately, women in Kibera sometimes spend years caught in such escape patterns, in a downward spiral from bad to worse to bad again. Repeated attempts at escape often provided no way out of the abuse (see Figure 2).

Such a cycle was evident in the writing of Dee, a long-term participant in the current study (April, 2007-December, 2009). Because Dee wrote regularly and at length for almost three years, her story was illustrative of how an *escape* strategy can become a dangerous and debilitating way to cope. In fact, Dee’s ongoing inability to find a place of safety after repeated attempts to escape gender-based violence provided a panoramic view of the strategy’s

ineffectiveness. Ironically, long-term use of the *escape* strategy only served to tighten the net of gender-based violence in which women such as Dee were caught.

Dee's first escape was from her home of origin. Although her parents were both alive, they lived separately in different parts of Kibera. Dee lived with her mother and four siblings. She ran away from her mother's home, thinking that even the street would be better than the hovel in which she lived. She wrote, "This is the home sweet home that I came from and that made me run away from home to the street—lack of balance food, lack of enough food, can't sleep because of fleas, bed bugs and lack of clean bedding..." (Dee, March 2008). On the street, Dee experienced sex at an early age and became pregnant without being married. She wrote:

What comes to my mind is why men were created by God to destroy women's future. My future was bright before I came to know that women were meant for men. I did not understand...I got my first-born outside the wedlock (Dee, March 2008).

Soon Dee fell passionately in love with another man and set up housekeeping with him. They immediately had another child, after which the relationship turned violent.

I have never seen such hatred; he took his time to play with my future. I do remember the first time we met, he was so loving, so kind...and of course, he is handsome. But for now, he behaves like a killer who is on the pay...I have gone through a difficult life of being beaten daily without any reason, being beaten till I bleed and there is no pity (Dee, April 2008).

After living with her abuser for four years, Dee escaped, remarking that she is "lucky to have come out of his house alive" (Dee, April 2008). But she still ran the risk of seeing her former partner on the street:

Having gone through this kind of life has made me regret how I came to know this man. I even curse the day we met. He promised me a good life but in turn he gave me the worst life I have ever had. Today if I come to meet him on my way I just find a way not to be seen by him. I find somewhere to hide myself here in the slums. There are many streets that I can go through and not be seen (Dee, April 2008).

But the separation was short-lived. Dee began seeing her abuser again, living with him for another month before old patterns once again emerged:

I still have the love of my kid's dad after he wanted to kill me for the four years we had been together...Everything was going quite well but in the month of February, things changed...He was (arrested) and after he got out, he started fights and quarrels most of the time and I spent the night without food (Dee, April 2008).

Dee wanted to escape again but “by this time, he was supporting me. I used to go to him and get money to maintain Teresa,” her second child and his biological child (Dee, April 2008). Soon, though, she became pregnant again and the abuse escalated:

Little did I know that I will be in a big mess at the month of May—I got pregnant. I kept it to myself but as the tummy became big, I told him and (I knew) I was in for a fight. I was beaten up like a dog. He kicked me in the tummy. I think he wanted the baby to die. Since that time, I have never gone to his place again (Dee, April 2008).

But the punishment wasn't over. She tried to return to her father's house but, when he found out she was pregnant for a third time, he, too, threatened her:

At six-thirty I was up packing my belongings because I had some conflict with my father after he knew that I was pregnant. I was confused I did not know where to go, the only choice I had was to go to my mother's place. I carried my kid Teresa and we left (Dee, April 2007).

Dee spent the next few months, living anywhere she could, sometimes on the street. She worked odd jobs while she saved money for a house of her own and a mattress. She was particularly proud of her steadfast efforts and paid regular installments on the mattress she imagined will be hers one day. She wrote:

. . . since September, I have been paying money for the mattress which I have been paying in installments. I had paid 950 shillings (about \$13), so I had a balance of 750 shilling (about \$10), which I paid. So then I will pay 250 shillings (about \$4) the day I will collect my mattress. The mattress price was 1700 shillings (about \$27). I thank God because I am about to own my own mattress, and I believe a long journey starts with a single step (Dee, November 2007).

In December, 2007, she was finalizing plans to move with her children into a place of her own, believing that "at least now, we will have a little peace" (Dee, December 2008). Unfortunately, neither Dee nor anyone else in Kibera was destined to have peace during the upcoming months.

In December 2007-January 2008, Dee was caught in the political violence that rocked the country. A controversial Presidential election was held on December 27<sup>th</sup> and the process of vote-counting began. The country was tense and poised to erupt at the first sign that the incumbent President, Mwai Kibaki, would retain power. The timing was not good for Dee, who had just made a down-payment on her own house, which she hoped to occupy after the first of

the year. She was also in her eighth month of pregnancy when the country (and Kibera) exploded in violence. On December 28<sup>th</sup>, Dee wrote:

I was woken (from a nap) at 6 pm by the neighbors who were running up and down. I woke up and closed the door tightly so that no one can come in. The tension was high as the counting of votes went on and the people were harassing each other because of the tribe they belong (to). This was the longest day of the week because you couldn't even go to the shop. I don't even remember eating...People were all sitted with a radio to know how the counting of the votes is going...we all stayed awake. Nobody slept (Dee, December 2007).

By December 31<sup>st</sup>, incumbent President Kibaki had been declared the winner of the election and violence was rampant in Kibera. Thousands of homes and businesses were burned and looted. Dee assessed the situation and feared that her house would be burned because she is from the Kikuyu tribe but is living in a Luo neighborhood. She also feared rape, which was going on all around her. She decided to try to escape Kibera before things got any worse:

I found myself...wondering what to do next because outside the house people were running not knowing where to go or what to do next, we have being awake all night fearing that my house would be torched down because of the post-election announcement of the Presidential seat, which many say was not fair...I just felt uncomfortable and disturbed by the ongoing war tribe against tribe. I had nothing to do but take my kid and flee to look for a safer place...I carried nothing but a shawl and two bottles of medicine and I left. On my way they asked me where I was going and I told them I was taking my kid to the hospital and they gave me way...I went on journeying until I reached a church at Karonja. I entered

the church and they took me in. In the evening, we were about 300 women...I was tired and I slept on the bench with my kid beside me. I only woke up to find that it was day lite—it was 5 a.m.—and people were still running from side to side (Dee, December 2007).

Dee looked outside the church and realized that she was still in an area where there was much violence. She decided to go further from the city center:

I left the church at six-thirty, carried my kid on my back and as I left some women asked me where I was going but I told them anywhere I can feel peace around me. I cannot sit here listening as the policemen fire tear gas on the air and people are torching homes and stealing from shops...A young lady with a kid said that I should not leave her behind; she took her kid and we left the church...On our way we met some policemen who told us if we are seeking refuge we should go to the Nairobi show ground, which was not far from where we were. As we approached the show ground, we saw people who came running. Behind them was a big crowd of people with pangas and stick(s) and they were beating somebody...we hurried and now we were at the main road to the gate. I felt pain on my lower abdomen and it forced me to sit down. My kid was crying and saying mum, let's go but I couldn't even stand up and the lady I was with...called the police. Two policemen came and carried me to the show ground (Dee, December 2007).

Dee reported being unconscious for two hours and waking up to find a team of doctors around her:

The doctor in charge said I have walked a long distance carrying the kid on my back with the situation of my pregnancy. Now it was 2 pm and people at the camp

were eating and my kid was running around happily to see her mother awake again. I ate lunch and we were given blankets. We looked for a place to sleep in the arena (Dee, December 2007).

But, although she had reached seeming safety, Dee found that she had once again fled to a place that was worse—this time psychologically—than the place she had begun. She soon realized that she was among the refugee population, which would ultimately be moved to refugee tented encampments where they would be labeled Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). She wrote:

I looked at the situation...I found myself crying. I was a refugee in my own country. It was a bad situation; this was the first week of a new year; I have never seen anything like this since I was born. I have heard of refugees but now I am one...In the evening the well-wishers (Red Cross and NGO's) brought us some clothes to change...I thank Kenyans who give support to people who need it...(but) I just took my kid and went to my bedding because the reporters came taking photos. I didn't want anybody to take my pictures since I did not appreciate myself as a refugee in my own country...I felt depressed and found myself awake most of the time at night...some time I thought I was dreaming and I wanted out of this dream...I woke up at seven-thirty...I told myself that this was my last day at the refugee camp. I need to go to my house even if I had nothing to eat. I no longer want to be a refugee (Dee, December 2007).

On January 4<sup>th</sup>, Dee escaped again, this time fleeing from the refugee camp back to Kibera, where the violence was abating. She went first to her own house and slept with Teresa on the mud floor. For the rest of the month, she alternated living at her unfurnished house and at her sister's home. Unfortunately, though, there were few odd jobs, since the still-sporadic violence



kept people mostly indoors and wary. Furthermore, Dee was nearing the ninth month of her pregnancy, making strenuous work difficult. Her lack of earning capacity during this time caused Dee not only to lose her house because she could not pay the rent but also to lose the beloved mattress, on which she had been making payments. The mattress and all other personal items in her house were confiscated by the landlord when the rent was not paid on time. During this difficult time, a person whom Dee refused to identify approached her about selling her unborn baby for cash. She refused. On January 25<sup>th</sup>, Dee gave birth to her third child, a boy whom she names Kevin. She began 2008 with no job, no partner, and no home. She had three young children but few prospects for the future. She wrote:

Now I will start from the roots again. I don't have anything. My bed, my kids' bed, my bedding, my utensils, I can't believe it. I have saved money to buy a nice chair, now I am empty-handed...Now I have nothing. Oh my, oh my God, in which place do I belong, was I born to go through this kind of pain. I can't even hold my tears. Who am I supposed to go to? (Dee, March, 2008).

With few escapes left and only her mother to rely on for partial support, she found herself in the world of prostitution. She wrote, "I don't enjoy sex but I enjoy the money because at long last my kids have food to eat and no one will know the kind of business I am up to..." (Dee, March 2008).

Soon Dee was infected with a sexually transmitted disease (STD) which caused her severe pain in her abdomen and cost valuable money to treat. She reported that she "spent one week in bed, my abdomen was still paining...I felt deep pain when I washed my private part" (Dee, March 2008). She admitted that prostitution was a "dangerous and dirty business" but she had no option but to continue:

Being a prostitute is the only option left and yet it is the hardest decision for me to make. I sometimes have no money to feed my kids, they go to bed without food or sometimes spend the day without eating...I have tasted the money of prostitution. You have everything you want, eat a balance diet and dress properly with the money but (you also may) end up getting infected with HIV/AIDS (Dee, March 2008).

Seemingly at the bottom of the social world, Dee feared only the impersonal violence of disease and possible death. But her former abuser was still in Kibera, ready and able to inflict very *personal* blows on her weakened body. He had heard the rumor that Dee was offered the option of selling her baby boy, which was his biological child. Although he declined to support the child, he decided to intervene when he believed she intended to sell the boy for money. One day when she was taking the child to the hospital, her abuser misinterpreted her actions, thinking she was going to the hospital to make a sale:

When he saw me, he blocked my way. I tried to cross the road to walk away from him because I fear him more than fire. He followed me and pulled me. I was afraid because I knew how he can react. He asked me where are you coming from. I answered 'am from the hospital.' He said you think I am a fool. I know that you want to sell the kid. Try it and I will kill you before you enjoy the money.' I was waiting to see if he will walk away without threatening me but I was wrong. For the first time, he took Kevin and told me to walk away. I pleaded with him to give my child back but I was beaten (with) strong slaps in front of a big crowd. I still begged but the more I begged the more I was beaten. This time

blood was running down my nose. The only thing I remember is my clothes looking as if they were dipped in blood (Dee, March 2008).

Dee woke up in the hospital, where she had been taken by the police, who told her that they found her “beaten and left to die” (Dee, March 2008). They asked her who assaulted her and she told them “it is the man I love most, the father of my kids” (Dee, March 2008). She did not even consider pressing charges, fearing retribution from her abuser. She told the police that she just wanted her son back and was appalled when the police told her they had no knowledge of Kevin’s whereabouts. Dee left the hospital and made her way home, where her other children asked her “mummy, where is Kevin, have you left him in the hospital” (Dee, March 2008). She appeased the children with bits of food and lay down to nurse her wounds. That evening, there was an unexpected knock at her door:

It was my boyfriend’s mother carrying my son. As she came in, I took my son quickly...I told her the whole story. She asked if I can have a talk with her, her son, and the father of my boyfriend so that they can understand the problem between us. I refused because I don’t want to die before God’s good time (Dee, March 2008).

Dee not only refused the mediation offer but also continued to use side streets and paths through Kibera to avoid further contact with Kevin’s father. Again, her escape into prostitution and desperation had brought with it not only its own concomitant suffering. It had also reignited the wrath of her former abuser, adding another level of risk to her already risky life.

Dee’s writing during this period of her life provided a multi-episode example of what could happen when a woman in Kibera engaged in a series of consecutive escape attempts from

situations of gender-based violence or the threat of it. With each escape, she encountered more or worse violence and also entrenched herself more deeply in a life of cyclical risk.

In 2010, Dee disappeared from Kibera. Repeated attempts to locate her and discover news about her circumstances were unsuccessful. Other study participants who knew Dee reported that they had heard rumors she got married and left Kibera. No one knew whom she purportedly married and no one knew if the rumors were true. Dee's friends have expressed hope that her final escape attempt was truly successful, leading her to a safe and fulfilling life. In one of her final diary entries for the current study, Dee wrote:

I have a dream that I am walking away from the troubles in my life from being a hopeless mother to a mother with vision, and from poverty to riches, from rags to good and nice clothes and from prostitution to being a politician. I know that with my head high, my dream will one day come to be part of my life (Dee, November 2009).

Participants in the current study expressed hope that Dee's dream has come true. Unfortunately, in Kibera, the odds are against her.

### *Analysis of the Escape Strategy*

The *escape* strategy was unsuccessful in removing women from situations of gender-based violence. Escapes were often impulsive and, therefore, had little chance of success since the financial, social and psychological means to *support* such escapes did not exist. This was not, however, to say that Kiberan women were particularly foolhardy or intrepid. There is an egregious lack of support services for women in Kenya generally, and virtually none in Kibera. Because women knew this, they also knew that an impulsive escape had about the same chance

of success as a planned one—that is, virtually no chance. Still, escape was often seen as a preferable strategy to staying put, especially when a woman risked death in her own home.

*No Safety Net: Women's Support Systems in Kenya*

Women in Kenya lack an effective system for reporting or prosecuting gender-based violence. They also lack temporary protective housing, as well as the societal support to advocate for such services. For example, although passage of the Sexual Offenses Act (2006) made rape a crime, women still lack an effective system through which to report and prosecute it. For example, in order for an investigation or prosecution to begin, a woman must take the initiative by reporting the crime to the police. If she does so, her statement will be recorded in an Occurrence Book, which is held in each police station. However, most police officers are inexperienced and prejudicial in their dealing with gender-based violence, particularly violence between married partners. Many officers are completely untrained, despite a campaign by FIDA-K to provide education through the publication of a police manual on gender-based violence (FIDA-K, 2008). According to Amnesty International:

Women who seek police intervention are often embarrassed, ridiculed, verbally abused and made to feel as if they are wasting police time. In many interviews carried out by Amnesty International, women said they were reluctant to approach the police and had only reported their case when the violence had become so extreme that they needed intervention to protect their lives (Amnesty International, 2007).

Besides the initial reporting, another burden is placed on women who want to begin an investigation or prosecution of violence they have experienced. That is, women must obtain a

Medical Examination Report, also known as a P-3 Form. This form must be obtained from a police station before a woman can be examined by a doctor. The procedure is cumbersome and time-consuming, requiring the form's first section to be filled out by the police, who subsequently escort a victim to a police-affiliated doctor to be examined. It is not hard to imagine the difficulties inherent in this system, especially for distraught, abused women who are expected to wait patiently on line for forms and official signatures. Furthermore, Amnesty International reported that many women must bribe police in order to procure a P-3 Form in the first place. A common bribe is 100 shillings, which often amounts to a day's wages in Kibera, decreasing the likelihood that women will spend such valuable cash. Even if a woman has the fortitude to withstand police ridicule and the wherewithal to secure a form, she must still take the P-3 Form to a doctor and submit to an examination. One rape victim described her experience of reporting a rape:

After I had been taken to a private doctor, he told me not to wash as I would have to report to the police doctor. Since it was 2 a.m., this meant that my report would have to be filed the next day. I could not believe that I would have to sleep with the smell of those men on me... When I went to report to the police doctor, I found a long line with all sorts of people. The nurse assisting him gave me two glass slides and told me to stick my fingers up myself and wipe the semen onto the glass slide. I could not believe what she was saying to me, they were asking me to re-enact the rape" (Amnesty International, 2007).

The difficulties described above are compounded for women in Kibera, for whom police stations and hospitals are likely to be located far from their homes. They would, similarly, be unlikely to be able to pay a bribe to secure a form or to spend time, with children in tow, standing on line in

both police and doctors' offices. But even if they persevered in the above instances, they would be unlikely to have the money to take the next step. Bringing a case to court, which means hiring an attorney, is expensive. It must be remembered, too, that victims of *marital* rape do not even have the right to endure the medieval system described above. Marital rape was exempted in the Sexual Offenses Act, a compromise necessary to secure passage of the controversial bill. In Kenya, marital rape is not a crime.

In addition to the difficulties women face in reporting or prosecuting gender-based violence, there is also a severe lack of social services for women who need immediate emergency protection. For example, there are no governmental shelters or emergency housing services. Although a few women's organizations provide counseling or temporary emergency protection (1-2 days), there is only one shelter in *all of Kenya* which provides long-term shelter for women victims of gender-based violence. There are no shelters of either the short- or long-term variety in Kibera. Furthermore, experts point to an even deeper structural problem:

. . . the biggest problem observed by organizations that run shelters and women's organizations is that, because of women's economic disempowerment, many victims of abuse still return to their husbands. As the Women's Rights Awareness Program (WRAP) told Amnesty International, 'The silence has been broken to a degree. The women come here for refuge but still negotiate to return home' (Amnesty International, 2007).

Given the lack of social services throughout Kenya and the structural disempowerment of women, it is perhaps not surprising that victims of gender-based violence in Kibera, who could not attain even the limited social services of the middle class, often attempted to escape bad situations by impulsively jumping to something worse. After all, change represented hope for

something better and many women felt they had nothing to lose. For women in Kibera, though, these gambles didn't usually pay off. In fact, women rarely broke even.

### *Micro Level*

The *escape* strategy was only effective if a woman was fleeing life-threatening violence and the escape took her to a place where she survived. If the escape was intended to alleviate ongoing gender-based violence, however, it usually provided neither palliative remedy nor long-term cure. On the micro-level, the escape strategy was disruptive of familial relationships, often taking the woman to a different location within Kibera, meaning that she lost the social capital she had built in her area, including bonds with her neighbors and her husband's family.

Furthermore, her children's bonds with friends and relatives were also disrupted. Leaving her home would also mean that a woman must relinquish her material possessions, taking with her only what she could carry. In Kibera, losing clothes, bedding, and cooking utensils made it difficult to set up a new living situation. Such items were expensive and difficult to replace. In addition, a woman's stress and anxiety level increased during an escape attempt, adding to her psychological difficulty and sometimes impairing her decision-making power. If she left a relationship but changed her mind—which many women did because of economic dependence on their abusers—she would often suffer punishment and increased violence once she has returned home.

### *Mezzo Level*

On the mezzo level, the *escape* strategy was similarly non-productive. For example, escape from a violent situation often required a change of residence, meaning a change in a woman's community-level contacts. Leaving a violent husband or partner, a woman must seek



safety by moving to a different part of Kibera, resulting in the loss of neighborhood and employment contacts in her former venue. Because a woman often worked (plaiting hair, selling food, washing clothes) in the neighborhood where she lived, leaving a relationship was often tantamount to leaving a job. Transition to a new neighborhood might mean not finding work again until she made connections and established trust in the new location. Similarly, if a woman had children, they might have to stop attending school or lose important school time during an escape attempt.

#### *Macro Level*

Similarly, the *escape* strategy did not benefit the escapee at the macro level. While those women who employed *endurance and faith* as a strategy at least appeared to fall under the social dictates of institutionalized gender norms (they tried to be good wives, they fell back on religious faith in times of trouble), escapees' activities often ran counter to the socialized understanding of women's roles and "proper" female behavior. Leaving a husband, cohabiting with a series of male partners, or reporting violence to the police all ran counter to social norms in Kenya. Amnesty International reported that women's families and in-laws often pressure them to stay quiet about their experiences of gender-based violence and not to officially report it (Amnesty International, 2002). Women choosing to go against such social norms by leaving violent relationships or by reporting gender-based violence to authorities often suffered an additional harm--social ostracism and familial condemnation.

**CHAPTER 10**  
**QUALITATIVE RESULTS—SECTION THREE: *LIMITED PARTNERSHIP AS***  
**COPING STRATEGY**

The third strategy for coping with gender-based violence was one that expressed a woman's decision to establish only a "limited partnership" with a man or men in her life. The strategy was utilized by three participants in the current study, making it a unique and provocative—albeit minority—coping strategy among the diarists. The *limited partnership* strategy was defined as a pragmatic decision to engage in partnerships with men for economic support (with or without love and friendship) but to refrain from both marriage and child-bearing with these male partners. The *limited partnership* strategy was described as a *long-term* strategy by two diarists. That is, these writers did not speculate about a time when they would not use the strategy. It was described as a *short-term* strategy by a third diarist, who envisioned a time when she would be able to abandon it.

The purpose of the *limited partnership* strategy in both the long- and short-term was to avoid male power and control in a relationship, which often resulted in violence to the female partner. For two diarists, this was the *only* stated purpose of the strategy and these writers did not seem to anticipate a time when they would engage in other kinds of partnerships with men. A third diarist envisioned the strategy only as a short-term way of coping, almost as a delay tactic or stalling device. Unlike the others, she hoped that it would enable her to avoid the entrapment of marriage and children, as well as the violence that came with marriage, until she could secure a modicum of economic independence. In this manner, should she later choose marriage and motherhood, she would have an "out" if the relationship became violent.

The *limited partnership* strategy was clearly defined by Elizabeth, whose terse, succinct, even severe journal entries often provided vehemence without detail. Although her journals said little else about the *limited partnership* strategy, she clearly articulated its long-term goal. She wrote:

I don't always feel good about this beast called men. I call them beast because they ruin my life. I sleep with them and (they) give me money but no one (is allowed) to say I am his woman. When he thinks that you are, he just start having jelousy. When he meets others then he will even start commanding you or even beat you thinking he owns you. That's why I tell every (man) that I have someone (else). So he will not have any say on (my) self even when they meet together...They will fear each other. It's another way of surviving here...

(Elizabeth, March 2010).

Sarah described in more detail her strategy of engaging in limited partnerships, in which she kept an intentional distance between herself and the men with whom she was involved. She described learning about sex at a very young age from her mother:

My mom is the one who teach me what happen in bed between two people. We always sleep in one room with our mother...she drinks wine and comes (home) with different men...and start doing sex even before I get to sleep (Sarah, March 2010).

She described her first sexual experience as taking place one night when her mother locked her out of the house: "It all started for me one night when I was chased from the house and I went to a guy and was loving him. I stayed there for three days. I always remember the day and the month and the year when I lost my virginity..." (Sarah, March 2010).

Sarah soon began sleeping with men for money so that she could buy food for her family and also some personal items such as clothes, underclothes, or sanitary napkins. She discovered, though, that *young* men would either promise to pay after sex and then NOT pay or they would provide only a very small sum of money. She wrote:

. . . I now expect him to give me money *first* because some, they can't. They will just promise and after giving him what he want, he will chase you or beat you... Young men don't have money to give you...only a small amount that can't even help (Sarah, March 2010).

It is at this point—realizing that sleeping with young men, either for money or in the hope of a future relationship, was neither rewarding nor safe—that Sarah formulated a strategy for survival which consisted of forming limited partnerships with certain pre-selected men. She chose men who were, in fact, already married because they were older (that is, more likely to have the funds to pay for her services) and because their marital status would forbid them from making any claims on her. She wrote:

My (plan) these days is to get with older men who have family at home...because of their life at home, they have no (ability) to leave (so I find) someone who give me (money), even if he is older...My mother only get sometimes food for us but it is not inaffe and even it's only one meal every day of ugali and sukuma wiki. But when I get a good man some times (he) gives me 200 shillings...so for now, my 'boyfriend' is not one (person). I have like three of them. I sometimes buy things for (my siblings) because our mother is someone who lives with changua on her mind (Sarah, March 2010).

Sarah later added, “I never want to marry and become like my mother with many mouths to feed and then deserted by the dad...rather I will be alone. I just hope I don’t get pregnancy...” (Sarah, March 2010).

Catherine also articulated the strategy of *limited partnership*. For Catherine, the strategy was one that evolved from her experiences while she was a participant in the current study. Catherine first experimented with the strategy of *endurance and faith*. She engaged in survival sex with a variety of partners in order to obtain money for food and relied on her faith in God to see her through. Later, she attempted to reject that strategy for a “job” as a bar-maid. This *escape*, however, was worse than her original situation, so she returned to using survival sex, knowing it might entail frequent violence, as well as the risk of pregnancy and/or HIV infection.

During the final phase of the current study, however, Catherine abandoned the use of survival sex, saying:

There was a time I had given up with my life, such that I had to sleep with men to get money and enable us to survive. But there (came) a day when I settled down and asked myself so many questions. Yes, I went to school up to Form Four. I did all the best I could and got a moderate grade. (Now) here I am with no college to expand my studies, no job, but I made up my mind and said it is better to stop this habit because HIV/AIDS has spread all over and you never know who has it...so I decided to quit (survival sex) and started washing clothes and at the end of the day, get the small (money) I will get (Catherine, March 2010).

As Catherine surveyed her options, she evolved a clearly articulated strategy of *limited partnership*, a strategy which might minimize her risk of violence and maximize her chance of establishing an independent future. Unlike Elizabeth and Sarah, however, she engaged in *limited*

*partnership* with only one man. She openly shared with him her desire not to marry at the present time and not to become pregnant outside of wedlock. Catherine explained her reasons for adopting a *limited partnership* strategy. She wrote:

Because I see the way my fellow colleagues have been exploited by men. Many girls has dropped out of school due to early pregnancies. Others has died while doing abortions. Others have contracted AIDS and so many things. So now I have this guy whom I fall in love with but I always tell him my hopes and dreams. I always hope to get a job or have my own business...I always tell him to use a condom because I don't want to start having abortions because I don't have the money to raise a child (Catherine, March 2010).

Catherine noted that she would prefer to stay single. She lamented: "If I had a stable job or if I was brought up in a stable family, I could stay single and never get married" (Catherine, March 2010). In fact, she expressed quite a cynical attitude toward marriage in general:

Because sometimes I see how some women who are married, what they go through in the so-called marriage. You find a lady having five kids. All of them have not gone to school, her husband is jobless, no food, no clothes, fighting every time, in fact, there is no peace and happiness (Catherine, March 2010).

Catherine did not entirely reject the idea of marriage in her own future but envisioned it as coming *after* she had obtained a steady job which would help make her partnership one of equality. She wrote: "I always hope to get a job or have my own business so that we (she and her boyfriend) can protect each other for our future if God will allow us to be together and have our own children" (Catherine, March 2010). But she continued to underscore the fact that the time

for marriage and children was not now. She said, “What I am up to now is to get a job or have my own business and the rest will follow later” (Catherine, March 2010).

### *Lack of Family Planning Among Young Women in Kibera*

On the surface, the *limited partnership* strategy appeared smart, savvy, and contemporary. However, a close reading of the diaries revealed that women using this strategy did not seem to combine it with a concomitant birth control regime that was under their personal control. Surprisingly, they resorted to chance (Sarah) or to a partner’s willingness to wear a condom (Catherine). Such a flaw in an otherwise thoughtful coping strategy did not appear to be attributable to lack of *knowledge* about contraceptives or to their *availability*. All three diarists describe attending family planning seminars and having knowledge of birth control. Although diarists did not explain their non-use of birth control, it may have been rooted in the inaccessibility of clinics and the procedural difficulty of even a minimal transaction at such a facility.

Contraceptives are readily available throughout Kenya and *can* be obtained at clinics, even in Kibera. Birth control pills, as well as an injectable birth control (Depo Provera) and Norplant implants are available at very low cost and sometimes, depending on the clinic, they are free of charge. Nevertheless, during the three-year duration of the current study, only two diarists mentioned using birth control pills to prevent unwanted pregnancy. One is an unmarried 18-year-old who participated briefly in this project in 2007. That young woman (JC) described being taken to a clinic by her mother to receive birth control pills and instructions about their usage. Her mother told her that “just because you are illiterate doesn’t mean you can’t control your own life” (JC, June 2007). The other mention of birth control pills came from Marya (March, 2010),

who utilized the strategy of *endurance and faith* to cope with gender-based violence. Marya, who already has one child, used pills to avoid another pregnancy while she hoped for someone to marry her.

It was, perhaps, not as surprising that women employing *endurance and faith* or *escape* strategies did not more commonly avail themselves of female-controlled contraceptives. These women, after all, believed in and sought traditional marriage and child-bearing—sometimes believing that finding the “right man” and bearing his children would be their salvation. However, women employing the *limited partnership* strategy had rejected, at least for the time being, the idea of marriage and children. It is surprising, then, that these women did not avail themselves of birth control methods that would enable them to prevent unwanted pregnancy, with or without partner cooperation. The use of the pill, for example, would seem to raise the odds of economic survival in favor of these women and give them more time to put their strategy into effect. Particularly in the case of Catherine, whose future plans depended on not becoming pregnant, it seemed counter-intuitive not to utilize birth control. However, none of the women who used the *limited partnership* strategy mentioned using female-controlled family planning methods. One woman (Elizabeth) mentioned nothing about her birth control choices. Another (Sarah) worried about becoming pregnant-- a tacit admission that family planning is not under her control. A third diarist (Catherine) mentioned “always” asking her partner to wear a condom, a statement that implied she does not have her own birth control plan.

Because the diarists did not offer reasons for their lack of a safe birth control regimen, my attempts to understand this omission are based on research and observation about clinic location and usage in Kibera, not on diarists’ written journals. However, clinic inaccessibility has been cited by health experts as a huge problem in Kibera, one that likely affects the diarists. For



example, a recent study on adolescence in Kibera by the African Population Health and Research Council (APHRC) provides noteworthy statistics. Although the APHRC survey is primarily focused on adolescents' knowledge of HIV infection, it also includes questions on general reproductive health education and choices in Kibera (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007). The survey interviewed 1,675 adolescents aged 10-19, asking them, among other things, about their knowledge and use of birth control. A total of 921 young women took part in the survey, of which 16% were already married. Of those not married, 36% were sexually active. The study reported that 56.4% of married or sexually active young women had used a family planning method and, of those, most had used the male condom (37.4%). Although 41.5% knew about injectable contraceptives and 46.1% knew about birth control pills, only 19% had ever used injectables and only 16.7% had ever used birth control pills. A staggering 1 in 10 young women depended on "safe days" to avoid pregnancy. Like the diarists, then, these adolescents know about female-controlled contraceptive options but still do not use them. Such statistics may imply that is not *education* that is lacking in Kibera but the ability to put that education into practice.

### *Clinic Accessibility*

Part of the problem may lie in the inaccessibility of clinics and health centers in Kibera. There are currently no public (government subsidized) clinics in the slum. Clinics that do operate in Kibera are operated by private NGO's, such as CARE, UNICEF and AMREF, as well as a variety of churches and faith-based groups. Although there is no accurate estimate of the number of health clinics in Kibera (some are extremely small and many are ephemeral), the Global Alliance for Africa (GAA) estimates that "there are four viable health clinics in Kibera..." and

that “these clinics are being overwhelmed by the demand for services from the ever-growing population” (GAA, 2010). The Global Alliance is currently constructing a clinic in the Kibera village of Kianda, where they estimate that there is “only one other proper medical facility serving a population of 350,000” (GAA, 2010). According to the GAA, many people do not attempt to utilize these clinics “due to the long distance of the nearest clinic or lack of finances” (GAA, 2010). Indeed, travel to/from clinics, plus long on-site waits may result in loss of a day’s wages. In addition, there may be a cost for care. Private clinics vary in their policies about consultation fees and payment for medicines or drugs such as birth control pills. One clinic that is currently operating in conjunction with CARE International waives the 30 shilling consultation fee for its poorest patients but does charge for medications dispensed (GAA, 2010). Other clinics may choose an opposite strategy, providing pills or injectables for free but asking for a consultation or “visiting” fee from the patient. Consequently, for a woman seeking birth control pills, the “cost” to her may be a long walk to a clinic, a long wait, and then, finally, an undefined expense that her budget may not be able to absorb. Thus, women in Kibera may not have time or money to invest in the long (and repetitive) process of obtaining birth control. Ironically, short-term dependence on subsistence daily labor may stand in the way of long-term reproductive independence.

#### *Micro Level*

Nevertheless, if pregnancy was avoided, the *limited partnership* strategy was moderately and temporarily successful at the micro-level of diarists’ lives. That is, engaging in *limited partnership* provided women with a degree of economic security at the same time that it limited the male partner’s ability to exercise control over them or abuse them. However, the strategy was

only successful if the women who employed it remained childless. If women did become pregnant, there was little likelihood that the fathers would marry them or continue to support them. Many men distanced themselves from women with whom they had fathered children, even if they knew that woman did not seek marriage, because they would not or could not pay to support a child (Catherine, March 2010; Cathy M., March 2010). When this happened, abortion was one option. Women who were deserted by their partners often risked their own lives in backstreet, illegal abortions. On the other hand, if they bore a child, the *limited partnership* strategy was no longer effective for them. Having children rendered mothers *more* economically dependent on men than childless women were, making it less likely that mothers could control what *kind* of partnerships they engaged in with men (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008). Indeed, women with children often had to accept *whatever* partners they could get and on *whatever* terms.

Thus, *limited partnership* was actually a risky strategy and one with high stakes. It was subject to failure if pregnancy occurred, in which case, women could opt to abandon the strategy or risk death through abortion. The strategy was only viable if combined with a female-controlled family planning regime. Unfortunately, diarists in the current study appeared not to be using reliable birth control. For Elizabeth, Sarah, and Catherine, then, the *limited partnership* strategy was more like a ticking time-bomb than a sustainable solution to gender-based violence.

### *Mezzo Level*

On the mezzo level, the strategy was only semi-successful because it was out-of-sync with patriarchal social norms. Having relationships with multiple partners (Elizabeth) or married partners (Sarah) might not stand women in good stead among neighbors and peers in Kibera, who would likely consider that these women were simply prostitutes. Even Catherine would not

find social favor for long. Although her relationship with her current boyfriend was monogamous (on her part), it still did not comply with patriarchal standards for female behavior, which dictate that women should prioritize marriage and motherhood, not careers (Amnesty International, 2007). Indeed, since there were few opportunities for viable women-owned/operated businesses in Kibera, a woman like Catherine would need either incredible luck or outside help, perhaps in the form of a micro-loan, to make her strategy work. In order to secure such a loan, even in Kibera, a woman must have some kind of social capital, perhaps a relationship with a local NGO, such as UNICEF or AMREF. Lacking special connections or the confidence to achieve them, women using this strategy were racing against time. As they spent their days doing laundry, for example, they lost touch with other employment skills. As their years out of school *increased*, their marketable skills *decreased*. Indeed, the longer they were delayed in establishing careers, the less likely it is that they would establish them at all.

### *Macro Level*

Structural change is coming to Kenya. Advocates for women's rights and for equality in women's employment are increasing. Among the mainstream population, the average monthly wage of a working woman is still only 2/3 that of a male doing the same job. Nevertheless, in 2007, the Kenyan government pledged to set aside 1/3 of existing civil service positions for women (US Department of State, 2010) and although this pledge has not yet been implemented, it is likely that the promulgation of the new Kenyan Constitution in 2010-2011 will push it to fruition (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The Constitution, adopted in August, 2010, includes language on women's rights in both community and home environments and may enable progressive legislation on women's issues within the next several years. Nevertheless, women in

Kibera like Catherine, Sarah, and Elizabeth are aging and do not have much time to wait for structural changes on the macro level to trickle down to them. Unless women's opportunities increase in Kibera, the *limited partnership* strategy may time itself out, leaving them no choice but to marry or to struggle through their middle years in a downward spiral of subsistence-level poverty.

**CHAPTER 11**  
**QUALITATIVE RESULTS—SECTION FOUR**  
**COPING WITH GENDER-BASED ASPECTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Although the purpose of the current study is to describe and analyze coping strategies used by young women dealing with gender-based violence from their *intimate partners*, it would be inappropriate to omit the diarists' descriptions of gender-based aspects of the political violence they endured during December, 2007-January, 2008. Although previous discussion included an account of Dee's attempt to escape the Kibera inferno, she was not specifically escaping gender-based violence but trying to flee to a place where members of her tribe would be safe. But many diarists wrote about gender-based aspects of the post-election violence, which clearly targeted women regardless of tribal affiliation. In some instances, political violence was an excuse for a free-for-all on women, which included kidnapping, rape, gang rape, and murder.

During the political upheaval in December, 2007, Kibera writhed and burned. The violence was mainly a war between the Kikuyu and Luo tribes. Many of the diarists described the mayhem and murder they saw—mobs hacking people to death with machetes, chopping off heads, burning down homes with families still inside. Diarists described fear, horror, hiding in alleys, and sneaking out of the slum under the cover of darkness. These experiences were common to both women *and* men. However, some experiences were common *only* to women and happened not because there was a tribal war but because the tribal war gave men (of either tribe) an excuse to make war on women. Women sought to survive by any means possible. Many of the descriptions below were written in March, 2010 when the promulgation of the new Constitution, a new voter registration drive, and a visit to Kenya by Kofi Annan brought back

memories of the 2007-08 turmoil and caused diarists to reflect on their experiences during that turbulent time.

For example, diarists in the current study frequently wrote about their perception that rape was generalized beyond tribal boundaries and that women were sexually targeted. For example, Jane wrote:

It was a very long night...It was like day because of the fire everywhere. Next day, we and other girls were helping each other to remove their belongings (from their houses). People were passing by being cut, bleeding, going to the hospital. It went on till the end of the day. A lot of women were being cut only because they were women. Also they say they were raped (Jane, March 2010).

Jane also commented on the sexual free-for-all, in which young men and boys raped any woman they could find, regardless of age. She wrote: “Other boys were raping women who were older than their mother” (Jane, March 2010).

Sometimes women trusted men of their own tribe to aid them during the riots, only to find that trust misplaced. These women experienced first-hand the reality that sharing a tribal affiliation did not necessarily protect them from being raped by men or gangs of men who were empowered by the chaos. For example, Betta described her experience when she trusted some young men of her tribe to help her search for her younger sister, who had become lost during the riots. Betta wrote:

My mother came and told me she can't see our smallest sister. I panic and started crying. My friend came and told me to stop crying. We can go and look for her. It was around 9:30 at night and on the road, we found some guys we knew. They told us they will help us to find my sister. But after that, they were drinking. They

locked us in a house and they were having sex with us every time they wanted and forcing us to do whatever they want, telling us if we try to run, they will kill us.

Till now, I haven't stopped thinking about that...I also see these criminals around.

Nothing I can do to them (Betta, March 2010).

Although the main "war" was between the Kikuyu and Luo tribes, no women were safe. Women who belonged to tribes other than Kikuyu or Luo were also fair game when it came to rape. Catherine, who belonged to the Kamba tribe, found that being a non-party to the conflict did not protect her. She managed to prevent her own rape by a quick and effective lie. Her neighbor women were not so adroit or so lucky. Catherine described her family's calculations of whether they should try to walk out of Kibera and risk exposure on the streets or stay home and risk attack:

By this time, my mum had communicated with my uncle who lives in a rural area (and decided) to bring us there. But me, I wasn't going to go...because at this time (even) policemen had taken advantage wherever they know there is a pretty lady. They were storming houses and raping them. So I didn't want any of them to see me during the day because, if they do, I had to face the consequences. So I told me mum to leave me behind and leave with my young sister and brother because they are young and nobody would probably take advantage of them when they see them...So they talked with one of the policemen and he agreed to accompany them to the nearest bus station...So they left and here I was with my dad and some few neighbors, not knowing what to do and with nothing to call food. But at least we were from the same tribe (Kamba) so we have trust (Catherine, March 2010).



Later that night, Catherine regretted that she had not gone with her mother to a rural area. She wrote:

Little did I know that it was our turn that night. I should have gone with my mum. The night came and no one could sleep because of the fear of being attacked. We closed tightly our door, although the doors are so bad such that, if one kick it, it's down, so we just stayed calm... Suddenly I heard people storming our gate. I trembled and within one second, I was under the bed. From there, I could hear my neighbors screaming one second and the next minute, they keep quiet, meaning they were dead. I knew this was the end of us... In a few seconds, they stormed out door, gangs of boys entered. I found myself screaming, forgetting I was hiding. They attack my father and ask what tribe he was. When my dad told them, they cooled a bit... By this time, I was pleading with them not to kill us but one of them said, 'let's rape her.' I screamed and suddenly something ran into my mind. I told them that I was HIV positive and thank god, this saved me. They left me. They took everything valuable they could find and left us... I went back under the bed, thinking they might change their mind and come back. There I cried the whole night (Catherine, March 2010).

The next morning, Catherine found that her neighbors had been killed and the women raped, despite the fact that they were Kamba:

In the morning when I opened the door, I was trembling but when I saw stains of blood starting from our door step, I knew (the neighbors) were dead... two of our neighbors were dead and the woman was raped... Later she was taken to the hospital because she had so many injuries. I could imagine how she felt after all

those more than seven men going through her. It was just by the grace of God that I did not go through the same (Catherine, March 2010).

### *Conclusions*

Participants in the current study were shocked and horrified by the political violence of December, 2007-January, 2008. It is likely that many of them are still suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Diarists described not only the trauma --“...until the day I kiss the grave, I will never forget” (Catherine, March 2010)--but also the frustration of seeing the men who raped them walking around the community unpunished when the riots were over. It is possible that the gender-based violence women experienced during the political turmoil enabled them to see their daily violence in a different light and that it may have prompted them to see their “private troubles” as a version of the ongoing public trauma of political corruption and the devaluation of poor people, particularly poor women. No diarist made any political comments in her journals, nor indicated she believed she was qualified to make such remarks, *before* the post-election violence. *After* the violence, however, women wrote the first diary entries in which they speculated about their nation’s political future and questioned the roots of the violence. Dee, for example, wrote:

Since the election, being a Kenyan is not something to be proud of. Many people lost their lives, while others lost their beloved ones; a lot of blood was shed down....I dream of a Kenya of different tribes (but) one people. We should love one another...and not let our economy favor the rich...because for now the rich are benefiting while for the poor, everything is at a high price (Dee, February 2008)

Similarly, Catherine, in an uncharacteristic entry about the roots of political violence, wrote:

Nairobi, especially Kibera slum, is among the most physically and psychologically violent places on earth. Not only is crime and violence a feature of everyday life, but slum dwellers are emotionally assaulted daily by greedy politicians who don't care about their living conditions, by opportunistic landlords who think nothing of charging rent for a mud hovel with no toilet, by employers who pay them a pittance and by a government that spends millions on politicians and then claims to have no money for public service. For most of us slum residents, the grind of getting through the day is fraught with hazards. Most mothers...give their kids alcohol to stop them from pleading for food. Most of the girls are raped by their drunkard fathers or by men in the street and there is no one to help them. The slum is being neglected by policymakers who think that, in our poverty, we are the ones to blame for what we do (Catherine, March 2010).

No conclusion can be drawn from the current study about the relationship between the post-election riots of 2007 and the growth of Kiberan women's political and social concern. However, future research might attempt to discover whether the gender-based aspects of the 2007-08 political violence are related to women's understanding of and concern about the larger national context in which gender-based violence is situated.

## CHAPTER 12 SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE RESULTS

### *Prevalence and Efficacy of Coping Strategies*

The current study shed important light on what kinds of strategies women used to cope with gender-based violence and, in fact, which strategies were the most effective in keeping women safe. More participants in the current study (12) chose the *endurance and faith* coping strategy than either *escape* (5) or *limited partnership* (3). One participant changed strategies, experimenting with all three strategies during the course of the study.

*Endurance and faith* appeared to be the strategy that had the greatest possibility of keeping women alive. That is, women using *endurance and faith* appeared to consolidate the benefits of their current situation (home, food, stable neighborhood relations), while minimizing the risks that would come with leaving those things. Unlike women who chose the *escape* strategy, they appeared to favor staying with “the devil they knew” rather than risking unknown circumstances. And, unlike women who chose *limited partnership*, they appeared to prefer staying within the bounds of social approval, maximizing the social capital that came with community approval. If social services existed in Kibera, the strategies of *escape* and *limited partnership* would likely hold greater potential for helping women eliminate violence from their lives. But, since there was no safety net for women who tried to *escape* violence--and since material necessities needed to underpin *limited partnerships* were difficult to access-- the *endurance and faith* strategy appeared to provide the best option for women trying to protect themselves and their children from gender-based abuse.

But, although *endurance and faith* was the most widely used and possibly the most effective in keeping women safe, diarists did not appear to choose this strategy out of passive

acceptance or a belief that they deserved abuse. In fact, they expressed anger and unhappiness about their abuse and resistance toward their abusers. The fact that their strategy-choice appeared to be out-of-sync with their attitudes toward the violence may indicate that their strategies were chosen out of necessity not preference. If Kibera women had access to social services or economic empowerment, their strategy choices would likely change. If conditions existed to give them what one diarist called “a hand up” (Sally, March 2010), they would likely take it and not look back. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, the city of Nairobi has no plans to offer social services to Kibera residents and NGO’s limited budgets are outstripped by Kibera’s burgeoning population.

### *“Doing” Survival*

Global feminist theory encourages us to inspect the webs of domination that affect women and to analyze the intersections of various types of oppression. Applying such a theoretical construct to results from the qualitative component of this study provides a unique way of understanding the choices of coping strategy made by various women.

All of the diarists experienced the intersection of gender-based violence and the structural conditions of extreme poverty. The web of oppression was difficult to circumvent, given that there are few social services in Kibera and that patriarchal norms govern the macro, mezzo, and micro levels of their lives. There are few chinks in the armor of domination. Yet women made choices, exhibited agency, and lived their lives within these constraints. I suggest that they did so by consciously “doing” gender in the way they saw as most self-serving and self-protective. Thus, each of their strategies was an interaction ritual—a way of “doing gender” that women hoped would work to their advantage.

Women who chose *endurance and faith*, for example, tried to side-step gender-based violence by playing the role of the good and patient woman—a preferred role for women in Kenyan society. In such a way, they “did” gender to ameliorate gender-based violence by performing the appropriate socially-acceptable female role of patient, faithful, obedient wife, calling only on God for help and support. Such a choice provided them with familial support (from both their own and their partner’s family); with support from a church or faith-based community; and with sympathy, a kind-of social capital emanating from the community’s understanding that women are conforming to social norms and appropriate gender roles.

Women who chose *escape* as a strategy, on the other hand, attempted to find an opening in the web of oppression and to use it, although often to their own disadvantage. It appeared that women who used *escape* as a strategy had more access—or paid closer attention—to media sources such as television, radio, and newspapers. There was a distinctly higher reportage in their diaries of reacting to news events or spending lengths of time reading or listening to news broadcasts. Dee’s mentioned magazines, books, or radio eleven times in her diaries; Susanna mentioned listening to the radio four times in her writing; and Catherine mentioned reading novels and watching both movies and television five times. No other project participant mentions any interaction with news media more than twice. Dee’s mentions of media were the most extensive and she appeared to use the media as a point of departure for her own writing. Sometimes she commented on articles she read in newspapers. Other times, she described a reverie brought on by a particular song. For example, she wrote:

I stayed awake for a long time and read the magazine until I was tired. The only thing left to do was listen to music. I wondered why I was the only one feeling lonely and having no one to share my love with. For some months now, I have not

seen my daughter's father, who is the only man I want to spend my future with. But things fall apart... In my life, I have been inspired by Whitney (Houston) and this song: 'I will live my life the way I like, no matter what, I'm gonna keep it real. And it's time for me to do it on my own.' I can't tell at what time I fell asleep but I remember waking up at night to find the radio still on. It put it off and went back to sleep (Dee, November 2007).

It is possible that the media was influential in the role-modeling of women who chose the *escape* strategy and that it affected what they perceived as appropriate or available choices. However, such choices may only have been appropriate in mainstream society, where greater economic opportunity and social services, such as emergency shelters for battered women, were in place.

Women who chose *limited partnership* as a strategy chose to "do gender" in a subversive manner, by co-opting the institutions that held them down—e.g., marriage, motherhood. They were determined not to marry or bear children. They hoped not to fall into the trap, so aptly described by Catherine, of the battered "lady" with no education and an increasing number of children every year. However, because this seemingly intelligent and forward-thinking strategy was not supported by necessary material advantages—such as birth control regimens that were under women's control—it actually was nothing more than *endurance and faith* under a more progressive guise.

Nevertheless, each diarist chose a strategy for "doing gender" that was congruent with her perceived options and opportunities. In this way, women negotiated the web of domination by constructing gendered interaction rituals that enabled them to traverse the complicated terrains of their daily lives. As they were "doing gender" they were also "doing survival."

### *Narrative Style and Coping Strategy*

The qualitative component of the current study also revealed an intriguing overlap between coping strategy and narrative style. Schegloff (1997) has remarked that narrative data occupy a space at the “intersection” of language and action. This intersectionality of language and action had particular implications for the current study because the diaries described coping strategies (actions) through the use of particular narrative styles (language). Furthermore, diary narrative was necessarily “retrospective meaning-making” (Chase, 2005). The narrative style of the writer indicated how a diarist chose to interpret her past experience and how she portrayed herself in the activity of coping with gender-based violence. In other words, writers described what had happened—what violence they had experienced and how they dealt with it—from the standpoint of looking back upon the violence and its after-effects. Each diarist had, therefore, two kinds of strategy—a *coping* strategy and a *narrative* strategy, through which she described how she coped.

Analysis of three years of diary data revealed three narrative strategies most commonly used by writers: *generalized reportorial*, *dramatic storytelling*, and *future-oriented reportorial*. Perhaps not surprisingly, these narrative styles corresponded closely to diarists’ coping styles. Not all diarists who employed a particular coping strategy used the same narrative style in all of their writing. Some writers, most notably Catherine, used varying and inconsistent narrative styles. Nevertheless, it is important to note that coping strategy and narrative style did correspond in enough cases that future research is warranted to determine their relationship.

The first narrative strategy, *generalized reportorial*, was the narrative style most often used by women who chose *endurance and faith* as a way to cope. This narrative style was consistently used by seven of the eleven women who employed the *endurance and faith* strategy.



The narrative style was characterized by short, succinct sentences or phrases that depicted a situation as stationary and unchanging. For example, Marya wrote, “My father, he comes at night drunk. He always drinks every day because of the life and stress...every day to wake up and find the situation the same. We eat the same meal every day...” (Marya, March 2010). When she described experiencing gender-based violence, she described it in generalized terms. For example, “...I did abortion because when I told my boyfriend I have (become) pregnant, he rejected (me) and say I am prostitute and beat me...” (Marya, March 2010). Similarly, Jane, who also used the *endurance and faith* coping strategy, spoke in the same short generalized style. She wrote, “Sometimes I feel that I can go somewhere far and die there. When I think how life is treating us. Sometimes our house is closed. My father being told to pay the months (rent) he has not paid” (Jane, February 2010). She also wrote, “Kibera is a place called bad names by rich people...It is not our wish to be here. I was born here, also my parents. My father can’t afford anything. We lead very bad life” (Jane, February 2010). When she described the gender-based violence she experienced from her boyfriend, she did so in declarative and generalized terms: “Sometimes he beat me when he smoke bangi...but men is just men” (Jane, February 2010).

A second narrative strategy—dramatic storytelling—was distinctly different from the generalized reporting style. Dramatic storytelling was characterized by the presentation of information in a literary manner, with many descriptive details, metaphors, and dialogue. This narrative style was most commonly used by writers who chose *escape* as their coping strategy. In fact, four of the six writers who employed *escape* as their coping strategy also used a dramatic story-telling narrative style. For example, Dee wrote about the first time her son stole money:

My plan is to prove that being a street girl is not a challenge to being a good mother. This is my strongest principle and I work hard to achieve it. My son had

gone once to the street. He stole money from my mum's pocket and he ran away from home. The amount was 900 (shillings). For an eight-year-old, stealing 900 is a lot of money. I looked everywhere for him. I found him around 9:30 pm. He had used 400 shillings. The balance was 500 but I added my own money on top and lied to my mum that Rodney didn't take the money. I just found the money in the house. Mum believed and I told Rodney to lie because if the truth came out, he could be chased out of my mum's house and be back in the street for good (Dee, May 2009).

When she described her experience of gender-based violence, it was similarly in the form of a dramatic story, with herself at the center. The following excerpt is from a much longer description of an incident in which she was beaten by a former partner and woke up in a local hospital:

I opened my eyes. I was shocked to see doctors around me. I sensed danger. Around the bed were two policemen and a doctor and a nurse. They asked me my name and where I am from. I told them and asked them where was my son? They were shocked, they looked at each other. And the doctor asked me, 'You mean you have a child?' I answered I don't only have one child, there are three. I asked them who brought me here. The police guard said we are the ones who found you beaten up and left to die (Dee, May 2009).

Clearly, Dee's story-telling style was very different from the reportorial style of women who simply recounted that "he beat me."

Similarly, Susanna, who also chose the *escape* strategy for coping with gender-based violence, used a dramatic storytelling style in her diary. For example, she described the

beginning of a day: “It was raining cats and dogs. I woke early. I didn’t want to be late for the second day of my new work. I had to rush like the wind to get ready...” (Susanna, March 2010). Similarly, she described each of her many instances of gender-based violence in dramatic mode. For example:

Oh, no, another fight again. This time he claimed his breakfast was not on the table. I tried to explain to him I had not yet set the table because he hadn’t finished dressing. He really makes little and petty conflicts to turn up and seem big. It came to a point where he left without having taken his breakfast. I kept telling myself it was nothing I could be blamed for. I completed my chores in due time. Later I took a nap. As the sun was about to settle in the west, supper was ready. Since my husband had not arrived home yet (I) ate with John (son). I woke up around midnight and found Sam (husband) was not home yet. I came to find a note at the door which was saying he would never come home again (Susanna, March 2010).

Recounting her experiences in story form, with visual cues about the weather and the sunset, denoted a very different narrative strategy from the generalized reportorial style used by women employing *endurance and faith* as a coping strategy. Susanna’s long and detail-laden description of being deserted by her intimate partner was told in dramatic, dialogic fashion. Although she and Jane were describing the same kind of incident, Susanna’s account was very different in style and content from Jane’s blunt statement “he rejected me.”

Finally, a third strategy, future-oriented reportorial, was used by all three women who chose *limited partnership* as their strategy of coping with gender-based violence. This narrative style was similar to the generalized reportorial style. It too, consisted, of short, declarative

sentences and spoke more often in generalities than in specifics. However, there was one distinct difference in the two styles, in that the future-oriented style spoke of things that could be, of plans that might occur at a later date. Elizabeth spoke of a plan in which her *limited partnership* strategy would cause men to compete for her and not exert control over her. She says, “they will fear each other...that’s another way to survive here” (Elizabeth, March 2010). Similarly,

Catherine recounted:

I have this guy that I fall in love with but I always tell him my hopes and dreams. I always hope to get a job or to have my own business so that we can protect each other for the future if God will allow us to be together and have our own children (Catherine, March 2010).

When describing her strategy of *limited partnership*, she said, “What I am up to now is to get a job or have my own business and the rest will follow later” (Catherine, March 2010).

Unfortunately, her diaries indicated no clear plan about how the “rest” would follow. In fact, all three women who utilized the *limited partnership* strategy lacked realistic underpinnings—such as reliable birth control—to make their coping strategies successful. Similarly, their narrative styles were devoid of detail, metaphor and adjectival description. They speculated about their futures but did not portray themselves as active agents in the evolving dramas of their lives.

### *The Efficacy of Storytelling*

The close correspondence between coping strategy and narrative style brings up many questions that cannot be definitively answered through the current study. For example, the writers in the current study who employed the *escape* strategy also most often employed a dramatic storytelling narrative style. This parallel in strategy and style raises provocative

questions. Is there a relationship between the ability of a diarist to present herself as an active agent in her own drama and her ability to resist or escape abuse? Do her attempts to escape abuse *create* the narrative style or does the narrative style contribute to the resistance? Unfortunately, since few safety nets exist in Kibera, most women who used *escape* as a strategy were not rewarded for it. But, if social services *did* exist, it is likely that the women who attempted to escape abuse would be more likely to actually *accomplish* that escape. More research is needed on the relationship between the dramatic written construction of one's life history and the real-life exertion of personal agency. It is possible that diary projects such as this one, in which women have the opportunity to "star" in their own life story, may aid in the learning or *honing* of women's capacity for agency, resistance, and social change.

## CHAPTER 13 SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the 200-woman survey administered in 2009 provided context for the thematic diary data, as well as an illuminating back-drop for the personal stories revealed in the diaries. It also provided a means by which to better understand diarists' experience of gender-based violence in relation to that of their peers.

Survey respondents were asked to specify their age, birthplace, living arrangement, number of children and source of income (see Table 5). The mean age of survey participants was 24.2 years, with a minimum age of 18 years and a maximum age of 36 years. Women born in Kibera made up 40.5% of survey respondents, with other women hailing from a wide range of provinces. Nyanza Province and Rift Valley Province were the most widely represented provinces-of-origin for those not born in Kibera. Non-native respondents reported a mean time of 8.6 years living in the slum, with a minimum of one year and a maximum of 20 years residency in Kibera.

Forty-eight percent of the survey respondents reported being currently *married*, while 31% reported being *single* and 5.5% *widowed*. Another 5.5% said they were *divorced*, while 7.5% referred to themselves as *separated* from an intimate partner. The mean number of biological children reported by respondents was 1.4, with a minimum of no children and a maximum of 5 children. However, when asked how many children currently *lived* with them, the mean was 3.6, with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 9, indicating that women may sometimes house and/or support children who are not their biological offspring.

When asked about their current living arrangement, 46.5% of respondents reported living with a *husband*. Twenty-one percent said they lived with *relatives*; 14.5% said they lived *alone*;

and 11.5% reported living with *children only*. Only 6% reported living with a *boyfriend* and only one respondent reported living with a *roommate*. Women's source of income was primarily from a male partner, with 44.9% of respondents reporting being supported by a husband or boyfriend. Others indicated that they worked (30.3%) or were supported by relatives (24.2%).

Survey results showed that 84.5% of women had experienced some form of gender-based violence in her lifetime. Survey respondents were also asked to report their lifetime experience with eleven different *types* of gender-based violence from an intimate partner (see Table 6). The most frequently reported type of gender-based violence was being *humiliated* in front of others, with 61.9% indicating that they had experienced this type of abuse. The second most-frequently reported type of violence was the physical *forcing of unwanted sex*, with 36% of women reporting being forced by an intimate partner to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to. Other types of violence included being threatened or having someone close to them threatened (35.9%); being slapped or having arms twisted (35.6%); being pushed, shaken, or having something thrown at them (35.1%); being forced to perform unwanted sexual acts other than intercourse (30.9%); being kicked or dragged (27.3%); being punched with a fist or another object (26.8%); being strangled or burned (20.4%); being *threatened* with a knife, gun or weapon (15.5%); and actually being *attacked* with a knife, gun, or weapon (13%).

In each of these categories, for women reporting that they had experienced a particular type of violence, a *husband*, rather than a boyfriend, was the most frequent perpetrator of the violence. Percentages of husband-initiated violence ranged from 77.8% (tried to strangle or burn) to 57.4% (forced woman to perform unwanted sexual acts other than intercourse). Respondents who had experienced abuse in a particular category were also asked to report *how many times* they had experienced that abuse. They were provided with three categories: 1-5 times; 6-10

times; and 11 or more times. In each of the eleven categories, most respondents indicated that they had experienced the lowest frequency rate (1-5 times). Interestingly, in most categories, the reported frequency rate was slightly lower for each step *up* the frequency scale, which consisted of ranges 1-5 times, 6-10 times, or 11 or more times (an act was perpetrated). Three categories differ from this pattern. For these categories—*forcible sex acts other than intercourse, slapping/twisting arms, and pushing/shaking/throwing an object*—more women had experienced that type of violence *eleven or more* times than had experienced it *six to ten* times. For example, 22% of women had experienced being slapped or having their arms twisted *eleven or more* times, while 15.3% had experienced that type of violence 6-10 times. Similarly, 19.6% of women had been pushed or shaken *eleven or more* times, while 16.1% had experienced that violence 6-10 times. The greatest discrepancy between the middle-frequency rate (6-10 times) and the highest frequency rate (11 or more times) occurs in the category of forcible sex acts other than intercourse, where 8.6% of respondents reported experiencing that type of violence 6-10 times, while 25.7% indicate experiencing it 11 or more times. This gap may indicate that, for this type of gender-based violence, if it happens at all, it happens frequently. This is also the category where boyfriend-initiated violence (40.7%) is the highest, perhaps indicating that both husbands and boyfriends perpetrate this type of violence on female intimate partners, with boyfriend-perpetration accounting for the increase in reported frequency.

### *Women's Help-Seeking and Coping Strategies*

Survey participants were also asked whether they *talked about* their abuse with anyone (see Table 11). Women who talked to family (39.1%) represented the largest category of respondents who said they discussed the violence they experienced. A smaller percentage



(22.8%) reported discussing their abuse with friends, while 20.7% said they *talked to no one*. Some women discussed their abuse with a counselor (14.7%); with the abuser himself (15.2%); or with their children (4.3%).

Survey participants were also asked what was most helpful in enabling them to cope with the violence they experienced (see Table 12). A full 40.9% of participants said that *having faith in God* was the thing that helped them most. Another 34.9% reported that they *sought professional counseling*; 16.7% said they *ended the relationship*; 12.4% said they *got their partner to change*; 7% said they *became better wives/partners* themselves; and 2.2% indicated that their most helpful strategy was something other than any of the above-presented options. Only 25.7% of participants indicated they had ever sought medical attention for the abuse they received.

Finally, survey participants were asked to define their subjective feelings about the violence they experienced (see Table 13). Forty percent (40.1%) said they felt *angry*; 20.2% said they felt that *they did not deserve the abuse*; 17.1% said they felt *very upset* about the violence they experienced; 16% reported feeling *sad* about the abuse; and 3.7% said they felt that *they did deserve the abuse* they received from their partners. An additional 9.6% used a write-in option to indicate that they felt *something other* than the above options presented to them. Those write-in descriptions ranged from feelings of suicide to feelings of not wanting to have future relationships with men. Three women wrote that the category did not apply to them because they had never experienced violence from an intimate partner.

### *Women's Attitudes toward Gender-Based Violence*

In addition to asking about experiences with victimization, the survey asked respondents to reply to four questions, indicating their attitude toward gender-based violence, and under what circumstances, if any, that violence might be justified. Three of the four questions had between four and five sub-parts, eliciting gradations of opinion on one particular subject. For example, respondents were asked if a husband or boyfriend would be justified in hitting or beating his partner in four particular situations: *going out without telling him; neglecting the children; arguing with him; refusing sex; and burning the food* (see Table 7). Results showed that there was no category in which more than 28% of women thought beating might be justified. A solid 70% or more of participants replied that beating was *not* justified in *any* of the categories presented to them. The category “refusing to have sex” received the highest percentage of “not justified” responses, with 87.1% of respondents saying that a man was not justified in beating a wife or girlfriend for denying him sex. Burning food received the second highest level of “not justified” responses, with 86.5% of respondents indicating a man was not justified in beating his partner for burning dinner. Participants indicated that men were not justified in beating partners for arguing (78.4%); going out without telling him (74.2%); and neglecting the children (70.2%).

Another category of questions sought information on women's attitudes about their right to refuse sexual participation with an intimate partner (See Table 8). Participants were asked whether they believed they were justified in refusing to have sex in four very different situations. Women responded that they believed they were justified in refusing sex if they knew a partner had a sexually-transmitted-disease (84.8%); if they had recently given birth (83.7%); if they were tired and not in the mood (81.1%); and if they knew he saw other women (79.5%). Respondents were also asked if they believed they were justified in asking a partner to wear a condom if they

knew he had a sexually-transmitted disease (see Table 9), to which 92.9% responded that they thought they *were* justified in asking for condom-use.

Another series of questions asked respondents whether they thought their husbands or boyfriends had a right to engage in certain punishing actions if they refused to have sex with them (see Table 10). Eighty-four percent of participants said that husbands or boyfriends did *not* have a right to use force if a woman refused to have sex; 83% said they did *not* have the right to see other women; 80.3% said they did *not* have the right to refuse to give the woman household money; and 71.9% said the partner did *not* have the right to get angry.

#### *Women's Agency in Relation to Gender-Based Violence*

Survey respondents were asked to reply to a series of questions designed to gauge their sense of agency or control over the violence they experienced (see Table 14). Only 29.3% indicated that they had *no* control over the violence, while 48.4% indicated they had *some* control, in that they did not accept the violence and were considering options to handle it. Eighteen percent of participants indicated they accepted the partner's violence as something that was important and valuable; 13.2% indicated they accepted the partner's violence because doing so conformed to social norms; and 8.5% indicated they accepted the violence because someone else insisted that they do so and non-conformity would cause "trouble" in their daily lives.

The series of agency questions was based on a recent adaptation of the Ryan-Deci scale (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which was designed to elicit much more nuanced information than reported here. For example, when responses are aggregated into a weighted index, the scale provides a Relative Autonomy Index, which illuminates the multiple ways that agency may be socially constructed by more than one social factor at a time. It enables a respondent to indicate

that “several or even all possible reasons” for exercising agency (or not) might “be present to varying extents” at the same time (Center for Development Studies, 2007). For example, a woman may indicate she has some agency in a certain situation but that she also modifies that agency to please her father-in-law, without which family life would be difficult, and that she also feels somewhat coerced by social norms and what the neighbors think. A questionnaire based on the Ryan-Deci framework has recently been “developed, piloted, and revised” to make it “appropriate for inclusion in a survey....addressing women who are destitute or below the poverty line” (Center for Development Studies, 2007) in Kerala, India. Although an in-depth analysis of agency using the Ryan-Deci framework is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the series of questions included in the current study may provide fertile ground for future research, particularly since the scale has recently been used among a similar slum population. Comparisons between the Kerala population and the Kibera population may provide a seed for future research projects.

### *Summary of Survey Results*

Results of the current study’s survey component yielded demographic characteristics of participants and provided information about the type, prevalence, and attitude toward the gender-based violence they had experienced. Most survey participants were in their early to mid-twenties. About half of them were married and indicated they were living with their husbands. Women’s sources of income were primarily from their male partners.

Survey respondents indicated that *being publicly humiliated* was the most frequent type of violence experienced (61.9%). The *physical forcing of unwanted sex* was the second most

often reported experience of violence, followed closely by *being threatened* or having someone close to them threatened (35.9%) and *being slapped* (35.6%).

Questions about women's attitudes toward gender-based violence indicated that most survey respondents did not agree that men had a right to behave violently toward their female partners in order to punish them or educate them. Seventy percent did not agree with the idea that a man had a right to beat his wife in *any* of the posited situations, from burning dinner to refusing to have sexual intercourse. The category "refusing to have sex" received the most "not justified" responses, while "neglecting the children" received the lowest percentage of "not justified" responses.

When asked if a woman had a right to refuse to have sex with her partner in certain posited situations, 80% or more of women indicated that a woman *did* have the right to refuse sex in each of the posited categories. Ninety-three percent of women also replied that they thought they had a right to ask their partners to wear condoms if they knew those partners had sexually-transmitted diseases. Further, a full 84% of participants indicated that a man did not have a right to use force if a woman refused to have sex.

When asked to define their subjective feelings about gender-based violence, women's responses were in line with their attitudinal preferences. Forty percent said they felt angry about the abuse; 20% said they did not deserve it; 17% said they felt very upset about it; and 16% said they felt sad. Fewer than 4% said they believed they deserved the abuse or found it constructive or educational.

Although these above responses appear to indicate that many women reject patriarchal norms and ideas, participants' responses to a series of questions about helping-seeking seem to indicate woman had no effective channels through which to seek economic or emotional support.

Only 39% of women *talked to family* and only 23% *talked to friends*. Twenty-one percent of women said they *talked to no one* about their abuse and 40.0% indicated that *having faith in God* was their chosen coping strategy.

#### *Comparison to KDHS (2008)*

It was not the intention of the current study to replicate the range or scope of the KDHS and its Domestic Violence Module. Nevertheless, the questions posed by this survey about type, prevalence, and attitude toward violence may enable us to draw tentative comparisons between women in Kibera and those in the general population.

#### *Demographics*

The current study surveyed women between the ages of 20-30 (mean age=24) living in Kibera. The survey was conducted in December, 2009. The KDHS (2008) is a nationally representative sample survey of 8,444 women between the ages of 15-49 (mean age = 28.8) and was conducted between November, 2008-February, 2009.

#### *Prevalence and Types of Violence*

The Kibera study found that 84.5% of women surveyed had experienced gender-based violence in their lifetimes. The KDHS (2008) found that 39% of women in the general population had *ever* experienced gender-based violence. Furthermore, women in the Kibera study indicated a higher prevalence of gender-based violence in each of the eleven categories stipulated in the survey than did women in the general population. However, the ranking of the categories was very different. For example, the type of violence most-often experienced by women in Kibera was *public humiliation* (61.9%). Only 17.2% of women in the general

population had experienced public humiliation. Among women in the general population, *being slapped* was the type of violence more women had experienced than any other (32.3%).

Although the percentage of Kibera women who had experienced being slapped was similar (35.6%), the category was *fourth* in prevalence-rank in Kibera, after public humiliation (61.9%), forced sex (36.1%), and being threatened (35.9%). Forced sex was the second most commonly experience act of gender-based violence among women in Kibera (36.1%). It is fourth among women in the general population (14%).

For each category of abuse, women in Kibera reported a prevalence rate *at least twice* as high as that reported among women in the general population. However, in some categories, the figure was as much as seven times higher in Kibera. For example, in Kibera, the category indicating that a partner *tried to strangle or burn* (20.4%) was almost seven times higher than that of the general population (3.1%). A second category, being forced to perform sexual acts other than intercourse was more than seven times higher in Kibera (30.9%) than in the general population (4.3%).

### *Attitudes toward Gender-Based Violence*

The Kibera study contained a wider variety of questions about attitudinal issues relating to gender-based violence than did the KDHS. However, the single question posed by the KDHS (“Do women believe a husband/boyfriend is justified in beating his wife/girlfriend?”) and its five sub-parts (“If she burns the food? Argues with him? Goes out without telling him? Neglects the children? Refuses to have sex?”) were replicated exactly for the Kibera participants (See Table 7). Surprisingly, in four out of five sub-parts, a *higher* percentage of women in Kibera indicated that they did *not* agree that a man was justified in beating his wife. About the same amount of

women in *both* surveys agreed that burning dinner was not a justifiable cause for a beating-- in Kibera (86.5%) and in the general population (86.7%). In every other category, however, more Kiberan women expressed opinions that wife-beating was not justified than did women in the general population.

For example, in Kibera, the highest percentage of women thought wife-beating was *not* justified for refusing to have sex (87.1%), while only 78.9% of women in the general population concurred. Seventy-eight percent of women in Kibera thought wife-beating was *not* justified if a woman argued (78.4%), compared to 67.8% in the KDHS survey. Seventy-four percent of Kiberan women opposed wife-beating for going out without telling a husband, while only 68.1% of women in the general population agreed. Finally, in both populations, the smallest percentage of women said that wife-beating was not even justified if a woman neglected her children—in Kibera, 70.2%, as compared to 60.7% among the general population.

Further research is needed to fully understand the nature of attitudinal differences between women living in Kibera and those residing in the general population. It is likely that these attitudinal differences may be partly attributed to the fact that the KDHS survey is administered to *both* urban women and rural women and that many of the rural participants live in extremely traditional outlying villages and provinces. Previous research has shown that rural women in Kenya are likely to hold traditional values toward women's status and legal rights (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008). Kiberan women, on the other hand, although not as highly educated as *mainstream* urban women, are part of the expanding Nairobi population, where they are exposed to more progressive attitudes toward gender roles.



## CHAPTER 14 COMPARISON OF DIARY AND SURVEY RESULTS

A comparison of demographic results of the survey to the qualitative diary data showed more similarities than differences. For example, a large percentage of women participating in *both* qualitative and quantitative components of the study had been born in Kibera. Approximately 40% of the survey participants were native Kiberans, while half of the diaries had been born in the slum.

Most women in both study components indicated the *importance* of male economic support to their ongoing survival. Forty-five percent of women surveyed indicated they were supported by male partners, while 30.3% indicated that they were working, and 24.2% said they were being supported by relatives. Diarists repeatedly wrote that they could not survive economically without some sort of male support, from a boyfriend, husband, or father and that this support had to be combined with another job to meet basic economic needs. Such reports from the diarists indicate that the survey question—asking participants to choose one answer to the question of how they supported themselves--was not nuanced enough to provide realistic data. In hindsight, it is now patently obvious that Kiberan women support themselves through *multiple* means at the *same* time—not working or being supported by a male but working and being supported by a male. All but two of the diarists indicated their source of income as a combination of *male economic support* and their *own work*. The other two writers reported a combination of *all* three sources of income. The clarity and nuance provided by the diarists' accounts may help refine and re-shape survey questions about income that are posed in future surveys of this population.

The survey sample showed a higher number of married participants (48%) than was found among the diarists, among whom only two were currently married during the course of the study. One diarist was officially divorced. Among survey participants, 5.5% said they were divorced and 7.5% indicated they were separated from former intimate partners.

### *Experience and Frequency of Violence*

A total of 84.5% of survey participants indicated they had experienced some type of violence from an intimate partner during their lifetime. Among the diarists, 95% (all but one) reported having experienced violence from an intimate partner at some time during their lives. The three most highly reported types of violence among survey participants were verbal humiliation (61.9%), forced sex (36.1%), and being threatened (35.9%) (or having someone close to you threatened). The first and last categories closely paralleled diarists' accounts. Among diarists, all but one made at least one mention of verbal humiliation or public "put down" by an intimate partner; half reported being threatened or made to feel fear by an intimate partner.

In relation to forced sex, the percent of diarists reporting it was much higher than women participating in the survey, with 75% (15 out of 20) indicating they had been forced to have sex when they did not want to. It should be noted, however, that diarists did *not* provide enough detail to determine how much of this unwanted sex was reluctant acquiescence to a male partner's demands and how much was forcible rape. Sentences like "he makes me have sex, even when I am on my period," did not differentiate between coercion and force. In addition, survey participants reported that 30.9% were forced to perform other sexual acts other than intercourse. Four diarists (25%) alluded to other sexual acts ("things I cannot explain," or "things you would not believe") but did not specify what the acts were.

### *Women's Attitudes*

Most diarists did not describe their abstract ideas about gender-based violence in the highly specific contexts delineated in the survey, especially if they had not personally experienced those contexts. Consequently, it was not possible to construct a direct correlation between the specific survey questions (“Is a man justified in beating his wife if she burns the food?”) and the diarists’ daily accounts of their intimate partner experiences. However, it was possible to construct a general comparison between the survey responses to the question “How do you feel about the violence you experienced” and diarists’ personal accounts of their emotional responses to intimate partner violence. For example, among survey participants, if the categories for *anger*, *not deserving abuse*, *feeling upset*, and *feeling sad* were combined, they indicated that 93.4% of survey respondents had experienced some or all of those feelings. Similarly, among diarists, all but one expressed some or all of those feelings during the course of the three-year study. Although 3.7% of the survey participants said they believed they *did* deserve the violence, this sentiment was not echoed among any of the diarists.

### *Women's Agency*

A cursory comparison of agency between survey participants and diarists was all that could be provided by the current study. Nevertheless, it was interesting to note that 40% of diarists exhibited an unconventional coping strategy in regard to gender-based violence (either *escape* or *limited partnership*). This figure is very close to the percentage of survey participants (48.8%) who said that they “did not accept” the violence they experienced and were “considering options to handle it.”

### *Women's Coping Strategies*

Thirty-nine percent of the survey participants reported *talking to family* about gender-based violence. Only four diarists reported *talking to family* about their abuse. Instead, about half of the diarists reported *talking to friends*, while only about 20% of survey participants reported “girl talk.” Among the survey participants, 20.7% indicated that they *talked to no one*, while among diarists, only 10% *talked to no one* about their abuse.

When asked what helped most to cope with gender-based violence, 40.9% of survey participants indicated that *having faith in God* was their best source of support. This may correspond to the *endurance and faith* category among diarists (55%), in which they endured domestic abuse and sought solace in prayer and religious faith. Thirty-five percent of the survey sample said they *sought professional counseling*. Such a strategy was not widely represented among diarists, of whom only 10% reported seeking counseling. Twelve percent of survey participants said they *got their partner to change* (no diarists reflected this response) and 7% said *they became better partners* (no diarists reflected this response). Seventeen percent of survey participants cited *ending the relationship* as the thing that helped most to cope with intimate partner abuse. Women who chose this coping strategy may correspond to diarists who reported the coping strategy of *escape* (25%), a usually unplanned and hasty exit from a situation of abuse. Among survey participants, 2.2% of participants indicated that *something else* other than options offered by the survey instrument was coping method. Unfortunately, the survey instrument did not provide women with the option of writing in what this “something else” was. It would be fascinating to know if any of these responses corresponded to the limited partnership category among diarists (15%). Future surveys may refine this category and yield more nuanced information.

## *Summary*

There were few but, nevertheless, interesting *differences* between survey participants and diarists. Survey participants were more frequently married than were the diarists. Survey participants more frequently talked with *family* about their abuse, while diarists talked more frequently to *friends*. Survey participants also showed a greater tendency to seek professional counseling to cope with gender-based violence (22.8%), while very few diarists mention counseling as a coping strategy. These differences may be attributable to the fact that more of them were single, perhaps encouraging “girlfriends” to talk among one another in a way married women would not. It is also possible that the higher percentage of survey participants who sought professional counseling indicated that survey respondents were more educated than diarists, among whom only two had achieved any education above the primary level. Unfortunately, data on education level among survey participants was not captured by the survey instrument.

*Similarities* between the survey population and the diarists, however, far outweighed differences. Although the lifetime experience of gender-based violence was slightly higher among the diarists (95%) than among survey participants (84.5%) it, nevertheless, reflected an extremely high level of abuse and one considerably higher than that of the general population (39%), as reported in the KDHS (2008). Similarly, the emotional response to violence among survey participants and diarists was very similar, with virtually *all* women indicating anger, upset, sadness, and feelings that they did not deserve the abuse. Another significant similarity was found in the area of coping strategy, with survey participants indicating the *religious faith* helped most to cope with violence and diarists indicating *endurance and faith* as their most frequently chosen coping strategy.

## CHAPTER 15 RESEARCHER OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

### *Kibera Tweets*

During the course of the current study, I made four trips to Kibera. When I was *not* in Kibera, I managed to keep in touch—via phone call or text message-- with the director of the youth group which had originated the diary project. Such communication facilitated the efficient transmission of diary data from Kibera to me and enabled me to arrange meetings and survey administration. At all times during the project, I felt extremely lucky that this young man owned and maintained a cell phone, thereby making communication between myself and my field project possible between visits to Africa. In 2007, he was a rarity and our text messages were on the cutting edge of technology. Today, however, the Kibera is on the verge of technological change which may soon make my sporadic text messages seem downright primitive.

By this time next year, it is not inconceivable that researchers could “follow” their study participants via Twitter. In fact, I already receive a daily Twitter feed from the Map Kibera project, which is sharing information about politics, safety, and community organizing through a new project called Voice of Kibera (VOK, 2010). There is even an ongoing Twitter conversation about gender-based violence, advising residents about legal workshops and alerting them to incidents of gender-based violence that have happened locally. These technological outbursts of news and information began when VOK was founded (May, 2010). VOK currently exists as both a website and a Twitter site, accepting and verifying Twitter messages from persons in Kibera concerning five main categories of information: news, issues, events, emergencies, the new Kenyan Constitution, and demonstrations. Although activity on the site is not huge, it is steadily gaining ground in use and popularity. Such a technological change in Kibera promises to

transform the slum from an isolated swamp of human misery to a settlement creatively connected to the rest of the world. Needless to say, such achievements have huge ramifications for data collection and scholarship—especially for the de-centering of a Western perspective and the rise of a truly indigenous voice.

### *Observations of Study Participants*

As the study progressed, I also noticed a change in the study participants and in the way they related to one another and to their data. In fact, I watched the writers undergo a slow and tentative transformation from an individual to a group identity. Some individual participants left the study during the course of the three-year period and were replaced by other writers. Over the years, only two women remained as constant participants from beginning to end of the study. Nevertheless, group dynamics were decidedly different at the beginning of the project than at the end. In 2007, when women began writing, there was little or no group cohesion. Even though there has never been a time when participating diarists did not know one another and did not meet regularly in youth group meetings, the feeling among participants and the way they related to the project became more cohesive and personal—as if diarists somehow “claimed” the project as a communal rather than an individual endeavor.

For example, in December, 2007, when I met with study participants as a group for the first time, they did not talk among themselves, in fact, they hardly made eye contact. Each of them spoke with me individually to discuss informed consent and other IRB issues. But there was very little interaction among the women. Although some of the women were friends with one another, they did not talk about the project and I did not detect any sense of camaraderie due to project participation. By the end of the project, when I met with the group in July, 2010, a

group spirit had developed. Women arrived at the meeting together, they talked among themselves during the meeting, and, when they came to me with questions, those questions were asked using the collective “we” pronoun, instead of the simple “I.” For example, they let me know that “we” want to continue to write; “we” want to know about the future of the project.

I also observed a change in study participants in relation to political concern and national pride. The post-election violence of 2007 had a horrific impact on the diarists, each of whom experienced the December, 2007-January, 2008 riots in an up-close-and-personal manner. Some of the diarists chronicled their experiences during that time, which ranged from personal attacks, both physical and sexual, to witnessing attacks on family, friends, and neighbors. The fear and stress left by these riots was palpable in the diarists’ accounts of the events. All of them remarked or speculated on the future of life in the slum, the political stability of their nation as a whole, and the possibility that similar riots would occur again in 2012. Nevertheless, their fear did not (or has not yet) given way to pessimism. In fact, when Kenya’s new Constitution was promulgated in August, 2010, diarists expressed interest in voting in the referendum and keen awareness of the implications the new Constitution might have for women like themselves. Either because of—or in spite of—the riots, many of the writers moved from a lack of political involvement and interest at the beginning of the project to an awareness of the importance of political change. Two diarists even expressed pride in Kenya’s adoption of a progressive Constitution. Their vision of the world seemed to change from one centered in the slum to one focused on the larger nation and world beyond Kibera.



## CHAPTER 16 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the current study was to understand gender-based violence as part of the lived experience of twenty young women in Kibera, Kenya. By analyzing the diaries of these women over a three-year period (2007-2010), the project identified strategies the women used to cope with gender-based violence and discovered *which* strategies were used most often and why. The study also utilized a survey to situate the diarists within the context of their peers. This quantitative component provided information about type and prevalence of gender-based violence among a group of 200 Kiberan women and enabled comparison of their experience with that of the diarists.

### *Overview of Findings*

Through the analysis of the dairies of twenty young women in Kibera, Kenya, the current study identified *three main coping strategies* for responding to gender-based violence. Those strategies were *endurance and faith*, *escape*, and *limited partnership*. None of the strategies guaranteed a safe route away from violence. However, if social underpinnings in the form of women's services or economic opportunities were in place, it is possible that the latter two strategies would help women end or avoid violence from intimate partners. Unfortunately, because such services are not currently available in Kibera, the *endurance and faith* strategy—the strategy-choice of most diarists—appears to be the strategy most conducive to immediate safety of women and their children.

Diary analysis also revealed a *parallel between the escape strategy and the dramatic narrative writing style*, a finding which may be important in understanding the nature and

meaning of women's agency and how it is constructed. A further parallel was found between exposure to daily media sources (radio, newspapers, television) and choice of the *escape* strategy, indicating that, as media and internet outlets become more prominent in Kibera (Map Kibera, 2010; VOK, 2010) choice of the *escape* strategy may increase.

Data from diaries also showed that diarists have knowledge of birth control, HIV/AIDS transmission, and family planning. However, they may not have the economic means to put this knowledge into practice. This finding is supported by previous literature, which found that most Kiberan women had knowledge of health and family planning issues but were dependent on "expensive profit-driven health facilities" which they could not afford (APHRC, 2002).

The survey revealed a startling *84.5% lifetime experience of gender-based violence* among participants, a much higher rate than in the general population of Kenya (39%). In all eleven categories of violence-type, women in Kibera reported a *higher* percent of lifetime experience than did women in the general population. Although comparative quantitative studies of gender-based violence in Kibera do not exist, this finding is supported by studies in the general population which showed that gender-based violence was correlated with "living in poorer households" (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008, p. 341).

Certain categories of violence were significantly higher in Kibera and warrant discussion. Public displays of violence (public humiliation) are reported almost four times more often in Kibera as in the general population, indicating a possible shift in social norms among the general population which has not yet penetrated the slum. It could also be related to the fact that people live more publicly in Kibera, where there is extreme overcrowding and little privacy. Furthermore, acts of physical battery which have been criminalized even for spouses (tried to strangle or burn; threatened with knife or gun) are reported approximately seven times more

often in Kibera than in the larger population. This may be another indication of public education in the general sector about women's legal rights that has not yet become general knowledge in Kibera. This finding is supported by previous literature, which indicated that women in Kibera had little or no information about their legal rights in relation to gender-based violence. It may also indicate that it is simply more difficult to report and prosecute such violence in the slum, where police and social services are rare, hospitals are distant, clinics are expensive, and funds to pursue legal cases are non-existent. One category (slapping) is almost the same in Kibera (35.6%) as in the general population (32.3%), indicating that patriarchal norms are still alive and active behind closed doors of both formal and informal populations.

Both the diary component of the study and the survey revealed that most women in Kibera do not justify gender-based violence or believe they deserve to experience. In fact, Kiberan women's attitudes appeared to be less accepting of any form of justification for gender-based violence than those of the general population of Kenya. A cursory analysis might indicate that Kiberan women's attitudes are out-of-sync with their coping strategies. Most women adhere to norms of the traditional culture, coping with gender-based violence through endurance and faith and keeping quiet about their experience. However, a closer inspection revealed that it may be lack of economic empowerment that causes women to select traditional coping strategies. In fact, Kiberan women may choose their coping strategies based not on attitudinal preference but on survival and economic necessity. It is likely that, if social services existed in Kibera, such as shelters, law clinics, or police headquarters, there would be a much higher rate of resistance than is currently evident among the population. This finding is not congruent with previous literature (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008), which found "a tendency on the part of women in Kenya to accept

abuse as the norm within their communities and marital relationships” (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008, p. 341).

### *Limitations of the Study*

The study was limited by its small sample size, which did not enable the generalization of results beyond the parameters of the particular Kiberan women participating in the research. The survey participants were drawn primarily from three Kiberan villages (Laini Saba, Mashimoni, and Soweta East), where the Kikuyu tribe is predominant. Although information about tribal affiliation was not solicited in the survey, it is possible that most survey participants were Kikuyu and that results may have been different among participants of different tribal affiliations. Furthermore, the diary data used in the current study reflect extremely personal and individual points of view, which limited what I was able to know and see about the diarists’ lives and their strategies for coping with gender-based violence. However, any limitations were far outweighed by the ability of these data to provide a rich and detailed insiders’ perspective into the unique sub-culture of Kiberan women.

### *Implications for Policy*

Since 2000, a bill to criminalize domestic violence has been stalled in a committee of the Kenyan Parliament. National and well-organized feminist advocacy to the contrary, the bill has not been able to pass onto the floor of Parliament for a vote. The Kenyan Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-K) has provided Parliamentary committees with testimony, statistics, and legal precedents to support the bill’s passage. But advocates have, nevertheless, been unable to surmount the weight of cultural tradition and institutionalized patriarchal power in the country. It is my hope that the current study will provide articulate personal descriptions of abstract social

issues, making these issues at the same time *more* pertinent and *less* easy to dismiss. A case in point is the sometimes disputed connection between gender violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. While quantitative studies in the larger population (Zulu, Doodoo & Ezeh, 2003; Kimuna & Djamba, 2008) continue to bring forth mixed results about this link, diary accounts discussed in the current study provide vivid descriptions of how the threat of violence and the desperate need for money leads to unprotected sex, which, in turn, may lead to HIV infection. It is my hope that such personal stories will bring life to abstract issues, thereby turning advocacy into policy. Indeed, if the results of this study help to criminalize domestic violence in Kenya, the project will have empowered women not only in Kibera, but in the country of Kenya as a whole.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

It would be both useful and fascinating to obtain a larger picture of young women's lives in Kibera by expanding both the qualitative and quantitative components of the current study to a larger population within the slum. Such an expansion of the boundaries of the study would enable us to understand whether variables such as tribal affiliation and geographic location *within* Kibera change the demographics and experience of gender-based violence. It would also be instructive to expand the age range of participants to include older women (i.e. women in their 30's and 40's). Previous studies have indicated that older women may be more isolated and less likely to seek help than younger women (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008). An expansion of the current study would enable a comparison of help-seeking behaviors among women in different age-group cohorts and could recommend services specific to women in specific age ranges.

Future studies that compare gender-based violence in Kibera with that of the general population are urgently needed. Such studies might attempt to replicate the KDHS Domestic Violence Module in Kibera, thus enabling important comparisons between the slum population and the general population. If such studies corroborate this study's finding of a much higher rate of gender-based violence in the slum, it will also be important to find out *why* such a huge discrepancy in violence rates exists. Variables that should be considered include social norms in the slum versus those in the general population; education in the slum; and living conditions, such as overcrowding, noise, pollution, and extreme poverty.

Future research is also needed that will compare gender-based violence in Kibera with that in other mega-slums in the developing world. Because mega-slum populations continue to increase, it is urgent that issues relating to gender-based violence in these communities be addressed in slum-specific terms. That is, solutions to the problem of gender-based violence in slums and informal settlements are likely to be different from those that are effective in general populations. Slum solutions will likely be linked to alleviating situations of structural violence, such as overcrowding and subsistence-level poverty.

### *Implications for Practice*

Results of the current study indicated that use of the *escape* strategy as a way to cope with gender-based violence may be linked to the availability of media sources, which help educate women and orient them to lifestyles outside the slum. All forms of media—including social networking capabilities—are now penetrating the slum, indicating that more women may be exposed to media sources in the next decade. If media availability and participation are, indeed, linked to women's attempts to escape, then it is urgent that a safety net of social services

be promulgated in Kibera. Western researchers have several options. They can educate international NGO's with offices in Kibera about the results of studies such as this one. These NGO's may, in turn, originate or expand services for women who are victims of gender-based violence. Western researchers can also share research results and cooperate with Kenyan women's rights organizations, such as FIDA and CLICK. Such partnerships may help provide data to be used in on-the-ground advocacy for women's legal rights in the area of gender-based violence.

The current study indicates that writing and journaling projects may help empower women. Therefore, more writing projects should be instituted in the slum. In addition to providing likely benefits to women in the areas of self-esteem and self-actualization, the proliferation of such projects would provide the necessary data to test whether and in what ways such projects are helpful.

Study results also indicated that women's coping strategies that are not accompanied by economic empowerment are inadequate to escape gender-based violence. Although some micro-loan opportunities exist in Kibera, the study revealed that there are not enough of these to assist all women and girls in need of support. Participants in the current study have indicated that job training seminars would be helpful in aiding women to find jobs outside the slum, especially for Kibera girls who have not attended secondary school. Their lack of education decreases their employment opportunities and increases their dependence on men and, thus, their susceptibility to gender-based violence. Job-training seminars may be one means of helping women gain the economic support needed to put their knowledge (of family planning, health issues) into practice.

Finally, the study has led to a unique "decolonization" effort which may serve as a useful example for future researchers. Cram (2009) has reminded us that "there has been a growth in

the capacity of indigenous peoples to conduct their own research” (Cram, 2009, p. 312). She points out two key examples. In Australia, non-Maori researchers have been instructed about how to share their skills with their Maori collaborators and “many funding agencies have instigated training and scholarship opportunities for Maori interested in research careers” (Cram, 2009, p. 312). Similarly, in Hawaii, efforts are underway to build a Native Hawaiian research capacity (Braun & Tsark, 2006). The World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) has remarked that:

. . . the increasing numbers of indigenous peoples who have slowly taken the initiative in their own research...have turned the bogeyman of ‘otherness’ on its head. They now seek to determine the agenda of research about themselves, what to study, how, and who will do the research (WHO, 1997, p. 10).

The diary component of the current study may follow in the footsteps of such “indigenous” research efforts. As this study was coming to an end, the diarists expressed a desire to *continue* writing even though data collection had been completed. After discussions among themselves and with the director of the youth group which originated the project, project participants decided to form the Kibera Women’s Research Project. This group of women seeks to expand the boundaries of the previous project and to collect data on women’s lives in Kibera that will include not only journals but also life histories, interviews, photographs, drawings, and crafts. Plans are underway to incorporate the group and to connect the project to Kenyan universities, which can provide training and expertise for nascent researchers. If diarists are able to create a wider pool of data on women in Kibera, their efforts will help to de-center the inevitable Western perspective that morbidly overarches most research on, with, or about Africans. It is hoped that the diarists’ effort succeed. If they do, the project will have passed into



the hands of Kibera women, empowering them at the same time that it sheds light on the intricacies of their daily lives.

### *Conclusion*

The current study is one of the first to bring systematic quantitative data out of Kibera. For that reason, the study's findings will be strategic in the ongoing effort to determine the general demographics of gender-based violence in the slum. At the same time, the qualitative dimensions of the study make it the very first of its kind to put a personal "face" on gender violence. Therefore, it is my hope that the study will be a unique and compelling voice in the ongoing societal debate about gender-based violence in Kenya.

**APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTERS**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901, 407-882-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Notice of Expedited Initial Review and Approval

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board**  
FWA00000351, Exp. 5/07/10, IRB00001138

To : **Elizabeth Swart**

Date : **April 10, 2008**

IRB Number: **SBE-08-05621**

Study Title: **Women Writers' Project: Kibera, Kenya**

Dear Researcher:

Your research protocol noted above was approved by **expedited** review by the UCF IRB Vice-chair on 4/9/2008. **The expiration date is 4/8/2009.** Your study was determined to be minimal risk for human subjects and expeditable per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.110. The category for which this study qualifies as expeditable research is as follows:

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The IRB has approved a **consent procedure which requires participants to sign consent forms.** Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Subjects or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, which may include signed consent form documents, must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Form must be submitted 2 – 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. Advise the IRB if you receive a subpoena for the release of this information, or if a breach of confidentiality occurs. Also report any unanticipated problems or serious adverse events (within 5 working days). Do not make changes to the protocol methodology or consent form before obtaining IRB approval. Changes can be submitted for IRB review using the Addendum/Modification Request Form. An Addendum/Modification Request Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <http://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

**Failure to provide a continuing review report could lead to study suspension, a loss of funding and/or publication possibilities, or reporting of noncompliance to sponsors or funding agencies.** The IRB maintains the authority under 45 CFR 46.110(e) to observe or have a third party observe the consent process and the research.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 04/10/2008 09:03:18 AM EDT

IRB Coordinator



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### Notice of Expedited Initial Review and Approval

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board**  
**FWA00000351, Exp. 5/07/10, IRB00001138**

To : **Elizabeth Swart**

Date : **June 30, 2008**

IRB Number: **SBE-08-05719**

Study Title: **Kibera Domestic Violence Study**

Dear Researcher:

Your research protocol noted above was approved by **expedited** review by the UCF IRB Chair on 6/30/2008. **The expiration date is 6/29/2009.** Your study was determined to be minimal risk for human subjects and expeditable per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.110. The category for which this study qualifies as expeditable research is as follows:

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

A **waiver of documentation of consent** has been approved for all subjects. Participants do not have to sign a consent form, but the IRB requires that you give participants a copy of the IRB-approved consent form, letter, information sheet, or statement of voluntary consent at the top of the survey.

All data, which may include signed consent form documents, must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Form must be submitted 2 – 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. Advise the IRB if you receive a subpoena for the release of this information, or if a breach of confidentiality occurs. Also report any unanticipated problems or serious adverse events (within 5 working days). Do not make changes to the protocol methodology or consent form before obtaining IRB approval. Changes can be submitted for IRB review using the Addendum/Modification Request Form. An Addendum/Modification Request Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <http://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

**Failure to provide a continuing review report could lead to study suspension, a loss of funding and/or publication possibilities, or reporting of noncompliance to sponsors or funding agencies.** The IRB maintains the authority under 45 CFR 46.110(e) to observe or have a third party observe the consent process and the research.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 06/30/2008 10:14:09 AM EDT

IRB Coordinator



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## EXPEDITED CONTINUING REVIEW APPROVAL NOTICE

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board**  
**FWA00000351, Exp. 10/8/11, IRB00001138**

To : **Elizabeth Swart**

Date : **April 03, 2009**

IRB Number: **SBE-08-05621**

Study Title: **Women Writers' Project: Kibera, Kenya**

Dear Researcher,

This letter serves to notify you that the continuing review application for the above study was reviewed and approved by the IRB Chair on **4/3/2009** through the expedited review process according to 45 CFR 46 (and/or 21 CFR 50/56 if FDA-regulated).

**Continuation of this study has been approved for a one-year period. The expiration date is 4/2/2010.** This study was determined to be no more than minimal risk and the category for which this study qualified for expedited review is:

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Subjects or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Form must be submitted 2 – 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. Use the Unanticipated Problem Report Form or the Serious Adverse Event Form (within 5 working days of event or knowledge of event) to report problems or events to the IRB. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. Changes can be submitted for IRB review using the Addendum/Modification Request Form. An Addendum/Modification Request Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 04/03/2009 10:16:08 AM EST

IRB Coordinator



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Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
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## Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Elizabeth Swart**

Date: **December 03, 2009**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/03/2009, the IRB approved the following modifications/human participant research until 06/21/2010 inclusive:

Type of Review: IRB Addendum and Modification Request Form  
Modification Type: Addition of a survey  
Project Title: Kibera Domestic Violence Study  
Investigator: Elizabeth Swart  
IRB Number: SBE-08-05719  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

The Continuing Review Progress Report must be submitted 2 – 4 weeks prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 8 weeks prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 06/21/2010, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Joanne Muratori'.

IRB Coordinator



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### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**  
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Elizabeth Swart**

Date: **June 10, 2010**

Dear Researcher:

On 6/10/2010, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Kibera Domestic Violence Study  
Investigator: Elizabeth Swart  
IRB Number: SBE-08-05719  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 06/10/2010 02:38:23 PM EDT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joanne Muratori'.

IRB Coordinator

## **APPENDIX B: TABLES AND FIGURES**



Table 1: Population and geography of Kenya

<b>Province</b>	<b>Population (in millions)</b>	<b>Area (sq. km)</b>	<b>Area (sq. mi.)</b>	<b>Capital</b>	<b>Population of Capital</b>
<b>Central</b>	3.9	13,191	5,093	Nyeri	98,908
<b>Coast</b>	2.9	83,603	32,279	Mombasa	655,018
<b>Eastern</b>	5.3	159,891	61,736	Embu	41,092
<b>Nairobi</b>	2.8	684	264	Nairobi	2,143,254
<b>North Eastern</b>	1.3	126,902	48,997	Garissa	50,955
<b>Nyanza</b>	4.9	16,162	6,240	Kisumu	322,734
<b>Rift Valley</b>	8.4	173,854	67,125	Nakuru	219,366
<b>Western</b>	4.1	8,361	3,228	Kakamega	73,607
<b>Total</b>	33.9	582,650	224,962		

*Source: Kenyan Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006*

Table 2: Characteristics of diary project participants (N=20)

	<b>Age (in 2010)</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Living Arrangement</b>	<b>Years in Diary Project</b>
<b>Betta</b>	19	Primary	With son	2008-2010
<b>Cara</b>	21	Primary	With mother and baby daughter	2007-2010
<b>Cathy M.</b>	18	Primary	With brother and sister-in-law	2008-2010
<b>Catherine</b>	22	Secondary (2 yrs.)	With younger brother	2007-2010
<b>Dee</b>	27	Primary	With three children	2007-2009
<b>Eliza</b>	25	Primary	Street or serial partners	2007-2008
<b>Elizabeth</b>	20	Primary	With sister	2009-2010

	<b>Age (in 2010)</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Living Arrangement</b>	<b>Years in Diary Project</b>
<b>Emma</b>	21	Some secondary	With mother	2007-2009
<b>Gemma</b>	23	Primary	With three children	2007-2009
<b>Ina</b>	22	Primary	Street or serial partners	2007-2009
<b>JC</b>	22	Primary	With family of origin	2007-2008
<b>Jane</b>	19	Primary	With parents	2008-2010
<b>Janet</b>	20	Primary	With family of origin	2009-2010
<b>Judy</b>	23	Primary	With husband and daughter	2007-2009
<b>Mary</b>	22	Primary	With baby son and female roommate	2007-2008
<b>Marya</b>	20	Primary	With son and parents	2009-2010
<b>Sally</b>	15	Primary	With aunt and brother	2009-2010
<b>Sarah</b>	20	Primary	With family of origin	2008-2010
<b>Susanna</b>	19	Primary	With husband and son	2009-2010
<b>Terry</b>	19	Primary	With family of origin	2009-2010

*Note: All names are pseudonyms.*

Table 3: Emerging themes from open-coding (N=20)

Participant		Themes						
Betta	Economic Need	Gender-Based Violence	Work	Tribal Violence	Family	Spirituality	Mothering	Hopes/Dreams
Cara	<b>Family</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	Tribal Violence	<b>Female Support</b>	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>
<b>Cathy</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	Despair	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	Abortion	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	<b>Schooling</b>
<b>Catherine</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	Abortion	<b>Family</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	Duty	<b>Work</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>
<b>Dee</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	Fear	Drugs	Schooling	Tribal Violence	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Work</b>
<b>Eliza</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Work</b>	Drugs	Despair	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>	Abortion	Street Life
<b>Elizabeth</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Family</b>	Men	Anger	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>	Despair	<b>Schooling</b>
<b>Emma</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	Schooling	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>
<b>Gemma</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	Art work	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>
<b>Ina</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Work</b>	Drugs	<b>Female Support</b>	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>	Fear	Street Life
<b>JC</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	Schooling	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>

Participant	Themes							
<b>Jane</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Family</b>	Schooling	<b>Work</b>	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>	Abortion	Isolation
<b>Janet</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	Schooling	Abortion	Exhaustion	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>
<b>Judy</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>	Aesthetics/Art	<b>Female Support</b>
<b>Mary</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	<b>Family</b>	Drugs	<b>Spirituality</b>	Street life
<b>Marya</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	Abortion	Tribal Violence	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>
<b>Sally</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	Isolation	<b>Work</b>	Tribal Violence	Schooling
<b>Sarah</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	Drugs	Partner's drug use	Schooling
<b>Susanna</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Family</b>	Duty	Despair	Schooling	<b>Female Support</b>	Partner's Alcohol/Drug Use
<b>Terry</b>	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>Gender-Based Violence</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Hopes/Dreams</b>	Schooling	Tribal violence	Drugs

*Note: All names are pseudonyms. Common themes in bold.*

Table 4: Frequency distribution of common themes per week (N=20)

	<b>Economic Need</b>	<b>GBV</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>Female Support</b>	<b>Hopes/ Dreams</b>
Betta	5	3	3	3	2	2	2
Cara	2	3	5	5	3	1	1
Cathy	5	4			3	1	1
Catherine	5	4	5	5	4	2	1
Dee	5	5	5	2	2	1	3
Eliza	5	5	3	1	1	2	1
Elizabeth	5	4	3	1	1	1	2
Emma	5	3	4	2	2	1	1
Gemma	5	3	5	2	1	1	2
Ina	5	5	3	1	1	2	1
JC	5	5	3	3	1	2	1
Jane	5	4	5	2	3	2	1
Janet	5	5	5	2	2	2	1
Judy	5	2	5	5	5	2	1
Mary	5	5	2	3	1	1	2
Marya	5	5	3	4	3	1	1
Sally	5	5	5	5	4	1	2
Sarah	5	3	3	3	3	1	1
Susanna	5	4	3	5	3	2	1
Terry	5	3	5	3	3	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>

*Note: All names are pseudonyms*

Table 5: Demographics of survey population (N=200)

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Age</b>	24.2	4.1	15	36		
<b>Years in Kibera</b> (if not native)	8.6	4.7	1	20		
<b>Number Biological of Children</b>	1.4	1.2	0	5		
<b>Children Living w/You</b>	3.6	2.9	0	9		
<b>Marital Status</b>						
Single					31.8	62
Married					49.2	96
Divorced					5.6	11
Separated					7.7	15
Widowed					5.7	11
<b>Living Arrangement</b>						
Alone					14.5	29
With husband					46.5	93
With boyfriend					6.0	12
With children only					11.5	23
With relatives					21.0	42
With roommates					0.5	1
Something else					0.0	0
<b>Source of Income</b>						
Work					30.3	60
Supported by male					44.9	89
Supported by relative					24.2	48
Something else					0.5	1

Table 6: Experience of gender-based violence (N=200)

Experience	Perpetrator			Frequency		
	Yes	Husband	Boyfriend	1-5	6-10	11+
Said something to humiliate	61.9	69.9	29.2	38	8	8
Threatened you or someone close to you	35.9	70.2	29.8	19.5	5	4.5
Pushed, shaken, thrown something at you	35.1	71	29	64.3	16.1	19.6
Slapped or twisted arm	35.6	74.2	25.8	62.7	15.3	22.
Punched with fist or other object	26.8	65.9	34.1	52.6	23.7	21.1
Kicked or dragged you	27.3	69.5	30.5	46.2	28.2	23.1
Tried to strangle or burn	20.4	79.2	20.8	54.5	27.3	18.2
Threatened with knife, gun, or weapon	15.5	71.4	25	56.5	26.1	17.4
Attacked with knife, gun, or weapon	13.0	76.2	19	52.9	29.4	17.6
Physically forced you to have sex	36.1	71.2	27.1	69.4	16.3	14.3
Forced you to perform other sexual acts	30.9	57.4	40.7	65.7	8.6	25.7

Table 7: Do women believe gender-based violence is justified under certain conditions?

Condition	Kibera Survey (N=200)		KDHS (2008) (N=8,444)	
	Percent No	Number	Percent No	Number
If she goes out without telling male partner	74.2	144	68.1	5,750
If she neglects children	70.2	132	60.7	5,125
If she argues with partner	78.4	145	67.8	5,725
If she refuses to have sex	87.1	162	78.9	6,662
If she burns the food	86.5	160	86.7	7,321

Table 8: Is a woman justified in refusing sex under certain conditions? (N=200)

Condition	Percent Yes	Number
If she knows partner has STD	84.8	162
If she knows partner has sex with other women	79.5	151
If she has recently given birth	83.7	159
If she is tired and not in the mood	81.1	154

Table 9: Is female partner justified to ask for condom-use when she knows her male partner has an STD? (N=200)

	Percent Yes	Number
Justified in asking for condom use	92.9	183



Table 10: Does male partner have right to engage in punishment if woman refuses sex?  
(N=200)

	<b>Percent No</b>	<b>Number</b>
Right to get angry	71.9	138
Right to refuse woman money For household expenses	80.3	151
Right to use force to have sex	84.0	158
Right to have sex with someone else	83.0	156

Table 11: Women who reported talking to someone about their abuse (N=200)

	<b>Percent Yes</b>	<b>Number</b>
Talked to Family	39.1	72
Talked to Friends	22.8	42
Talked to No One	20.7	38
Talked to Husband/Boyfriend	15.2	28
Talked to Counselor	14.7	27
Talked to Minister/Priest	7.7	14
Talked to Children	4.3	8

*Note: Women could check all answers that applied.*

Table 12: Factors most helpful in coping with gender-based violence (N=200)

	<b>Percent Yes</b>	<b>Number</b>
Had faith in God	39.1	72
Professional Counseling	22.8	42
Ended Relationship	20.7	38
Got Husband to Change	15.2	28
Became a Better Wife	14.7	27
Something Else	7.7	14

*Note: Women could check all answers that applied.*

Table 13: Subjective feelings related to experience of abuse (N=200)

	<b>Percent Yes</b>	<b>Number</b>
Feel angry	40.1	75
Feel I did not deserve it	20.2	38
Feel very upset	17.1	32
Feel sad	16.0	30
Something else	9.6	18
Feel I did deserve it	3.7	7

*Note: Women could check all answers that applied.*

Table 14: Factors related to women's agency among survey participants (N=200)

	<b>Not at all true</b>	<b>Not very true</b>	<b>Somewhat true</b>	<b>Completely true</b>
	<b>Percent</b>			
I do not have any control over whether my partner is violent with me.	53.4	12.6	4.4	29.3
Someone else insists I comply with my partner's commands.	71.4	13.8	6.3	8.5
I accept my partner's violence so people will approve of me and respect me.	64.0	20.6	2.1	13.2
I accept my partner's violence because I believe it is valuable and important.	57.7	17.5	6.9	18.0
I do not accept my partner's violence and have considered options for how to handle it.	35.1	9.6	6.9	48.4



Figure 1: Satellite image of Kibera

Source: Google Earth (reprinted with permission)

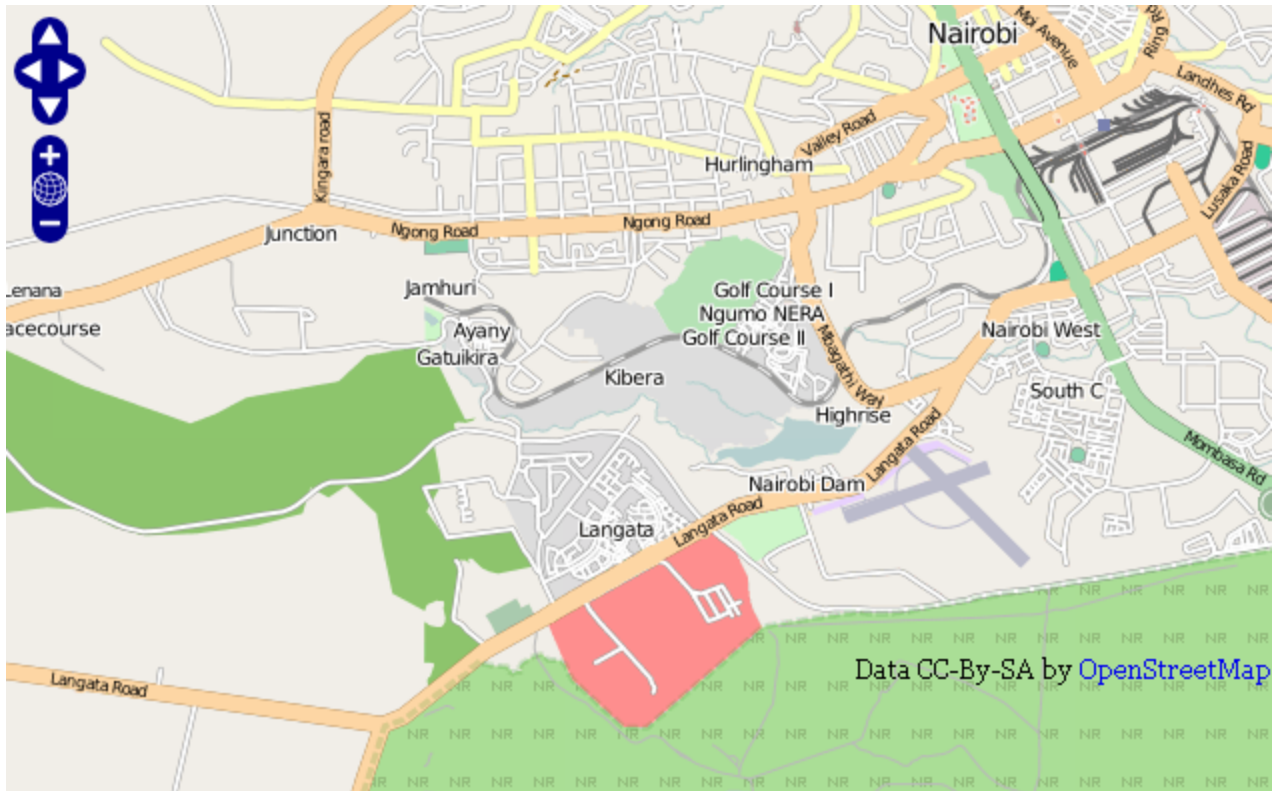


Figure 2: Map of Kibera in relation to city of Nairobi

Source: Open Street Map

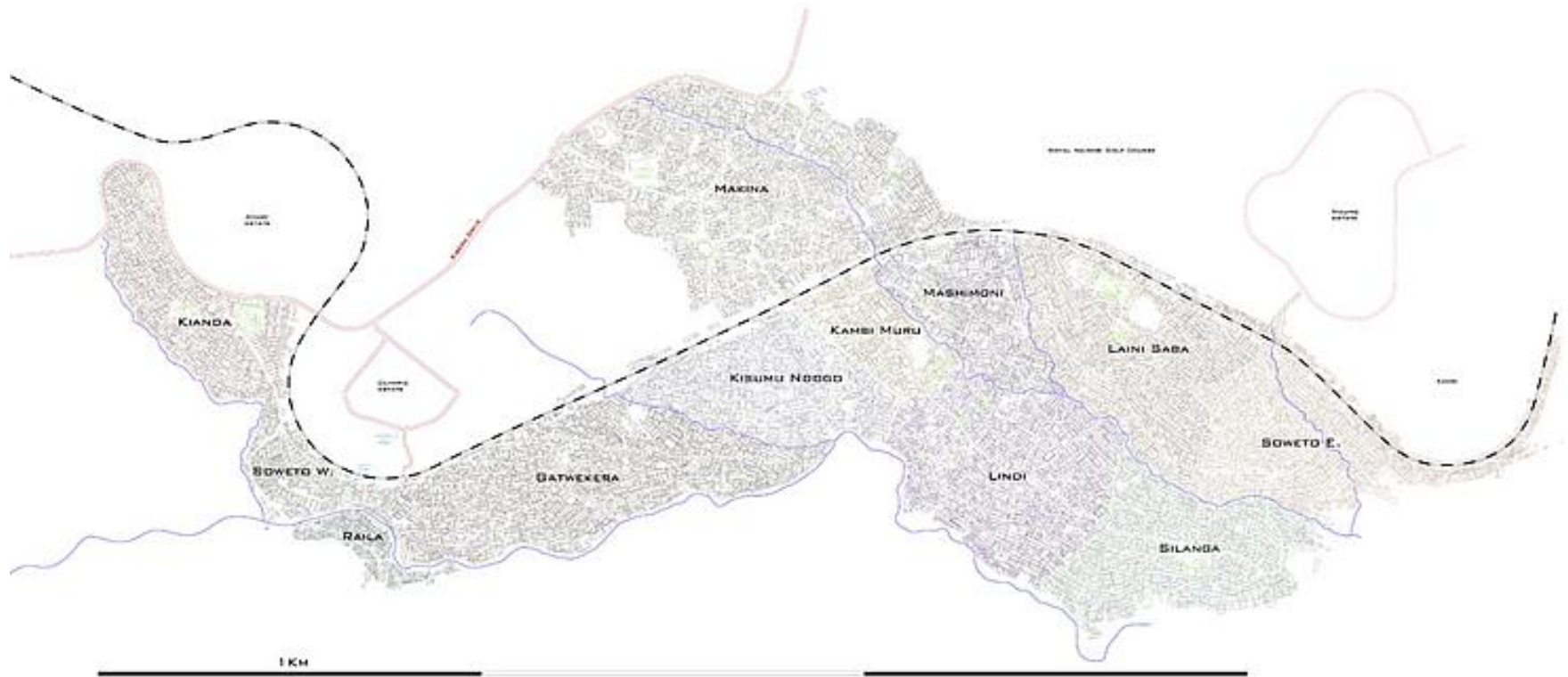


Figure 3: Map of Kibera villages

Source: Kibera UK--The Gap Year Company

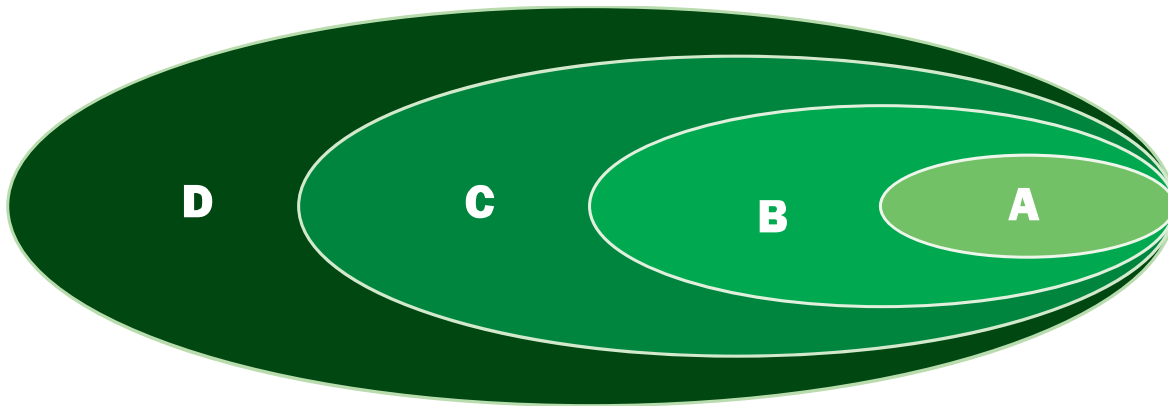


Figure 4: Ecological model of factors associated with gender-based violence

Source: Heise (1998)

<b>D</b> <b>Macro-System</b>	<b>C</b> <b>Mezzo-System</b>	<b>B</b> <b>Micro-System</b>	<b>A</b> <b>Personal History</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-based violence as a structural issue;</li> <li>• Rigid gender roles;</li> <li>• Institutionalized gender-based violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male dominance/abuse in school or work-place;</li> <li>• Isolation of woman from support structures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male dominance in the family (father, brother, uncle, husband);</li> <li>• Male control of economic and psychological environment of the home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Witnessing domestic violence in family of origin;</li> <li>• Being abused as a child.</li> </ul>

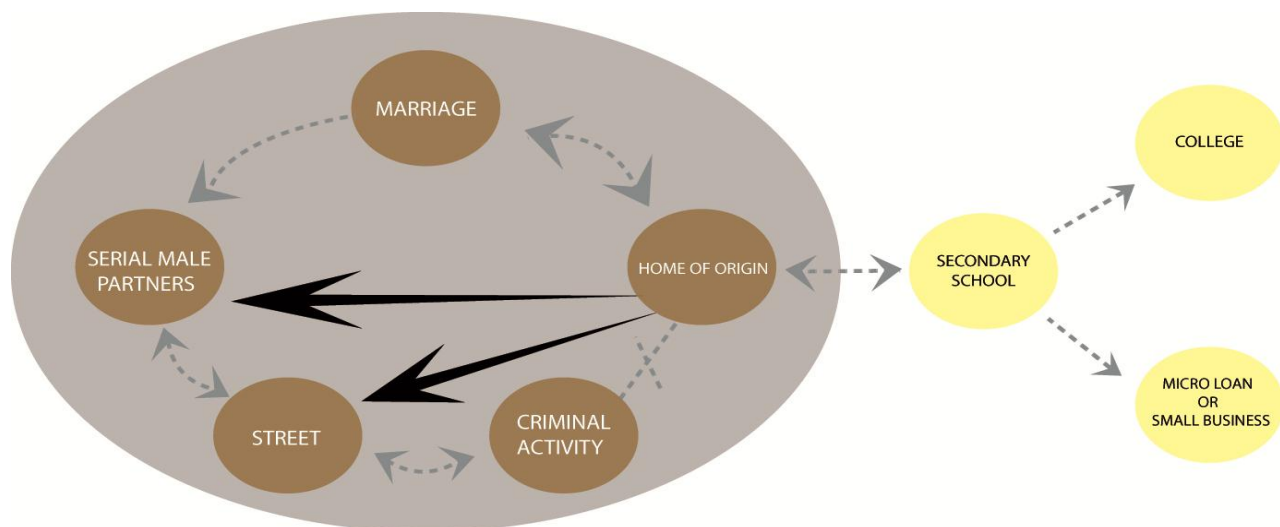


Figure 5: Factors associated with *Escape* strategy for coping with GBV

Source: Swart (2010)

<b>Gray Areas</b>	<b>Brown Areas</b>	<b>Yellow Areas</b>	<b>One-Way Arrows</b>	<b>Two-Way Arrows</b>
The Kibera social world	Social situations of women in Kibera	Social situations outside Kibera	Escape from which there is usually no return to point of origin	Escape in repetitive or cyclical patterns, showing cycles of violence in which women are caught.



TUESDAY.

The day came HP brightly and here I was still in bed thinking of which step I will follow when I wake up. And definitely I made up my mind. This time it was 7:00 am and my brother had left for school without any breakfast because we have been used to since our parents left. We don't know whether people take it or not. That's not our business. Anyway I woke up. TOOK a cold shower and later started cleaning our clothes which we had used the previous night. Later after all that was done I dressed on what I call my Sunday best and went outside our house whereby people are passing by and see if any man will try to talk to me ~~and~~ so that we may agree to sleep with him and give me a little money.

I stood there for about thirty minutes and then there is this guy who was passing and it seemed he knew me and started talking to me. Within twenty minutes we had agreed he will give me hundred and I rushed to our house and closed the door and I followed him. I timed the time when my brother was coming back from school and made sure I was in the house. At least for him he is lucky because they are been cooked in school, where they take their lunch. By this time it was almost 7:00 pm and darkness had already started and it was my duty to know what we had to eat so I prepared our supper and took it better we cancel it a day.

Figure 6: Scanned copy of diary by Catherine

Problems are following me day by day last night I did not sleep, my younger son was ~~very~~ sick I stayed awake the whole night he was crying continuously I did all kinds of first aid but nothing worked at five am I left the house and I went to Kenyatta hospital at seven am I was there I went to the reception I was asked to pay two hundred shilling for the card I paid then I was told to wait for my son to be seen by a senior doctor I waited for half an hour later my son was treated and I went to the pharmacy I paid three hundred shilling and I was given the medication for my son and I left.

When I was coming back I met my ~~former~~ <sup>is</sup> boy friend who ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> the father of Tracy and Ryan when he saw me he blocked my way I tried to cross the road to walk away from him because I fear him more than fire, he followed me and he pulled me, I was afraid because I knew how he can react, He asked me where are you from I answered am from the hospital he said for think am a fool I know that you want to see the kid try it and I will kill you before you enjoy the money.

I was waiting to see if he will walk away without threatening me but I was wrong for the first time he took Ryan and told me to walk away I pleaded with him to give me child back but I was beaten strong slaps in front of a big crowd I still begged but the more I begged the more I was beaten, this time blood was running down my nose the only thing I remember is my clothes looking as if they were dipped in blood.

Figure 7: Scanned copy of diary by Dee

## **APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS**



# KIBERA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

3. If you were not born in Kibera, how long have you been living here?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. (CIRCLE ONE) Are you:

**SINGLE | MARRIED | DIVORCED | SEPARATED | WIDOWED**

5. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How old are each of your children? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many children live with you? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Are your children in school? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What is your current living arrangement? (CIRCLE ONE)

**LIVING ALONE**

**LIVING WITH HUSBAND**

**LIVING WITH BOYFRIEND**

**LIVING WITH CHILDREN ONLY**

**LIVING WITH RELATIVES**

**LIVING WITH ROOMMATES**

**SOMETHING ELSE**

10. What is the source of your income? (CIRCLE ONE)

**I WORK**

**I AM SUPPORTED BY HUSBAND/BOYFRIEND**

**I AM SUPPORTED BY PARENTS/FAMILY**

**SOMETHING ELSE**

11. If you work, what kind(s) of work do you do?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. What do you think your life will be like in 10 years?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Sometimes a husband/boyfriend gets annoyed or angered by things his wife/girlfriend does. In your opinion, is a husband justified in hitting or beating his wife/girlfriend in the following situations: (CIRCLE ONE)

If she goes out without telling him:	Yes	No	Don't Know
If she neglects the children:	Yes	No	Don't Know
If she argues with him:	Yes	No	Don't Know
If she refuses to have sex with him:	Yes	No	Don't Know
If she burns the food:	Yes	No	Don't Know

14. Is a wife/girlfriend justified in refusing to have sex with her husband/boyfriend when: (CIRCLE ONE)

She knows her husband/boyfriend has a sexually transmitted disease:	Yes	No	Don't Know
She knows her husband/boyfriend has sex with other women:	Yes	No	Don't Know
She has recently given birth:	Yes	No	Don't Know
She is tired and not in the mood:	Yes	No	Don't Know

15. Is a wife/girlfriend justified in asking her husband/boyfriend wear a condom when she knows he has a sexually transmitted disease?  
(CIRCLE ONE)

Yes	No	Don't Know
-----	----	------------

16. Do you think, if a wife/girlfriend refuses to have sex with her husband/boyfriend, he has a right to: (CIRCLE ONE)

Get angry and reprimand her:	Yes	No	Don't Know
Refuse to give her money and other means of support:	Yes	No	Don't Know
Use force and have sex with her even if she doesn't want to:	Yes	No	Don't Know
Go and have sex with another woman:	Yes	No	Don't Know

17. The following questions describe why you do household duties and ask you to rank how well each fits with your own reasons. (CIRCLE ONE)				
a. <b>NO CONTROL.</b> I do not have any control over whether to do household work since there is no one else to do it.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
b. <b>EXTERNAL PRESSURE.</b> Someone else insists that I do this work---if I do not, there will be problems	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
c. <b>SO PEOPLE APPROVE OF ME.</b> I do it so people will approve of me and respect me for doing so. If I did not, I might feel guilty and ashamed.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
d. <b>I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT.</b> I do this work because I personally believe it is important and valuable.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
e. <b>I DEEPLY AND FREELY SUPPORT THIS.</b> I considered various options for how to handle the housework and who would do it. I value our arrangements.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true

18. The following questions ask you to describe possible responses you might have if you are experiencing violence from a husband or partner. Please indicate how well each fits with your own response to that violence. (CIRCLE ONE)				
I do not have any control over whether my husband/boyfriend beats me or is violent with me.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
Someone else insists that I comply with my husband's commands---if I do not, there will be trouble.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
I accept my husband's violence so will people approve of me and respect me for doing so. If I did not, I might feel guilty and ashamed.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
I accept my husband's violence because I believe it is important and valuable.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true
I do not accept my husband's violence. I have considered various options for how to handle it.	1 Not at all true	2 Not very true	3 Somewhat true	4 Completely true

Has your husband/ boyfriend ever....		Who did it?	How many times in the last year did this happen?
19. Said something to humiliate you in front of others?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
20. Threatened you or someone close to you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
21. Pushed you, shaken you, or thrown something at you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
22. Slapped you or twisted your arm?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
23. Punched you with his fist or something that could hurt you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
24. Kicked or dragged you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
25. Tried to strangle or burn you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
26. Threatened you with a knife, gun, or weapon?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
27. Attacked you with a knife, gun, or weapon?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
28. Physically forced you to have sex with him when you didn't want to?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more
29. Forced you to perform other sexual acts you did not want to?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> boyfriend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-more

30. Did you talk to anyone about this violence?

**MINISTER OR PRIEST**

**FAMILY**

**FRIENDS**

**YOUR CHILDREN**

**YOUR HUSBAND/BOYFRIEND**

**PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR**

**NO, TALKED TO NO ONE**

31. What helps/helped you the most to cope with this violence?

**HAD FAITH IN GOD**

**GOT PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING**

**GOT HUSBAND TO CHANGE**

**BECAME A BETTER WIFE**

**ENDED THE RELATIONSHIP**

**SOMETHING ELSE**

32. Had your partner been drinking/using drugs at the time he hurt you?

**(CIRCLE ONE) YES | NO | DON'T KNOW**

33. If yes, does your partner drink/use drugs often?

**(CIRCLE ONE) YES | NO | DON'T KNOW**

34. Has anyone else physically abused you before (besides husband/boyfriend)?

**(CIRCLE ONE) YES | NO**

If yes, who? \_\_\_\_\_

35. Did you ever seek medical attention for the violence you experienced?

**(CIRCLE ONE) YES | NO**

36. How do you feel about the violence you experienced?

**I FEEL VERY UPSET.**

**I FEEL ANGRY.**

**I FEEL SAD.**

**I FEEL I DID NOT DESERVE THE VIOLENCE I HAVE EXPERIENCED.**

**I FEEL THAT I DID DESERVE THE VIOLENCE I EXPERIENCED.**

**SOMETHING ELSE** \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY OF SWAHILI TERMS**

Bangi: Marijuana

Changaa: An alcoholic drink popular in Kenya, particularly among the poor. The beverage, made from millet or maize, is sometimes mixed with toxic chemicals, such as methanol or formaldehyde, to make it stronger. Although the Kenyan government has passed legislation to restrict such illegitimate brewing operations, the illegal brewing and consumption of changaa is common in Kibera.

Githeri: A staple dish made from a combination of beans and corn. It is a good protein source.

Jua Kali: A laborer who works with metal or wood. Such a worker often uses cheap materials, such as scrap metal, to construct a saleable item.

Kenya shillings: The official currency of Kenya, often abbreviated KES or Ksh. Although conversion rates vary, 100 KES is approximately \$1.23.

Mashimoni: One of the “villages” in the Kibera slum

Panga: An African knife with a wide blade, like a machete.

Sukuma wiki: A side dish made out of leafy green vegetables, such as collards or kale. Sukuma wiki means “to push the week,” indicating that sukuma wiki is a dish frequently used to stretch the week’s food budget by combining it with other, higher-priced food.

Ugali: A dumpling or porridge-like dish made from maize flour and cooked with water. It is considered a staple food in East Africa. It is filling but has a low nutritional value.



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