

**POST MARRIAGE PARENTING CHALLENGES:
THE CASE OF FORMER SINGLE MOTHERS IN
GITHUNGURI A. C. K. PARISH**

BY:

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DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

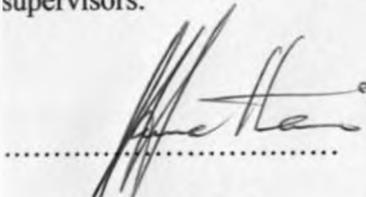


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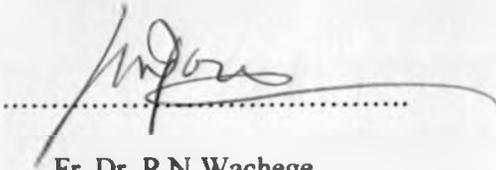
This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.



Dr. N. N'dung'u

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15th Nov 2008

Date.

DEDICATION

To my Family:

My Mum, Muthoni Wa Murang'ai.

My siblings

Njeri wa Ngugi, Wangui wa Macharia, Wanjiru Wa Mwangi and Muregi wa Murang'ai

To my Best Friend,

Wacera wa Irungu.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS.

A.C.K (Anglican Church of Kenya). This is a Christian congregation that is part of the Anglican Communion which is a worldwide affiliation of Anglican Churches. It is associated with Church of England in full communion and especially with its primate the archbishop of Canterbury. The Communion has over seventy seven million members world wide but the Kenya congregation comprises of around three million. .

Inculturation Theology. This is the process of presenting, interpreting and making Christ and his message understood by people of every culture, locality and time. It is a continuous process by the church to bring the message of Christ in to a particular socio-cultural setting while calling upon the later to grow in accordance with all its own values, provided they are reconcilable with the gospel. Hence in this study, it will imply making the message of Christ understood in the context of former mothers as parents.

Interchange of motherhood. These concepts have been coined to have an operational meaning which designates the conspicuous phenomenon of married women moving into single motherhood due to varying factors in the society and single mothers moving into marriage life.

Parenting role. This is a process of caring for the children and helping them grow and learn so as to become integrally empowered and acceptable members of the society. The role demands dedication, flexibility to various stages the child goes through and nurturance which requires love, care and attention for their growth and development.

Post single mother/ former single mothers. In this study, this has been used to refer to women who were at some point single mothers but have since moved into marriage life.

Post Marriage. This has been used in the study to refer to the life of a wife and a husband after they enter into the marriage life.

ABSTRACT

Family institution has seen changes some of which have had and are having far reaching ramifications. Among them is the phenomenon of single motherhood status that defies the conventional perception of the family. Consequently, this status has dynamics and one can be exemplified by the inter-shift in which while some are moving from marriage to single motherhood, there are single mothers who are getting married. Taking cognizance of the primacy of family institution in parenting of the children, the present research investigates the impact such interchange has on this crucial role. The emphasis however is single mothers who are getting married. This was done in Githunguri Parish of A. C. K Church as a case study. The researcher has used more of qualitative principles with key informants giving in-depth information on the subject of study. This has been supplemented by secondary data from the library and internet research.

The study commences by showing the values in *Agikuyu* culture that directly and indirectly came in handy in addressing the challenges of parenting role for former single mothers. The reflections are prompted by the researcher's assumption that some of these values can still be applicable today. This is possible in Christian context as long as they are reconcilable with the Christian teachings and practices.

Further into the study, the investigation shows the causes of single motherhood which is necessary if there is to be clear understanding of the single mother's experiences when they get married. It as well shows that there are real post marriage challenges of parenting for women who get married while already having child(ren). However, in the

attempt to find ways to deal with the challenges noted in the research, the role that Christian teachings and practices can play is sought. But, the research begins by seeking the response and in this case of A. C. K Church having been selected as the case study.

Further, there is an attempt to reflect on how the *Agikuyu* traditional cultural values can be utilized harmoniously with Christian teachings, in attending to challenges of parenting confronting former single mothers. The point of departure is the inculturational theology which engages culture as valuable tool in evangelization by appreciating values that are not contradicting the Gospel. It therefore concludes by articulating these *Agikuyu* values that are useful in addressing the difficulties families comprised of former single mothers encounter while brining up their children.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION.

Among the changes that have occurred in the family institution is the conspicuous phenomenon of single mother families against the popular view of classical family as an institution made up of a male and a female partner. Whereas traditionally there were as well single mothers due to varying causes, it was mainly temporary as different ethnic groups particularly in Africa had clear structures of addressing the occurrence. Indeed, single motherhood was not popular. In the event where a woman got a child outside marriage, attempts were made to marry her off. Marriage in the traditional society was viewed as the normal accepted mode of establishing family life and homestead¹.

Where single motherhood as a result of widowhood arose, different communities had different mechanisms to address the status. Goode observes, "In Africa, through diverse ways of inheritance, a woman could at least count on being cared for by some man. This has reduced. Some refuse to marry, whereas before they had no choice. Custom of inheritance is disappearing"². Suffice to say, there were enhanced structures which handled this social phenomenon depending on its cause. However, today the traditional cultural setting has gone through change and single mother families are a reality that society has to reckon with.

Against this background, Wachege observes a pronounced fascinating interchange of motherhood status. According to him, a considerable number of married mothers are

¹ . P.N. Wachege, *Third Millennium African Single Mothers and Mother Widows: Ethno-Religio-Philosophical Touch*: (Nairobi: Signal Press 2003) p. 193

² W.N Goode, *World revolutions and Family Patterns*: (New York: The Free Press. 1970) p. 199

drifting to single motherhood and a growing number of single mothers are getting married in lawful and even church weddings some in their old age³. This is a fact that is glaring in the today's existential realm and thus cannot be wished away.

In the face of this reality, Wachege further comments;

Today's single motherhood is proving to be provisional or tentative. There are quite a good number of single mothers who are becoming fortunate – or is it unfortunate? - to marry even in their advanced age. In this scenario, single motherhood is tending to be transitional for some. A stepping stone or a spring board into married motherhood⁴

It is against this background that the research studied the aspect of interchange of motherhood where single mothers are moving into marriage. It took into cognition that the reality of parenting under this circumstance could be a challenge and hence can not be wished away. The A.C.K Church which professes the Christian teachings was investigated to find out how it was reaching out to these mothers in their peculiar conditions of parenting their children.

This study was triggered by reflections on Wachage's scholarly works on interchange of motherhood and in particular from his observation on the phenomenon of post single mothers⁵. The researcher was able to investigate the effect of this motherhood status on the role of parenting. There was an in-depth approach which gave forth more

³ P.N Wachege, Op. Cit p 78.

⁴ Ibid p 78.

⁵ Ibid p 78.

information on this aspect of single motherhood but with particular interest to the parenting role.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

There are considerable numbers of single mothers who are moving into the institution of marriage. They thus move into such marriage already having children. As a result, there are observable challenges facing some of these former single mothers while parenting their children. However, there is very little and scanty documented information on this phenomenon a gap that this research is seeking to fill.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION.

There is lack of specific information on role and challenges of parenting among the post single mothers in Githunguri Parish of A.C.K Church which is indeed necessary if tangible interventions for effective parenting are to be enhanced. The study sought to fill this gap. It has generated information on the impact the phenomenon has on the upbringing of children, the role of A.C.K Church in the light of these reality and recommendations on how this state of parenting can be improved to ensure effectiveness.

The need for knowledge is driven by the fact that parenting is essential for wellbeing of individual, community and society. It is at the family level that socialization process begins where values and norms are introduced to the child as a new member of a given community. The institution is universal and serves as a basic unit of the society. Parents, other siblings and relatives tend to serve as the earliest role models for children. Against

this background, the effect of post single motherhood on this fundamental role in A .C. K Githunguri Parish has been presented.

The study sought to find out the role A.C.K Church is playing in the face of reality of post single motherhood. This was occasioned by the fact that it is a religio-social institution with structures and significant influence on individuals and society and hence potential to contribute towards effective and successful parenting role. It is an institution which the government and other involved agencies can network with to strengthen good parenting.

Suffice to say, family is very crucial in bringing up society's members who will ensure the prosperity and posterity of a community and hence the interest for deep reflections on how it is being done in the reality of post single mothers. As well, it was compelling to engage the Christian teachings and Agikuyu traditional values on parenting within a cultural milieu in order for them to fully participate in bringing up individuals and hence a society which is integrally empowered.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

- i) To identify the challenges of parenting among today's former single mother.
- ii) To find out the attitude and the response of A.C.K Church Githunguri Parish to former single mother in their parenting role.

iii) To find out how inculturational theology can be applied by the churches, scholars, policy makers and other agencies involved in the area of parenting in the effort to aid effective upbringing of children.

SECTION 2.

1.50. LITERATURE REVIEW.

According to Wanda, family is the proper environment for the development of the human person. It is within the family where one receives the first and most decisive stimulation for one's development. The main truth is that parents will have only one chance, and only one, to get it right and they must therefore teach their children to develop a firm conscience and a strong character⁶. Her arguments are very paramount but she fails to acknowledge the effect of other factors confronting the parents at any given time that may hinder them from discharging parental role accordingly.

Brisbane has argued that parenting is a process of caring for the children and helping them grow and learn. It involves physical care which includes provision of food, clothing, exercise, rest and safe place to live. This is inclusive of all physical needs. Consequently, it involves nurturing that factor in their need to be loved and appreciated which means providing love, support, attention and encouragement. Such creates a feeling of confidence and self worth. Finally, children do not know automatically what they should do and not do. They need appropriate limits placed on their behavior for their own and others welfare so that as they grow, these guides them to learn self control, positive values and moral standards⁷. This demonstrates a rather demanding task on the parents.

⁶ P. Wanda, *Bringing up Children in a Permissive Society*: (Nairobi: Pauline Publication. 2007) cf. pp 11-14.

⁷ H.E Brisbane, *The Development Children And Parenting*: (California: Glencoe Publishing company. 1988) p34.

D'Souza concludes that bearing children and raising them is a great task that involves plain work and responsibility. Serious responsibility is involved in the raising of the family properly i.e., psychological, economic, social and spiritual welfare of the family⁸. It is hence necessary to understand this perspective on former single mother.

Indeed therefore, taking care and bringing up of children is a special undertaking that calls for a serious attention. Chesaina in her inaugural lecture says:

Children comprise the future of any society. They are the future of the society. They are not only the future members and leaders but they also ensure the fecundity and continuity of every society. They are custodians of the society's mores, values as well as the society's entire culture and heritage⁹.

Abbot and Wallace note the special privilege accorded to the children due to the fact they represent the future hopes and aspirations of society or social group and as such are accorded particular help and protection.¹⁰ In essence therefore, family an overriding institution since it offers the basic arena on which first socialization is done which is essential for a growth and development of a child.

Gore M. E convey that the art of parenting should be approached with same conviction and dedication as professional career¹¹. That means a lot of dedication is ultimately required even in the face of diverse situation that mothers find themselves at any given

⁸ A. D'Souza, *Happiness in Marriage*: (New Delhi: Indian Social Institute 1975) p127.

⁹ See C. Chesaina's inaugural lecture: *The Role and Significance Of Oral Literature In Social Psychological Development Of Children*. p2.

¹⁰ M. Abbot and C. Wallace, *An Introduction to Sociology; Feminist perspectives 2nd Edition*: (London: Routledge 1997) p 22.

¹¹ M.E Gore, *Raising PG kids in an X-rated society*: (Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1987) p158

time. But, he does not recognize that sometimes the circumstances can affect the dedication of the parents.

Gordon T. views parenting as assuming a new job of bringing up an infant up to a contributing citizen. However, he laments that;

Parents are blamed, but not trained. Millions of new fathers and mothers take on a job each year that ranks among the most difficult anyone can have, taking an infant, a little person who is almost totally helpless, assuming a full responsibility for his physical and psychological health and raising him so that he will become a productive, a cooperative and a contributing citizen .Hence, it is an uphill task.¹²

This expresses the need for better understanding of the parenting role by the entire society so that support can be accorded to parents for them to bring up their children well for the greater good.

June and Cris Commenting on status of parenting in America says “few of us receive formal training or information about the lifelong responsibility of parenting”. According to them, Society thinks by a mere fact of giving birth, automatically this activates an innate parenting ability¹³. There is a need to impart skills on parenting. Indeed John II argues that more than ever necessary in our times is preparation of young people for marriage and family life¹⁴.

¹² T. Gordon and H. Peter, *Parent Effectiveness in Training* :(New York: Ayden Inc.1970) p 38.

¹³ E.N. June and J.B Cris, *Parenting and Family Issue. Child Growth and development 96/97:* (Guilford: Dushkin Publishing Company and Benchmark Publishers 1996.) p160.

¹⁴ Pope John II, *The Family In The Modern World:* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication) p79

Bamurange argues that parenting is a long and tiresome road to many parents and she is of the idea that it should be for both parents¹⁵. However, whereas both parents are important, she fails to identify the peculiar circumstances those women who get married while already having a child or children face.

John II while speaking on the dignity of women indicates that there still persists discrimination in greater part of our society that affects and seriously harms particular categories of women as for example, childless wives, widows, separated or divorced and unmarried mothers¹⁶. It is vital to seek to understand how this may affect the role of parenting particularly among post single mothers. He further observes that in the countries of the so-called Third World, families often lack both the means necessary for survival, such as food, work, housing and medicine and most elementary freedoms¹⁷. It is of essence to understand the effect of these to diverse family forms in the contemporary society.

In their book, *African Christian Marriage* Kisembo, Magesa and Shorter say that in traditional Africa, the education of the children was a collective responsibility of the whole community. With diminishing presence of extended family and clan, the early education of children falls more and more on the shoulders of the father and mother alone. It becomes a responsibility of the parents. Parents today have a great responsibility. Sometimes they surrender this to schools which do not concern themselves

¹⁵ V. Bamurenge, "Parenting Adolescents", in M. Ntukula and R. Liljestrom(eds) *The Dilemma of Parenting*, (Uppasala. Nordiska Afrikainstuleet. 2004) p43

¹⁶ Pope John II, Op Cit. p 35.

¹⁷ Ibid p 13.

with the religious and moral formation of the children. This exposes the unprepared child to influences which he/she cannot cope¹⁸. However, even though they argue that the role is now resting more on the shoulder of mother and the father, it does not show how it happens in the case of former single mother. It is worth to understand it in its peculiar circumstances.

Hooks blames earlier feminist of placing a lot of emphasis on joys of parenting without regard to the hardship therein. She hence says “because childcare is mainly on women, there is a need to revolutionize parenting where they jettison from isolationism to shared child parenting. There is a need for shared parenting where they will assist each other on parenting especially in small community settings”¹⁹. This shared parenting will be looked at in a context of former single mothers who are moving into marriage with children.

Focusing on the phenomenon of single motherhood, it needs be appreciated that it is not monolithic²⁰. This is important as it enables us not to generalize single motherhood in the effort to understand this phenomenon in relation to its nature and functions. In light of this perspective, we are well able to note distinct aspects of single motherhoods.

Suda observes a most significant trend in African family and traditions, and one that may have far-reaching consequences for the child, which is the increase in the number of

¹⁸ B.Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, *Africa Christian Marriage*: (New York.: Cassel and Macmillan Publishers. 1977) p 123

¹⁹B. Hooks, *Feminist Theory; From the Margin to Centre*: (New York: South end press 1984) p.146

²⁰ Ibid cf. pp 64-126

single parent families, particularly those headed by women²¹. She however fails to elaborate on the consequences this status has on the role of parenting.

Host, Rinehart and Winston discern that single families are prone to a special set of stresses and strains. They experience responsibility overload seeing the parent having to make decisions alone. There is task overload having to play the role usually handled by two people. There is emotional overload where they must cope with emotional needs of their children alone²². It is of great interest in the light of the research subject to seek to understand whether the case is different for single mothers who get married.

Greer is against the idea that marriage is a source of security. She says in any case, a husband is a possession which can be lost or stolen and the abandoned wife of thirty year old with a couple of children is far more desolate and insecure in her responsibility than an unmarried woman with or without children ever could be²³. Gore gets concerned of increased homes with single parent and deplores stresses and strains these parents face raising children and balancing jobs and other pressures. Networking with other parents in the neighborhood is an invaluable tool for this. 'Networks and parent groups can be set up through schools, churches and synagogues, community centers and neighborhoods²⁴. The possibility of these recommendations fails to reflect the peculiar circumstances of single parents at any given time and space for example post single mothers.

²¹ C.A Suda Inaugural lecture , "*Formal Monogamy and Informal Polygyny in parallel. Africa family tradition in transition.*2007.p 42

²² Host, Rinhart and Winston, *Sociology 5th edition*: (New York :A Narcourt education classroom company 1995) p 311

²³ G. Greer in A. Hinding, *Opposing View Points* :(San Diego: GreenHaven Press inc. 1986) p 129

²⁴ M.E Gore op cit p 159

Martha studied single families in America and noted some challenges. According to her, between 1970s and 1980s female headed families and millions of children living in these families became progressively poor, even as economy improved. They were found to be in and out of labor force and are more subject to unemployment and underemployment. They could not get good jobs, mainly because of multiplicity of factors, including occupational sex segregation, sex discriminations, poor education and training, sex role stereotype and the general devaluation of women's work. They were prone to stress and depression particularly those who were poor. Income and money were the main course of stress. Single mothers were more socially isolated, received less stable social networks than married counterparts²⁵. However, cultures are not uniform and on this basis the findings cannot be concluded to be exactly the similar happening in A.C.K Church *Githunguri* parish of Kenya where the researcher has based his study. Independent investigation is essential to check on experiences of post single mothers in *Githunguri* Division and how such affect their parental role.

Don Eberly says over the past decade, a voluminous body of data has been documented on the ill effects of growing up without a father. Fatherless children for example are five times more likely to live in poverty, three times more to fail in school, two or three times likely to experience emotional or behavioral problems, three times more likely to commit suicide. Children who are brought up in single parent households are bound by some

²⁵ A S. Skolnick and S.H Jerome, *Family in Transition*: (New York: Harper Collins college publishers.1994). pp 369-372.

immutable law to fail in school, turn to drugs or commit crime. A father absent society is one where many children grow in poverty²⁶. The findings demonstrate the case of single mother families. However, it is equally necessary to consider the case of single mother who end up in marriage and how this affects the growth and development of the children.

Suda observes that, one of the consequences of divorce and single-parenthood is the opportunity to remarry and establish what she refers to as blended family. Many children in these families are still linked to their biological parents who may have a strong influence on them, thereby disrupting or delaying their adjustments to a new family setup. Children from broken homes tend to have identity problems especially when they have different fathers and live in reconstituted or blended families²⁷. The study will seek to establish how phenomenon affects parenting role.

Wachege observes the intriguing state of family institution. He particularly takes cognizant of the interchange of motherhood where married mothers are moving into single motherhood and single mothers actually getting married.²⁸. The interest of the study on single mothers moving into marriage is how that is impacting on their role of parenting. He says that there are challenges when single mothers move into marriage. In some cases a husband engages in sex with the wife and his step-daughter (the wife's daughter). Men who are married to them are sometimes ridiculed and some succumb to this ridicule leading to depressing repercussion in the family. He says that such marriages

²⁶ G. W Thomas(ed), *Renewing U.N and Building A Culture of Peace:* (A report from assembly 2000. Publisher inter-religious and international for world peace 2000). See P 171-172.

²⁷ C.A Suda Op Cit p 47.

²⁸ P. N Wachege Op Cit p 78.

go sour and these mothers are relegated back to single motherhood with an extra child or children in this marriage and wounded personalities²⁹. However, his findings are brief and hence an in-depth study needs to be done to unveil the situation of married post single mother mothers in relation to parenting role.

Host, Rinhart and Wiston argue that Step families arise from remarriages. They are also called blended families. One of the major challenges is that children may resent stepparent who appear to be trying to take over the place of biological mother or father. Parents may complain of not being respected too.³⁰ It is necessary to find the effect of this tendency on their parenting role.

Cronam equates marriage to slavery where wife's domestic services are not rewarded. Marriage has been there for many generations and that has made woman internalize this form of slavery³¹. Hence even as some single mothers move to marriage, there are feminists who see them as getting into slavery. "Freedom for women cannot be won without abolition of marriage"³² This being her position, then how do we explain the movement of single mothers moving into marriage.

Waliggo discusses how values which are useful to a people and not in conflict with the Gospel can be applied to help deal with contextual realities. In the light of research topic, interest would be on values that would aid the success of former single mothers in

²⁹ Ibid. p79.

³⁰ Host, Rinhart and Wiston. Op Cit p 312

³¹ S. Cronam in A. Harding Op cit. p 146.

³² Ibid p 147.

parenting role. He views inculturation as an honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time³³. This require to be understood in the context of parenting so that former single mothers, the church and entire society may appreciate the need to apply the message of Christ in the circumstances of these mothers in the endeavor to build a better society. The church requires accepting them as recipient of grace for them to be affirmed mature Christians as they go about parental duties.

McGarry C. in the book *Inculturation; Its Meaning and Agency* argues that for the church to be truly the church of Jesus Christ, it must be both universal and particular. The church in each country must address the characteristic culture of its peoples³⁴. This gives grounds for the A.C.K Church to address the emerging characteristic of interchange of single motherhood and the peculiar challenges therein. It is a cultural reality which inculturation theology requires delving into and bringing out a clear understanding.

Teaching on the Church in our day, John II says it is placed in a social and cultural context which renders it more difficult to understand and yet more urgent and irreplaceable for promoting the true good of men and women³⁵. He further observes that there are societies that still rely on the passing of the ancient customs to impact values of marriage and family life through gradual process of education or initiation. But changes that have taken place in the modern society demand that not only the family but also

³³ J.M Waligo , A R Crollius, T.Nkamihigo, J.M Mbinda., *“Inculturation; Its Meaning And Agency”*(Kampala. St. Paul Publications.1986) p 12

³⁴ cf ibid p 7

³⁵ John P. II. Op Cit p39.

society and the Church should be involved in the effort of properly preparing young people for their future responsibilities³⁶. Through preparation for the marriage life, those who find themselves in post single motherhood will have prior knowledge on what to expect in such marriage and how to handle the task of parenting in such context.

John Mbinda asserts that one of the agendas of inculturation is the breaking of structures of dominion and depression so that people may live in communion, peace and harmony with one another. Through inculturation people begin to realize that the kingdom of God is among them³⁷. This has a contribution in the attempts to make those who find themselves in the interchange of motherhood even more effective in their roles because they will be able to jettison from any form of dominion or depression.

Whatever therefore, can really make Christianity be truly universal, that is, beyond culture but in cultures, beyond time but in time, beyond individuals but within each of them, beyond total apprehension but understood, must be advocated and carried out³⁸. Christianity has to speak meaningfully to each people in their socio-economic and political situation³⁹. The particular people in this study are women who have found themselves in the interchange of motherhood.

Wachege states that inculturation can be appreciated as one conveying the effect of presenting, interpreting and putting the Christian message in such a way that it

³⁶ Ibid p 79.

³⁷ J.M Walligo , A R Crollius, T.Nkamihigo, J.M Mbinda op cit pg 80.

³⁸ Ibid p 19

³⁹ Ibid p 24

germinates, thereby maturing and flourishing in our African people's culture⁴⁰. His approach is insightful as it contains and expresses coherently the emerging contemporary trend of understanding, presenting and concretely interpreting Christianity in accordance with our African people's aspirations, needs, thought-forms and mentality. It is more explicit in our approach and effort of confronting the gospel message with our African culture(s). This will be focused on parenting among former single mothers.

Kateyi argues that evangelization has come into appreciating the importance of culture. He says it is no longer seen as hostile to the Gospel⁴¹. This gives a fundamental base on which the cultural values of the indigenous people in *Githunguri* Parish can be utilized by the A.C.K Church in ministering to post single mothers.

Magesa says Christianity must reach out to people at their cultural settings⁴². Thus, it quickens the need to find out how Christianity is reaching out to former single mothers and especially in their role of parenting. In such approach, Christianity would be able to help former single mothers from cultural traits that might be oppressive and exploitative while commending cultural values that are empowering.

In the article *African Christian Theology*, Nyamiti says inculturation is the insertion or introduction of Christian life and message into a particular culture in such way that

⁴⁰ P.N Wachege, *Africa Women Liberation; A Man's Perspective: (Nairob. Industrial Printing Works.1992) p 28*

⁴¹ X . Kateyi, *Inculturation as a strategy for liberation: (Cluster publications. 1989) p36*

⁴² L. Magesa, *Authentic African Christianity; western Christian and church in Africa* in T. Okure and V.Paul 32 *articles evaluating: inculturation of Christianity in Africa;*(Eldoret. AMECEA Gaba Publications. 1990). p 115.

Christian message finds expression through the elements proper to that particular culture and becomes a principle that directs and transforms that culture⁴³. Indeed therefore, it is paramount for the message of Christianity to speak in the face of post single motherhood. It can be reflected upon to see the coming into reality its ability to transform culture in the face of today's single motherhood.

In his books *Studies in African Christian Theology vol. 1*, Nyamiti observes that there are values in the African culture that are still relevant. According to him there are people who say past cultures are outdated and unfit and that the current generation has no interest in them. Moreover, they argue such values will disappear and pave way for a universal culture. As for him however, it is what is unmeaningful to modern Africa that should be rejected but what is positive should be embraced.⁴⁴ This is important to the subject of research study because out of the African culture, there may be values that will be useful to former single mothers and their parenting role which the church as well can apply while ministering to their needs as parents.

The need to embrace the African values is vital as shown by theologians from different ethnic background for the reason that they are authentic and as values they transcend all ethnic limits.⁴⁵ This will help ethnic groups in Africa to benefit from each other because they will be able to share values relating to parenting found in various groups. Such wealth of values across Africa would contribute significantly in addressing the issues and

⁴³ C. Nyamiti, *African Christian Theology*. Class notes: Hekima college p 4

⁴⁴ C. Nyamiti *Studies in African Christian Theology Vol. 1:*(Nairobi. CUEA Publications. 2005) pp18-19

⁴⁵ Ibid 15

challenges being encountered. The research study was conducted in an almost a predominantly *Agikuyu* setting and some useful values to former single mothers within its culture can be useful to other ethnic groups.

Indeed, Nyamiti is of the idea that though African ethnic groups do not have uniform cultures, there is need to educate people to have an open mind and receptivity for all African values even when they do not belong to their ethnic groups.⁴⁶ This is of help in the attempt to deal with the reality of challenges in parenting as it was learnt from the research conducted within *Agikuyu* culture.

Bible and Church tradition are of primary importance for the African Theology. He talks of Christianization of African cultures.⁴⁷ This is fundamental because the research is a case study which involve a Christian Church i.e. A.C.K. This means the values found useful will be accepted if they will be reconcilable with the Christian teachings. Such values were mainly drawn from *Agikuyu* culture which is predominant in the area where the research was conducted.

Among the *Agikuyu*, there were post single mothers though rare. If a girl became pregnant before marriage, the social obligation to get married still prevailed in her but there were circumstances when she could not get married. Karanja observes:

If a girl became pregnant, she could not marry a young man. Instead, she would be forced to marry another man who had another wife. At times she could end up without a husband. The offspring of such a woman did not belong to her father's

⁴⁶ Ibid 14

⁴⁷ Ibid 16

clan and were called *aicakamuyu*. But more importantly, it was a serious thing to impregnate a girl and when it happened, the elders ordered him to pay a fine of nine sheep to the father of the girl, and another five rams which elders ate as an arbitration fee. On her part, the girl was made to prepare a lot of food and gruel to be eaten by her age mates. Both parties were stigmatized and ostracized by their age mates. The girl was expected to be a virgin in the sense of having imperforated hymeneal membrane to be attested in marriage⁴⁸.

Kenyatta argues that women were supposed to be married in their teen age i.e. fifteen to twenty years and this gave the reason why in *Agikuyu* language there is no term for the unmarried⁴⁹. It thus means unmarried life was not popular and therefore even single mothers were under pressure to get married. . Situating the same in the today's context, it was crucial for researcher to find out whether that social demand was causing single mothers to seek marriage.

Primarily there was a law forbidding a man to have a full sexual intercourse with a girl before marriage but it did sometimes happen and she became pregnant. If she got the second child she was likely to never get married and a hut was built for her in her fathers homestead⁵⁰. If a girl became pregnant, she was forced to confess who the father of the child was. This could not however bar her to get married 'for the child would become the legal child to whoever she married and would belong to the husband's family , provided that he paid one '*ngoima*' beast and ten goats and sheep in order to have his position as the legal father of the child recognized⁵¹. This is important because it provoked the researcher to try and understand whether marrying a single mother and being bound by

⁴⁸ W. K. Karanja , *Hallowed be Mt. Kenya* :(Ruiru. Gacuiro Publishers .2003) pp 38-39

⁴⁹ J. Kenyatta; *Facing Mt. Kenya* : (London, Heinmann Educational Books Ltd. 1938.edited by Martin Seeker and Warburg .1938) p 174

⁵⁰ L .S. B Leakey, *The southern Kikuyu Before 1903*: (London. Academic Press.1977) p 535

⁵¹ *Ibid* pp 801-802

cultural value to fully own the child right from the onset marriage would have a contribution in enhancing the role of parenting for the former single mothers.

Cagnolo says widows and widowers are free to re-marry among the *Agikuyu* but it is very complicated on account of dowry system and ownership of children who always belong to the dead husband's relatives⁵². This appears to hold a contrast in the modern *Agikuyu* life where widows are allowed to remarry with ease.

Furniss has a functionalist perspective on religion and stresses on the social benefit of religion for people's motivation to perform expected social roles despite existential uncertainty. It portrays religion or its equivalent as necessary source of societal integration and social co-operation⁵³. Against such background therefore, it would be expected that any religion integrates those in diverse needs and even help motivate them to play expected social roles. Hence, the researcher was keen to find out the role A.C.K Church Githunguri is playing in this light and in particular for former single mothers.

Broad S.E argues that today, the collective character of the church (*koinonia*) is being emphasized. He opposes seeing Christian as sum total of individual but the body of Christ which gives to its various members their specific roles and vocations, in accordance with the structures of identity of that body. Church consequently is not the collective result of individuals but a communion of saints; a total togetherness in Christ

⁵² C. Cagnolo, *The Agikuyu their customs, traditions and Folklore*:(Nyeri. Mission printing school. 1933) p 115.

⁵³ G. Furniss, *Sociology for Pastoral Care; An introduction for pastors and students*: (Kentucky . John Knox Press 1994) p 83.

expressed by total interdependence among the Christians. The maternal function of the Church, as well as the material content of the grace, implies that the Church is prior to its members and that they depend upon the Church for the origin and continuation of their new life in Christ⁵⁴. This assertion for interdependence and togetherness raised fundamental questions as to how the A.C.K as a Church addresses the emerging experiences of former single mother parenting since the preceding argument showed it has a responsibility to extend a hand of help in grace.

⁵⁴ E. S Broad , *Stewardship – Our Accountability to God*: (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation. 1983) p23

1.60 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

This research study made use of Walligo's inculturation theology. According to him, this theology is an honest and a serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation evermore understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life doctrine into the very thought-patterns of each people. It is a conviction that Christ and His Good news are even more dynamic and challenging to all times and culture as they become better understood and lived by each people and a continuous endeavor to make Christianity truly 'feel at home' in the culture of each people⁵⁵. This theory was applied in the endeavor to find out worthy values from the Agikuyu people who are predominant in Githunguri Parish that are reconcilable with Christian teachings on parenting and which were found useful to former single mothers as they endeavor to bring up their children effectively.

1.70 HYPOTHESIS.

- i) Former single mothers face some peculiar challenges while parenting their children.
- ii) The A.C.K Church is not responsive enough to challenges that former single mothers face while parenting.
- iii) Inculturation theology and insights therein have a significant contribution to make in articulating and enhancing effective parenting role among former single mothers.

⁵⁵ J.M Walligo , A R Crollius, T.Nkamihigo, J.M Mbinda op cit . p12.

SECTION 3.

1.80. METHODOLOGY.

1.81 Site Selection:

The research area was Githunguri Parish of A.C.K Church. Purposive sampling was used to select the research site. The researcher considered the time designated for project which gave warrant for covering just one A.C.K Church Parish. As well, the nature of research required in-depth interview that took a significant duration of time. But more importantly, the researcher was familiar with the main local dialect which was a boon in enhancing an in-depth interview.

1.82 Research Design.

Case study was applied. This involved in-depth analysis of cases identified in A.C.K Githunguri Parish. The exploration and description of the cases took place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving multiple sources of information that were valuable in this context. These included questionnaires, interviews, documents and observations.

The research cases comprised women who were at some point single mothers but later got married. The research study brought to fore the experiences they go through as they bring up their children. Other informants considered having information useful to the study due to their social status or professions were interviewed. They included Christian leaders, elders, social workers and counselors.

1.83 Sampling.

Being a qualitative research whose main interest was to get in-depth information, the following was employed to get informants.

a. Purposeful sampling.

In the said location, the researcher got key informants thorough contacts which he established from A.C.K church and social agencies in the area like government and non-governmental social welfare providers. These were twenty one in number i.e. the pastor in charge of Githunguri Parish and other two assistant pastors, the leader of mothers union in the Parish, three kikuyu elders, four counselors or community workers and eight former single mothers two men married to former single mothers and a young man who has a step-father. These were very useful in getting in-depth information on the research subject. Also, out of eighty questionnaires distributed, sixty were returned.

b. Snowball sampling.

Ones the researcher established a link with any informant in the targeted population, he in some occasions requested that person to direct him to another informant who fell within the research population. A good illustration is when the researcher came into contact with a former single mother, he requested her to refer him to another post single mother. Through his approach, the researcher administered a questionnaire to twenty former single mothers, ten children of such mothers, ten men who have married former single mothers and five counselors/community workers.

1.84 Data Collection Techniques.

In-depth interview.

The research engaged the respondents in an in-depth interview in order to derive as much the required information on interchange of motherhood in relation to the critical role of parenting. Guiding questions were employed to enhance direction and objectivity in the course of interview. The author was the main researcher, conducting all researches for the purpose of clarity and details. Consequently, interviews were conducted in Agikuyu vernacular with of use of Kiswahili and English in a few cases.

Questionnaires.

The researcher also administered questionnaires. Out the eighty given out, sixty of them were returned..

1.85 Methods of Data Recording.

- a). Note taking: the researcher wrote short notes during the interviews.
- b). Tape recorder was used. Tape recording was done especially during interviews to the key informants.

1.86 Data Analysis.

Before the conclusions of the field research, the researcher compared the study objectives and data collected in an attempt to identify any gap. Data from the field was tabulated and amalgamated with secondary data gathered from literature review. The resultant was collated according to the themes arising from the objectives of the study. The data was then interpreted and presented giving basis for summary and recommendations.

1.9 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY.

The area of study was Githunguri, it was selected due to its proximity to the University of Nairobi which authorized the research. This was very important for the researcher was able to make use of the institution's library which was necessary for secondary data relating to the subject of study. The researcher made extensive use of his ability to understand the local dialect in exploring the research topic from a cultural milieu.

The A.CK church was selected as a case study because of a very well established Mothers Union which has net works that spreads even into the rural areas. This was counted a boon in the investigations of challenges facing former single mothers in their role as parenting. At the same time, it is among a few Churches that have a large following in the area.

The research population covered the former single mothers, their children, their husbands, kikuyu elders, church leaders and experts who included counselors/community workers. This helped in getting more balanced information.

The total population or respondents were eighty one individuals. The researcher engaged twenty one of the respondents in an in-depth interview which limited him to this number of respondents. Some of the limitations were the unwillingness of the former single mothers to yield information fearing the reaction of their spouse, children, Church or

society when she exposed the experiences she had or was going through. Nevertheless, the researcher assured them of and practiced high confidentiality.

There was as well the challenge of informants failing to own appointments and thus derailing the completion of data collections in the field. Moreover, there were incidences where the selected informants failed to grant a chance to be interviewed at all. The researcher was however patient and resilient and was able to go by informants convenience for the appointments.

Additionally, Church was initially suspicious with the pastor in-charge of the Parish insisting the researcher justifies why he selected A.C.K Church and not any other in the area. He wondered whether it was a ploy to spy on them. Assurance that it was purely academic fulfillment defused the concern expressed.

Furthermore, field study involved walking long distances with the challenge of the terrain. The other difficulty was that some *Agikuyu* words were difficult. However, he (researcher) sought the meaning from the informants especially the elders.

CHAPTER TWO.

2.0 Single and Former Single Motherhood among *Agikuyu*.

2.1 Introduction.

In this discourse, it is of essence to have a reflection of the traditional *Agikuyu* society in relation to two aspects single motherhood i.e. single and former single motherhood. The two have been discussed along side each other since the former precedes the latter. This is necessary noting that the study was conducted in *Agikuyu* native area who gave a lot of insights. This chapter intends to bring forth findings from various writers' perspectives and the primary data gathered from the informants. The ultimate purpose is to orient the readers with the background of the single motherhood aspects among the *Agikuyu* people even as we grapple with this reality in the cotemporary setting. It will help us understand the mechanisms which were put in place to ensure such phenomenon did not occur.

Equally important, we will be able to know various ways used to address this motherhood status in the traditional setting. This is useful as it will later be situated in the contemporary society and seek to find out what can be utilized today to address the accompanying challenges as will be seen in chapter three. The premise is that each culture has some intrinsic value worth of consideration at any historical moments of a people. This overview is therefore absolutely paramount.

2.2 Reflections on Agikuyu Traditional Perspective on Single and Former Single Motherhood.

Single motherhood among the *Agikuyu* was a rare occurrence. There were customs and norms that ensured that it did not happen and if it did, it was in isolated circumstance. One of the contributory factors to single motherhood status has been sex out of wedlock. Traditionally, this was unacceptable and a girl who became pregnant was highly castigated by the society as such was a big shame not only to the family but to her age mates and the community as a whole. Gichinga says there was severe punishment and payment of fines which were clearly spelt out for both men and women who contravened the norm. According to her, a girl was expected to be a virgin on her marriage day. If not so, some stigma was placed on her.¹ Wachege further observes;

To conceive and get pregnant before marriage was a sure proof that such a lady violated the customary sexual taboo and ritual purity. This indicated that she was morally loose and of bad moral conduct. The *Agikuyu* community viewed and despised her as an irresponsible girl, a disgrace both to her nuclear family and the society as a whole. Such girls were 'condemned' as bad example to their age mates, to their younger sisters and to the other girls in the society. They were seen as bad girls who watered down the dignity and the respect of their parents and of the other girls in the *ituura*(homestead)².

It reduced their status in the society and in some extent jeopardized their chances of ever getting married. Even when they happened to marry, Nyambura argued that their choices on the husband became limited and mostly they got married as subsequent wives to men who had a first wife³. Karanja observes:

If a girl became pregnant, she could not marry a young man of her choice. Instead, she would be forced to marry another man who had another wife. At times she could end up without a husband and hence a single mother. Hence, a

¹ E. Gichinga, *Answers for unmarried mothers; a counseling guide*.(Nairobi: Uzima Press; 1996) p3.

² P.N Wachege *Third Millennium African Single Mothers and Mother Widows: Ethno-Religio-Philosophical Touch* (Kiambu. Signal Press ltd 2003) p179.

³ V. Nyambura interviewed on 6th July 2008 at Kianugu Village Kambaa in Githunguri.

girl was expected to be a virgin in the sense of having un-perforated hymeneal membrane to be attested in marriage⁴. Getting married as a subsequent wife denied them the privilege of being the first wife which was very significant among the Agikuyu.

The onus to prevent child outside marriage did not rest on the ladies alone but men as well were expected to be responsible enough not to impregnate a girl which was treated as a serious breach of the cultural norms. Fundamentally, no sexual intercourse was allowed before marriage and any young man who rendered a girl pregnant was held accountable and severely punished by the community. A man who did so was made a social outcast and the girl was ridiculed⁵. Thinji argued that this was very important as it ensured that cases of single motherhood and children born out of a marriage were reduced. He is however not amused young men who impregnate young girls are no longer held accountable as was the case in the traditional setting. For him, it is unacceptable for the community to condemn the girl while the man remains free. It is unfair not only to the girl involved, but to the fabric of the community as well and should not continue unabated.⁶

There was no impunity for a young man who impregnated a girl as observed by Cagnolo who argues 'if a pregnancy occurs, the culprit has to pay a fine of ten goats though it is left to his inclinations whether he marries her or not.'⁷ This similar view is held by

⁴ W.K Karanja, *Hallowed be Mt. Kenya*. (Ruiru: Gacuiro Publishers,2003) p 39.

⁵J. K. Kigera, interviewed on 28h June 2008 at his home in Kambaa village

⁶ Thinji, interviewed on 5th July 2008 at Gathangari A.C.K Church...

⁷ C. Cagnolo, *The Akikuyu, Their Customs, Traditions And Folklore* .(Nyeri : Mission Printing School. 1933)p 114

Karanja who says “it was a serious thing for a man to impregnate a girl. When this happened the elders ordered him to pay a fine of nine sheep to the father of this girl, and another five rams which elders ate as an arbitration fee. On her part the girl was made to prepare a lot of food and gruel to be eaten by her age mates. Both culprits were stigmatized and ostracized by their age mates.”⁸ What is important in these illustrations is that, pregnancy before marriage was not permissible. The individuals involved were severely reprimanded by the community and the advantage was that it helped in reducing occurrence of single motherhood and thus minimum incidences of post single mother challenge of parenting.

Agikuyu people valued marriage greatly in making of their community life because it formed the family institution which is a basic unit of the community. Therefore, every adult male and female were expected to get into family institution as a husband and a wife respectively. In this light Thinji argued, “everyone was bound by the culture to get married and hence presence of bachelors and spinsters was rare. This enhanced the continuity of the community through procreation”⁹. Kenyatta opines, “Marriage is of great importance and there is a desire of every member to build his own family and extend and prolong his father’s *mbari* (clan). An adult male and female are expected to found an institution of marriage”¹⁰. In addition, he states that, it helped to control prostitution and hence all women were expected to marry in their teens i.e. fifteen to

⁸ W.K Karanja Op Cit. p39

⁹ Thinji Op Cit

¹⁰ J. Kenyatta, *Facing Mt. Kenya: The traditional life of Gikuyu*. (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1938) p 163

twenty year. Therefore, there was no term in Gikuyu language for unmarried women or old maids.¹¹

The continuation of not only the clan but the community was vested on marriage institution. It is in this vital context that children were born replacing those who were dying and by so doing, the community progressed into the future. The role is still valued because it emerged from research that members are aware of their mortality and that they can only be survived by their children. Individuals know too well they can only continue when the old give way to the birth of the young and that the tree that does not bear brings an end to its own kind.¹² This role led to not only a social responsibility but as well created a sense of sacredness in marriage.

Owing to the fact that the survival of the community depended on role of procreation vested on the marriage, it was therefore not an individual affair but rather communal and customs and norms demanded stability. It was a desire to have harmony in community that made stability of marriage everybody's concern. Nge'ndo, says it was necessary to involve members of the community at different stages of marriage process because the outcome of a family had a direct impact on the community especially considering its critical role of ensuring the posterity through procreation and the upbringing of children¹³. This instilled a sense of accountability among the married because they owed

¹¹ Ibid 174.

¹² D. G Maillu , *Our Kind of Polygamy*. (Nairobi. Heinemann Kenya, 1988.) p 3

¹³ V. Nyambura Op Cit.

the community a responsibility to not only procreate but to ensure there was no disruption of social order through unstable marriage.

Leakey observes that in the average Kikuyu homestead the bonds of friendship and love which linked a man, his wives and their children was very strong¹⁴. This made a home a haven of peace where everyone felt appreciated. Hence, regardless of motherhood status of the woman at the time of marriage, the principles of harmony was upheld. This ensured the children that the post single mother came with into the marriage were appreciated and enjoyed a sense of belonging. They embraced the step-father, respected him and in their attempt to please him especially after knowing he/she did not biologically belong to him, they were liked and sometimes became his confidant. This was reported to have been more common where the post single mother had a son.

Women were highly valued in the traditional setting contrary to the view that they were objects of oppression by men. This is worth of consideration because the value attached to woman will determine how she is treated as mother and in this case with reference to the aspects of single motherhood which is subject of the study. Leakey makes a valuable observation that the clans are named after women i.e *Anjiru*, *Ambui*, *Acera*, *Agaciku*, *Ambura* or *Aithaga*, *Arimu*, *Agathigia* or *Aicakamuyu*, *Aitheredu*, *Angari* or *Aithe Kahuno*¹⁵. This demonstrates that they were important pillars that make up the community. Kenyatta states:

¹⁴ L.S.B Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*. (London: Academic press. 1977) p 2

¹⁵ Ibid p 118

Women are very important and the society cannot do without them. They are the salt of the earth; they have the most sacred duty of creating and rising the future generations. Female children are seen as the connecting-link between one generation and another and one clan and another through marriage which binds the interests of clans close together and makes them share in common the responsibilities of family life.¹⁶

Reflecting on the context post single mothers, it helped them earn the due respect traditionally. Whereas having children outside marriage was discouraged and caused stigmatization of the single mother, marriage brought her a change of status. It was a noble practice which was fulfilling the vital role for every woman. Marriage meant that now she was to participate in perpetuating the generation within the acceptable institution. Therefore, her role was recognized and no mistreatment meted on her on the basis of the past life. Suffice it that her dignity as a woman and a wife was restored.

A former single mother enjoyed the social status of other women which was not the case when she was a single mother. Scorresby and Katherine argued that a woman among the *Agikuyu* was a homemaker. It means, the completeness of a home depended on the woman¹⁷. Thus, a single mother failed in this vital aspect of making a home which was only socially acceptable within a marriage setting. Getting married made a former single mother improve her social condition. The remedy for discrimination and stigmatizations on a single mother was marriage. It helped restore and legitimize her motherhood and it accorded her respect as a complete woman in social life of *Agikuyu* people.

¹⁶ J. Kenyatta Op. Cit p 175

¹⁷ R. Scorresby and R. Katherine (eds.), *With a Prehistoric People; the Agikuyu of British East Africa*. (London: Edward. Arnold....) p121

To signify the importance of a marriage to the family is the fact that a home was described as belonging to the wife who ensured its daily running and gave it value in the eyes of other members of the community. During the study, the researcher visited one of the homes and found an old man who after greetings and a brief conversation informed him, “*eene matiri Kuo*” (the owners of this home are not there) and hence he was not invited in the house but rather they sat outside for one and a half hours. This was found to be a common saying by men when the wife was not at home. It signifies the importance of a wife to a home a fact that a *Gikuyu* man acknowledged because she made it acquire status. Men appreciated importance of wife to a home which made them avoid what would threaten the smooth running of the family. For a former single mother, this was favorable because the husband had no reason to treat her based on her former life but rather considered her a wife who required support and respect carrying out her role just like any other *Agikiuyu* married woman. This ensured that she performed her responsibilities including parenting within a conducive setting.

From this ongoing discourse, we realize that women were very critical to *Agikiuyu* life. Kenyatta notes the importance and says that society cannot do without them. They are the salt of the earth and have the most sacred duty of creating and rearing the future generations. Female children are seen as the connecting link between one generation and another and one clan and another through marriage, which binds the interest of clans close together and makes them share in common the responsibility of family life¹⁸. The duty of creating and rearing children is recognized in marriage and a woman who got a

¹⁸ J. Kenyatta Op Cit. p 175.

child outside marriage failed the principle of rightfully and morally continuing the community. This discouraged single motherhood that resulted from pregnancies before marriage.

Divorce, another course of single motherhood was allowed but was very unpopular and rare as Nyambura observes and it rarely happened on flimsy grounds as the case is today¹⁹. It also involved a rigorous process and not a one day decision. There were indeed some grounds on which it happened and Kenyatta states them as barrenness, refusal with conjugal rights, witchcraft, habitual thievery, willful desertion gross misconduct, ill-treatment, drunkenness and impotence²⁰. Nevertheless, it was not common. Nyambura says, '*mucii ni mutumia*' (a home is a wife)²¹ and on this ground even men on their part could not easily opt for divorce. This is significant because traditionally among the *Agikuyu*, a home was complete when there was a wife. Homes that lacked a wife were less frequented by relatives and neighbors. Suffice it that a wife created liveliness desired in a typical home. There were incidences when a wife would become annoyed and go back to her maternal home but both were under pressure from society's values to rejoin.

In the event of divorce, a marriage could not be dissolved once the woman had given birth to more than one child by the husband as Leakey argues. According to him, there was what he calls a legal separation. He says:

¹⁹ V. Nyambura Op Cit.

²⁰ J. Kenyatta Op. Cit pp 183-184

²¹ V. Nyambura Op Cit.

If a woman had more than two children, divorce became complicated especially because of returning dowry. So, the husband paid “*ngoima*” (a goat) and was allowed to pull down the hut of the wife in his compound. She was built another one at her fathers or brothers homestead and had children with whoever she wanted. But these children still belonged to the former husband because there was no divorce.²²

But if a woman who had divorced or separated went ahead and got married, her former husband had a right to claim his sheep, goats and cattle he had given as dowry. If she stayed at father’s compound and happened to get a child the former husband had a right to claim the child as long as “*ruracio*” (dowry) was not returned²³. However, the bottom-line is that, divorce was discouraged and this is well sufficed by Wachege’s comments “Divorce was rare. It was allowed as a last resort. *Agikuyu* women who were single mothers because they divorced from their husbands had to contend themselves with ridicule by the community. Such divorced mother was confronted as a careless woman who could not maintain her home”²⁴. Two substantial values are emerging from how *Agikuyu* treated divorce. It avoided prevalence of single mothers and secondly, for single mothers who got married, they had some certainty of their marriage since they were to a great extent cushioned against likelihood of being divorced and becoming single mothers yet again.

To prevent single motherhood that would result from widowhood, there were customs and norms which ensured that a widow was immediately integrated in her husband’s family. Kigera explained that there were norms guiding how widowhood was handled in the family:

²²L.S.B Leakey Op Cit p 806

²³J. Kenyatta Op Cit. p 106

²⁴P.N Wachege Op Cit p 185.

When the husband died, the wife remained in that home because through dowry she was member of that family. She was placed under custodian of a younger brother to the deceased husband. If the widow was still of child bearing age, she got children with the younger brother although they still belonged to her departed husband. Moreover, the younger brother provided to her and her children. In the event where the departed husband had no younger brother, a strong young man in the neighborhood was identified and she got children with her. Nevertheless, the choice of the young man was suggested to her first to avoid forcing her into somebody she detested²⁵.

Leakey is against the notion that, these widows were inherited. According to him, what was inherited is responsibility of providing food, clothing and other necessities but not acquisition of sexual rights with her. It meant there was no such thing as a destitute widow²⁶. Maillu applauds this practice as positive not only for her physical and psychological requirement but also for the well being of the children.²⁷. What was clear is that, a widow was taken care of together with her children and issue of playing single mother was not there.

The way *Agikuyu* handled widowed women falls under leviratic custom that is common among African communities. Kirwen discusses this custom at length and he observes that:

The wife belongs to the husband and the lineage and the children born of the marriage belong to the husband and his lineage. Its purpose is to continue the marriage of the widow and bring her family to full fruition in the name of her deceased husband. Furthermore, it ensures each marriage maintains its identity and achieves its goals even in the face of physical death. The deceased's brother takes full responsibility for the widow and her children. He substitutes for the deceased in all the activities of the bereaved family. In view of social dislocation caused by death, the African practice of leviratic custom offer a better alternative to the problem of care of widows. It provides the widow with a position in the society where she can continue her marriage and raise her family in security and stability. It is a respectable social institution of widows and not sexually immoral. Attacking it, attacks the very fundamentals on which the marriage rests. Sex in this context, is symbolic union with the physically dead groom (husband). It

²⁵ J.K Kigera Op Cit.

²⁶L.S.B Leakey Op Cit.. p 12.

²⁷D. G. Maillu Op Cit. p12.

protects the indissoluble quality of the original alliance and enables the original marriage to continue to function socially, economically and reproductively²⁸. From the above Kirwen's argument, the widows had security because the original marriage remained. It prevented them from falling into difficulties of being lone and single mothers as the case is observed today. The death of the husband did not mean a beginning of another journey to remarriage but rather continuing the role of a wife to the deceased with full support through leviratic custom.

Polygamy was a characteristic common in *Agikuyu* traditional culture and had some significance. Under the customary law, a man was allowed to have as many wives as he could support and that there was prestige in large family. According to Kigera, marriage was between a man and a woman or women. He cherishes the idea of polygamy which he feels helped offset the difference between the number of men and women at any given time²⁹. This phenomenon was noted by Kenyatta who said "in every generation there are more women of marriageable age than men"³⁰. Reflecting on this phenomenon Hillman argues that in sub-Saharan Africa, females tend to be more than men and he further explains, "African sex ratio tends to fluctuate, especially during childhood. Although the differential mortality factors are only imperfectly known, the male mortality rate appears higher at all ages with exception of the child -bearing years. This sex-differential mortality leads almost inevitably to varying female predominance in the adult populations of different African people... The differential mortality rate more than

²⁸ Read more M C. Kirwen , *A Christian Prohibition of African Leviratic Custom; An Empirical Study of Problem of Adapting Western Christian Teachings in Marriage to the leviratic era of widows in four African societies.* (PhD Thesis) pp 302-312.

²⁹J. K. Kigera Op Cit.

³⁰ J. Kenyatta Op Cit. p 170

anything else is due to the preferential treatment of female in the family environment and the greater hazards to which males are exposed... The high mortality rate of male however accounts for the largest reason as to the reason of more women than men to marry them³¹. The advantage of polygamy in this light, assured an opportunity for every female to be married reducing occurrence of single motherhood which is a precursor to the phenomenon of former single motherhood which is very conspicuous today. Those who became single mothers had an opportunity to get married courtesy of polygamy.

The *Agikuyu* community valued the children and the families were expected to protect them as they guaranteed its survival. Amidst the concerns of some children belonging to the single mothers against the community's tradition, there was that overriding concern and the need to protect every child. In the family context, Leakey noted that the young ones were greatly desired. Every elder in the course of prayers to ancestral spirits as well as those to God, prayed that his family might be fruitful and that children might be given to him. A woman on her part desired to have children so that she is called "blessed among women"³². God was considered the giver of the children.

Cavicchi says there was ultimate desire to have children to perpetuate ones name and survive ones descendants and the need for a concrete object of love for ones activity³³. Similar views are held by Kenyatta when says 'female children are seen as the connecting

³¹ E. Hillman, *Polygamy Reconsidered: African Plural Marriage and Christian Churches* (Nairobi. Transafrica Publishers Ltd.1975) p121.

³² L.S.B. Leakey Op. Cit. p 511

³³ E. Cavicchi, *Problems of change in Kikuyu Tribal Society*. (Milan.: Pontifical Institute for Foreign Mission,. 1953) p 31

link between one generation and another and one clan and another'.³⁴ The emerging fact is that children were of insurmountable value in the traditional setting. Desire to have children's is deep rooted in the hearts of both man and woman and on entering matrimonial union, they regard procreation of children as their first and most sacred duty. Childless marriage among Agikuyu brings no joy to husband and wife, the clan and the community at large.

In the average Kikuyu homestead the bonds of friendship and love which linked a man, his wives and their children was strong. Leakey gives an illustration "if a goat was slaughtered, there were designated pieces for children, men and women. This ensured under no circumstance would either of the three lack to share the spoil. Equally, a man would not eat meat without sharing with the children. Men too would deprive themselves to make sure that they bought garments and ornaments for their children as they passed through various stages and that there was enough food to celebrate these occasions³⁵ There is a kikuyu proverb that says *mwana ndetagia ithe nyama* (the son need not ask his father for a piece of meat)³⁶. It meant a good parent provided what the child needed. A child needed not remind the father of the obvious needs.

The family was required to protect its progeny and this is noted in the *Agikuyu* proverb '*mwana wi na ithe ndanyuaga muma*' (the son whose father is still alive takes no oath). This is because the father defends him and if necessary, takes the oath instead of the son.

³⁴ J. Kenyatta Op Cit p164

³⁵ L.S.B Leakey Op. Cit p 2

³⁶ G. Barra, *1000 Kikuyu Proverbs*. (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau., 1939) p 74.

The illustrations of value attached to children among Agikuyu offered an environment for proper parenting. It behooved the respective family and the community to put hands together in upbringing of the children. Wakirabi who is an A.C.K Parish priest in Githunguri argues “Agikuyu traditional life ensured all in the community were partners in parenting. The duty was not a preserve of the biological parent alone but for every one”³⁷. Indeed therefore, the legitimacy of the child’s birth did not supersede the inherent desire of the community to effect proper care and protection of the child’s growth and development.

Whereas it is noted the community participated in upbringing of the children, the bigger role rested on the parents. It was from here the process of socialization began as they acquired the values and norms of the community. For example, at the family level children learnt about God. It was the centre of all the religion where children learnt about God and spirits of the departed. It was here too, the first education was obtained. The father spent his evening talking to his sons and likewise the mother spent her evening talking to their daughters. It was also these sessions that were largely responsible for the strong bonds existing between Kikuyu children and their parents³⁸.

Parents developed a strong attachment with their children and by so doing they secured a future where by these children would take care of them at their old age. A good illustration is the strong bond that existed between sons and their mothers. Kigera says “A *Gikuyu* man shared more love to his mother than even to his father and he shared

³⁷ N. Wa kirabi, interviewed on 23rd July 2008 at his home in Riabai Kiambu.

³⁸ L.S.B Leakey Op Cit. p2

virtually about everything with her”.³⁹. Suffice that, life in the *Agikuyu* family was of absolute importance to the children and community worked hard to ensure its harmonious existence. It was where an individual received the primary security and protection necessarily for his or her growth and development.

On their part, children were expected to respect their father even in the event of a step-father which is the case of the child or children of a former single mother. As Thinji explains, “a step child had an extra duty to demonstrate his full loyalty and respect to his father”⁴⁰. This was necessary not only for the harmony, but also survival of the marriage.

It is worth noting that, if a man married a single mother, the step child would legally belong to his family provided that he paid one ‘*ngoima*’ beast and ten goats and sheep in order to have his position as the legal father of the child recognized⁴¹. Girl child was particularly liked because the father would get dowry from her marriage. There was a common saying when a man married a woman who had a daughter “*ino ni njohi yoka*” (this is bear which has come home). This meant he would marry off the girl when of age and benefit from the dowry. Suffice that, a child of single mother was quickly integrated in the family once she got married which was valuable for her parenting role.

³⁹ Ibid p10.

⁴⁰ Thinji Op. Cit.

⁴¹ L.S.B Leakey Op. Cit p802.

2.3 CONCLUSION.

From the above description of the two aspects i.e. single motherhood and former single motherhood among the *Agikuyu*, it emerges that the social life in *Agikuyu* culture provided mechanisms that were able to confront the probable situation of single motherhood, former single motherhood and the probable challenges particularly on parenting. To begin with, cultural arrangement prevented the occurrence of single motherhood by strongly discouraging sex outside marriage that would in some circumstances contribute to pregnancy and later single motherhood if the man involved refused to marry the girl. Cultural norms held accountable both the woman and the man who got involved in the birth of a child outside marriage.

The value attached to marriage traditionally prevented occurrence of single mother families. A wife was very important to the *Agikuyu* man in this case and this helped in sustaining marriage in that rarely could he opt for separation or divorce. A man who had no family other than for religious reason was considered a social deviant. Consequently, the wife did not wish to face the wrath of the community which would consider her a failure in keeping her home which was a variable in measuring the success of a woman.

The need to keep the family together discouraged divorce which is a cause to single motherhood in today's society. It was not a common phenomenon and hence rarely would have former single mothers who had become single mothers because they were divorced or they had divorced their husband.

Besides, there was the strong value attached to the children by not only the family but by the community as a whole. They were the future of the clan and the community and for that reason, they were respected and protected. There was that perspective that children were God given. It was normally said '*mwana ni kiheo kia Ngai*' the child is a gift from God. In this case, if a man married a woman who had a child, he had a social obligation to equally treat the children. Such step children accepted him fully as their father and were bound to ultimately do so. The mother ensured her husband was respected by the child.

Polygamy partly contributed to ensuring marriage to every person especially in the face of difference in number between men and women of marriageable age. Secondly, it prevented breakages of marriage because even where the reason for the man to divorce his wife came, he opted to marry a second. Thirdly, it gave an opportunity to single mothers to be married as subsequent wives and hence raising a family within socially acceptable institution.

Equally important, leviratic custom helped prevent single motherhood status. A woman whose husband died was cushioned against the realities of single motherhood by remaining legally in the family as wife to the deceased husband. She was helped and had all her needs met.

In essence therefore, the Agikuyu culture had very rare circumstances of single motherhood and where it happened and the lady later got married, the culture demanded

the stability of such marriage. The child was required to respect the step father and on his part he was bound to love the step children with no prejudice. On contrary, as will be discussed in the next chapter, things have since changed and former single motherhood status is emasculating the very essence of the family institution in some circumstances. Really, reflecting on how we can borrow from the success of the past situating it in the Christian teachings whose influence on marriage is significant comes in handy as will be discussed in chapter five. In the meantime, the study acknowledges there are values to be learnt by today's community in respect to former single motherhood status among *Agikuyu*. This is critical in the face of challenges being experienced today as discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 PARENTING ROLE AND CHALLENGES AMONG FORMER SINGLE MOTHERS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects on the factors which are contributing to conspicuous phenomenon of single mothers moving into marriage. It is an attempt to reveal the causal factors. Moreover, it also endeavors to bring out the experiences of former single mothers while parenting in this marriage set up and the various challenges they face. It will give the experiences from children's and husbands' perspective as well. Equally, the A. C. K. Church *Githunguri* Parish and professionals' views will be presented. This is fundamentally important as it will help in understanding and assist various actors offering interventions have more information on this motherhood status. The ultimate goal is to present the impact of this aspect to the role and duty of parenting.

3.2 Factors Leading Single Mothers into Marriage

The phenomenon of single mothers getting into marriage institution in the geographical area covered by research was found to be a reality which is more pronounced than any other time before in the history of *Agikuyu* people who are dominant and natives in this area. But it is of essence to bring to fore that single motherhood results from various causes which include widowhood, divorce and pregnancy before marriage among others.¹ Understanding causes of single motherhood is imperative because as it will be seen in table I below, it has influence on the single mother's resolution to get married. From the

¹ Read more from P.N Wachege : *Third Millennium African Single Mothers and mother Widow; Ethno-Religio- Philosophical Touch..*(Nairobi. Signal Press.2003) p 64- 164.

research findings, there are numerous contributing factors. In all the questionnaires and interview guiding questions, the researcher sought to investigate reasons which are prompting single mothers to get married in the contemporary society. The table below shows the clustered factors.

Table 1: Clustered Causes leading single mothers into marriage.

NO.	Factors	No. of responses	%
1	Companionship.	30	23.5
2	Need of a partner to help bring up the child or children.	26	20.4
3	To fulfill a cultural obligation	21	16.5
4	Desire to get a father for the children.	15	11.8
5	Rejection of Single mothers.	23	18
6	security and identity	12	9
	TOTALS	127	100

3.2.1 Rejection of single mothers

From the research, 18 % of responses argued that single mothers face rejection from their family which considers them an embarrassment for having a child particularly out of wed lock. Popularly referred to *gicokio* in a Gikuyu language, they face a challenge not only at their families but also in the community which considers them as deviants from the acceptable standards which the classical family set-up. In spite of the seemly tolerance to single motherhood, it became evident fro the research they are not fully accepted.

Rejection particularly by the family in some incidences results to the lady being evicted from home. Mrs. Gachuna who is a counselor observed that getting a child before marriage is still discouraged by African traditional culture and Christian teachings and therefore, a lady who gets a child before marriage is often condemned particularly in Christian families². This condemnation cultivates a sense of rejection and marriage becomes an option. Wanjiku says, “I had to get married to get away from my mothers and brothers insults. They were seeing me an outcast and great shame to the family.”³ Sometimes single mothers get married to win back acceptance in the family because this gives them status.

3.2.2 Need of a partner to help bring the children

20.4% of the responses indicated that single mothers get married to have somebody who will assist them bring up their children. In reality, many single mothers seek to remarry believing a father for the children will be necessary for their physical and emotional welfare⁴. They suppose such person will help them meet sometimes overwhelming demands of parenting which include physical, social and emotional needs. Christine who is professional social worker observes, “faced by the uphill task of bringing up the child or children some opt for marriage hoping a husband will help her meet the demands.”⁵ This is compounded especially by lack of stable income among young single mothers which characterizes the area of study. In the face of poverty, the utopian idea of marriage as being the panacea prompts some of them to get married. They hope marriage will

² Gachuna, interviewed at Githunguri shopping centre on 28th June 2008.

³ Wanjiku, was interviewed on 19th July 2008.

⁴ *Facing The Facts*; retrieved from <http://www.biblicalfamily.org/stepfathers.html>

⁵ Christine interviewed on 8th July 2008 in Nairobi.

deliver them from the trap of poverty. Njeri confessed that poverty contributed to her getting married despite having a four year old son. She says:

I needed to marry because of the insurmountable challenges at home having been evicted in the infamous tribal clashes of 1992 from Molo which saw me drop out of school at class five. We were five in our family the eldest being only 13 years and my mother was single. Our means of survival was only through casual labor whose payments were meager and not guaranteed. A young man promised to marry me and did impregnate me but apparently he married another woman. There I was pregnant, living in a rented house with the other siblings and our mother. In this desperate situation, another person promised to marry me and we moved into marriage. I gave birth to my first born in this marriage. Unfortunately, we could not stay together for long because of interference by in-laws and I had to move out. A year later I got married again. All I wanted to see was whether somehow I would come out of the socio-economic predicament.⁶

Apparently wealthy men were found to be a preferred lot by the single mothers who they stated were better placed to ensure a future for them and their children. Probably as long as an economic challenge which harbors poverty continue to characterize lives of single mothers, they will become more gullible to move into marriage hoping it will help them raise their children.

3.2.3. Companionship

23.5% of responses showed that, loneliness confronts single mothers. In the midst of a community where they are treated with contempt including by their fellow married women who view them as husband snatchers, they often lack social support groups. This challenges them emotionally as they have to shoulder the burden alone. To overcome this condition, some of them end up in marriage. Equally, a companion is seen as necessary to help meet the sexual needs. They opt for marriage believing that it will guarantee them sexual satisfactions.

⁶ Njeri, interviewed on 28th June 2008 at Gitwe village in Githunguri.

3.2.4 Desire to get a father for children

11.8% of the responses were of the opinion that, there is fear among single mothers that at some point, the children will demand to be shown their father. In an attempt to preempt that, marriage comes in handy. Such is well illustrated by the case of Mama Shiro who says,

I feared that my daughter would one day ask me where her father was when she grew up. So I prayed God that she could not grow up to three years without somebody to call a father. I could not turn to her biological father who abandoned me when I became pregnant⁷.

Besides, some respondents revealed that they did not want their children to be humiliated by their peers either in school or elsewhere for having no father. This expresses the value still attached to the classical family set up where the father holds a fundamental position. It was popularly held that there is a prestige for a child to have a father and that some single mothers are determined to get one for their child(ren). It goes in handy with what Christine refers to as 'legitimization' of the children meant to counter the perception that classifies them as illegitimate⁸.

3.2.5. Security and Identity

9% considered the need for security and identity as influencing single mothers into marriage. Christine says such women feel they need a man to protect them and their children from an form of aggression⁹. This protection may be physical where the man will stand and defend the family but also can be socio-psychological because the child will have somebody to show his/hers peers as the father thus eliminating the possible humiliations and discrimination. Hence, the element of security for her and the children is paramount.

⁷ Mama Shiro, interviewed on 27th June 2008 at Gitwe village in Githunguri.

⁸ Christine Op Cit.

⁹ Ibid.

3.2.6 To fulfill a cultural obligation

Moreover, there is stigma perpetrated on single mothers which sometimes forces them to seek a marriage partner. Nguru states that there are discriminations towards single women whom she argues are looked down in-terms of social status. According to her, marriage in Africa accords one a higher social status than a single person¹⁰. Hence, to gain status and escape condemnation of being morally loose and hence single motherhood, marriage becomes the option. It brings them respect and status in the church and in the society because they have fulfilled a valuable cultural rite which Kenyatta considers extremely necessary when he says, “An adult male and female are expected to found an institution of marriage”¹¹. Single motherhood is seen as being against the Agikuyu culture and hence some women in this position in pursuit of conformity get into marriage. However, marriage of single mothers has some challenges as will be seen below.

3.3 Challenges of Parenting among Former Single Mothers

There are diverse factors contributing to the phenomenon of single mothers moving into marriage. However, this comes with responsibility and numerous challenges as revealed in this study. The table below illustrates challenges of former single mothers in carrying out parental responsibility.

¹⁰ F. Nguru, *Single Adults In an African City; Nairobi Christian Single Adults Survey Report* (Nairobi: Daystar University Publications.2007) p 55.

¹¹ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya;The Traditional life of the Gikuyu*:(London: Heinman Educational Books LTD.1938)P163.

Table II. Clustered challenges of Parenting among former single mothers.

NO.	CHALLENGES	NO. OF RESPONSES.	%
1.	Sexual abuse of daughters by step fathers	29	21.8
2.	Interference from in-laws	23	17.2
3.	Father's challenge Being accepted	15	11.8
4.	Discouraged husbands	14	10.5
5	Child's quest for a biological father	11	8.2
6	Age of the husband.	10	7.5
7	Sex of the child i.e. whether a boy or a child	10	7.5
8	Sibling rivalry.	6	4.5
9	Economic Demands on the new found family	5	3.7
10	Physical abuse of the child	5	3.7
11	Cheating on motherhood status before marriage	5	3.7
	TOTAL	133	100

3.3.1 Sexual abuse of the daughter by their step-fathers

Serious challenge to former single mothers is the threat posed by their husbands to their daughters. 21.8 % of responses deplored of the increase of cases of sexual relations between the rogue fathers and their step daughters. One front has been through what informants treated as consent between the daughter and the step-father. The other was forced sex particularly on the young girls. ¹². Wachege observes, "the 'new husbands' have sexual intercourse with both of them and they rationalize that they are not

¹² Kingoi op Cit

biologically theirs”¹³ The study found this very humiliating to the former single mothers who fall victim of his anti-social behavior.¹⁴ There was even more fear of the event where the community happens to know because under such circumstances the family becomes a talk of everyone.

King’oi says this is shocking but it has become common with increasing number of former single mothers seeking help from him as a priest. He further says it is sad that some cases are not reported when they happen because of fear of shame if the community knows. He opines that, this is a threat to the marriage as well as to the innocent girls’ self esteem, dignity and ultimately their future which is shattered by the same persons expected to nurture and protect them. Former single mothers are concerned of their daughter’s safety in the hands of their husbands. One former single mother said “trusting my daughter with this man is very difficult. If I know I will be away for a night, I would rather go with her or send her to spend the night in a friend’s or relative’s house”¹⁵.

3.3.2 Interference by in-laws

17.2% respondents showed that the in-laws from either side of the couple are contributing to the difficulties being experienced by former single mothers. Mama Shiro says:

My parents refused to let go my daughter for two years from the time I married. They felt that it was not safe enough to allow me move with her into this marriage and this caused a lot of pain to me because my husband could not understand why my parents were refusing us to have the child despite his many pleas to them. Equally, I was uncomfortable of my daughter being taken care of by my elderly

¹³ Wachege Op Cit 79

¹⁴ Kigera op cit.

¹⁵ Anonymous respondent who requested her name not be used. Interviewed 3rd July 2008 at Kambaa trading centre.

parents. I had a strong feeling at their age they could not give her what it takes for proper parenting. They at some point declared that I would never take my daughter from them. This troubled my marriage for two years though they eventually allowed her to come. Of course, I know they were not sure whether my marriage could stand. But this was not good for my marriage because my husband was feeling offended.¹⁶

In another case, John who is married to a former single mother says:

When my parents noted that I was marrying a woman who had a child, they were not amused. They expressed their displeasure and asked me to reconsider my decision. But, I am a Christian and had prayed God about this decision and I was convinced this was my wife to be though she had a son whom she got when she was in college. There was a stand off between me and my parents but I stood my ground and they gave way. Though I married her, this marked the beginning of woes for me, my wife and my step son. Though my parents were present on my wedding, I realized this was for sheer public relations. After the marriage, my mother and my sisters sustained a spirited fight against my wife and the child. They refused to recognize them as part of our family accusing my wife of having enticed me into marriage to help her raise the illegitimate son. The acrimony forced me to leave my maternal home and I have now rented a house at Githunguri town where I live with my wife and my son now. I have had to bear the cost of renting a house yet we have substantial wealth at our home. I have become a fugitive from my very home where my inheritance is. And you know my crime? I married a woman who had a child.¹⁷

John admits that, men who marry single mothers sometimes find themselves against the very wishes of their parents and other relatives. This affects the child because it is her/him who is the centre of the problem. As well it was evidenced that, the fact that a woman has a child at the point of getting married generates concerns from her parents' side and that of the husbands. The child or children are seen as a stumbling block to the marriage.

Ann says that, though the phenomenon of single mothers getting married is increasing, the society still has some misgivings over it. This tells why the in-laws from either side

¹⁶ Mama Shiro op cit.

¹⁷ John interviewed on 12th July 2008 at Githunguri Shopping Centre.

tend to interfere¹⁸. Waithera who is chairlady of A. C. K Mother's Union in Githunguri Parish of Anglican Church says she has evidenced cases where the step children had to be returned to the wives maternal home because the husband's parents have refused them completely. Narrating her own case, two of her sons who are University graduates have married former single mothers and it has forced her to painfully accept them though that was not her wish¹⁹. Suffice it that, it is a serious challenge when in-laws fail to support a former single mother.

3.3.3 Father's challenge of being accepted by the children

Children as well are seen to contribute to the challenges as was discovered from 11.8% of the respondents. Some of them were said to have difficulties to accept and acknowledge the step-father. They feel the father is denying them the undivided attention they were used to from their mother. According to Pamela who is a social worker, single mothers normally show excessive attention to their children. They are their companion in whom they confide and share their lives with and coming of the step-father changes the scenario and this may not amuse them (children).²⁰ Children who are conscious of their mother's marriage status likely develop a reserved attitude towards the step-father.

John argued that his step son of eight years demonstrated suspicion towards him coupled with fear and uneasiness towards him. It took more than one year for the boy to start

¹⁸ Ann op cit

¹⁹ Waithera, interviewed at Kambaa village on 19th July 2008.

²⁰ Pamela interviewed on 15th July 2008 in Nairobi.

developing trust in him²¹. Some step fathers expressed their frustrations with unsupportive wives, who could not encourage their children to respect them. In her service for four years as a Chairlady of Mothers Union Waithera observes:

Former single mothers are to blame when they refuse to guide their children to accept the step father. Some of them maintain a very distinct boundary to the extent of showing partiality between children gotten with her husband and those she came with into the marriage. This makes step father experience difficulties in instilling discipline on such children because it is taken unkindly by the wife²².

As a result the father likely develops a feeling of being unaccepted and recognized as his authority gets undermined by the child or children prompting a strained relationship in the family which is unfavorable for an effective child up bringing.

3.3.4 Discouraged Husbands

The researcher noted that young men who marry single mothers sometimes find themselves under pressure from the peers and the wider community which may amount to being ridiculed and this accounted for the 10.5% of the responses. In Githunguri area, it is widely held that single mothers got their child or children for engaging in irresponsible sex. There is no consideration of the circumstances which led to the pregnancy. Wagituda who is a church Minister in A.C.K Church says premarital sex is an aberration not only according to the Church teachings but as well in the *Agikuyu* tradition²³. Gichinga while reflecting on the *Agikuyu* of central Kenya says, “a girl was expected to be a virgin on her marriage day.... .If not so, some stigma was placed on her”²⁴. The teachings held by the church and the *Agikuyu* cultural norm therefore makes a

²¹ John op cit.

²² Waithera op cit.

²³ Wagituda , interviewed on 5th July 2008 at A.C.K Church Kambaa.

²⁴ E. Gichinga, *Answers for unmarried mothers-a counseling Guide* :(Nairobi. Uzima Press, 1996) p3

single mother be treated with contempt. Therefore, it was found that a man married to a former single mother is at times ridiculed by the peers and the community and as a results, he can occasionally project his frustrations on the wife. The tension generated thereof affects the stability of the marriage shaking its very fundamentals among them the role of bringing up their children.

Moreover, some of the informants said that the presence of a step-child makes the man arrogate himself a higher moral ground on which he accuses his wife of amorous life prior to marriage particularly where the child was born out of wedlock. He uses this as the bases for contempt on the woman's marital faithfulness. It is as if these children symbolize unfaithfulness on part of the woman. Such developments are normally an impediment to the stability of marriage and eventually to discharging the parental duty.

3.3.5 Child Quest for a Biological Father

Among the responses the researcher got, 8.2% said the mother is sometimes besieged by the child(ren) to show them their biological father. This is normally a nightmare to a former single mother. For the step father, it becomes difficult to play his role as the head of the family under such circumstances. Wa Ciku remembers her daughter of twelve years asking her why she was named after her maternal grandmother and not her father's which normally should be the case for the first born daughter in the Agikuyu tradition. She informed her that she would give her the reason later in life.²⁵ . She is however faced by a dilemma of how she will break the truth and how the daughter will react to it.

²⁵ Wa Ciku., Interviewed at Gitwe village on 20th July 2008.

Kiroiro who is fifteen years old and a form one drop out confessed he will do what it takes to know his biological father. He has not asked the mother yet but will do so at some point. He believes life would have been different from the cruelty of the step father had he been brought up by his biological father²⁶. This was found to be a challenge to the former single mother because offended husbands normally react threatening the survival of marriage. Equally, how the mother will disclose and explain to children the circumstances when the child was born is hard because some are humiliating to the woman and would cause emotional damage to that child.

The problem is more compounded if the biological father still has some attachment with the child(ren). This normally offends the step father as the children develop a divided loyalty. The mother finds herself in the middle because two men i.e. biological fathers and step fathers claim the right over the child. Moreover, the biological father, either alone or in collaboration with his immediate family may be hell bent to destroy this marriage. Gladys, a mother of two says;

Where I was married before, I left when the mother-in-law became very hostile. After one year I got married but unfortunately my former in-laws kept interfering with my marriage. I recall my former brother-in-law would get drunk and mock my husband that he was bringing up my first born for them. Meaning they had the right over my son and would make a claim on him at some stage. This was hurting him but I did not know and he wasn't disclosing it to me. I traveled one day and left him to take care of our son. He took this as chance to kill him. I thank God that my brother-in-laws wife rescued him. This was unbelievable and I ran back to my maternal home. Well he came and we reconciled but since then my son stays with my mother because I want this marriage to stand but I have to take measures to protect him against any harm.²⁷

²⁶ Kiroiro, interviewed on 19th July at Githunguri centre.

²⁷ Gladys, interviewed on 29th June 2008 at mathanja C. village in Kambaa.

This illustrates the threat of the former in-laws to the marriage which does not auger well in parenting role. Similarly, the child concerted effort to know the biological father has potential to cause ripples in marriage.

3.3.6. Age of the husband

During the research, it was found that a significant number of single mothers some in their teenage are getting married to elderly men. This view comprised 7.5% of the responses and it was discovered such men are likely to experience difficulties in providing effectively the socio-economic needs of the family. Indeed, bringing up young children for the elderly men is an uphill task. They don't have the energy to actively participate in providing the needs required for their growth and development. Moreover, the demise of the elderly husband degrades the former single mother into another single motherhood status meaning taking care of the children alone yet again. Monica who is former single mother of three and has two children from her current husband candidly expressed her fears:

I got married to my husband who is a widower three years ago with my three children and I have gotten two more with him. He is now sixty years old and frail and hence provides nothing to us as a family. It concerns me even the more that he can pass on anytime which would mean I become a single mother yet again. So far he has not written a will which would cushion me and my children against imminent eviction by my step-children who have never been friendly. In such event, I do not know how I will bring up these children²⁸.

Really, the challenge of marrying elderly men for the single mothers is that, some are so advanced of age that they are unable to contribute to the well being of the family especially materially. Some of them as it was discovered get married so that they can be

²⁸ Monicah interviewed on 9th July 2008 at Wanger'e village.

taken care off. The woman finds herself with increased burden of taking care for the children and the husband. Children in such conditions fail to get the ultimate support required because the mother is ever working hard to provide for them and the husband and may be unable to meet all the demands.

3.3.7 Sex of the Child

5% of the respondents held the position that sex of the child which the former single mother had before marriage is a factor. First, it emerged from the informants that a single mother who has a boy(s) experiences difficulty in getting a marriage partner compared to the one who has a girl(s). Men who marry single mothers are more comfortable with a step-daughter as opposed to a step-son. Some women confessed that having a son before marriage reduces chances of ever getting married. Ann who is a social worker at Ministry of Home Affairs says that even if some men may not express this before marriage, there is normally likelihood it will come to haunt the family later. Open biases and hostilities towards the step-son sometimes come into play.²⁹

Kigera observes that, whereas the issue of whether the step-child was a boy or a girl was there traditionally, rarely did it threaten the marriage institution as the case is today. Step-sons are now considered a threat to the father and the popular view is that at some point, they may gang up with the mother against him. There is a contemporary saying that "*Wahikia wina Ihii itigakuhura*" (You have married a woman with sons. They will one

²⁹ Ann interviewed on 24th June 2008 at Githunguri Divisional centre.

day gang up against you.)³⁰. Today, step-sons are treated with contempt than it was traditionally. Thinji who is an elder comments:

“It is unfortunate that the phobia for step-sons has come to be popularly held in our contemporary society. It is a challenge to the child who suffers emotionally and even physically in such a context. The mother as well goes through pain seeing her son(s) being discriminated against”³¹.

This concern on the sex of the child was found to be not only an obstacle to some single women willing to get married, but as also having the potential to break the marriage for single mothers who have moved into marriage.

3.3.8 Sibling Rivalry

4.6% reported sibling rivalry as becoming a common phenomenon among children especially where they discover they don't belong to the same biological father. The child(ren) who came with the mother are discriminated by their brothers or sisters who claim biological right to their father. Kigera narrated a case involving his late brother's children, “I have been trying to solve a bitter conflict between my late brother's sons. The first born came with mother and his four brothers feel that he should not inherit their father but rather should go find his biological father and get inheritance from him”³². Indeed the rivalry was found to be a challenge for mothers who are striving for a harmonious family yet the children are fighting each other on the basis of the paternity.

3.3.9 Economic Difficulties

From the research findings, 3.7 % of the respondents argued that marriage comprising a former single mother has some economic distinct implications which at times pose difficulties. Unlike where a single lady marries and the couple has an opportunity to plan

³⁰ Kigera, interviewed on 28th June 2008 at his home in Kambaa village Githunguri Division.

³¹ Thinji, interviewed on 5th July 2008 at Gathangari A.C.K Church.

³² J.K. Kigera op cit

when to have a child considering their preparedness, the case of former single mother requires that provision to the children begins immediately. There is no time for the couples to prepare assuming parental duties. Men married to former single mothers confessed it is an uphill task which at times overwhelms them. Some of them were found to have underestimated the economic implications prior to marriage only to be confronted by the reality when they started discharging their responsibilities as husbands and fathers. It was found out that lack of proper preparation and understanding on the demands make the husband experience a shock. Muggy observes that the demands sometimes overwhelm the man and the difficulties thereof at times destabilize the smooth running of the family³³. This challenge was found to affect especially men whose means of income are low. Ultimately, this impairs parenting role whose effectiveness depends on the ability to provide basic needs i.e. food, clothing and shelter besides secondary needs all of which requires economic resources.

3.3.10 Physical and verbal abuse

Physical abuse of the children was reported by 3.7% of the informants as characterizing significant number of families comprised of former single mothers. This was said to be perpetrated by the husbands who develop hatred towards the step child or children. From the dialogues with the informants, it emerged that there is high probability of the husbands developing a negative attitude towards the step-child and application of double standards when administering punishment on them. Equally, step-fathers are said in some circumstances to project anger on the step-children through verbal and physical abuse if

³³ Muggy, interviewed at Githunguri Divisional Centre on 24th June 2008.

annoyed by the wife. One common verbal abuse which was mentioned is, “*nii ndiuyi kuria mwarutirwo*” (I don’t know where you were gotten from or you came from). This is normally meant to offend the wife because she is the one who knows where these step children came from.

The situation was said to deteriorate in some incidences where the step children excel more compared to the man’s biological children in various facets of life but more conspicuous in education. Christine argues that sometimes the man feels the failure of his biological children as opposed to the step children is a reflection of him. He reacts to this by showing hostility to step child(ren) and sometimes denying them resources to further their talents for example in education³⁴. On the other hand, former single mothers were accused of perpetuating the vice by showing favoritism towards child(ren) she came with in the marriage. In such context the family is divided into two and such inhibits an enabling environment for proper child up bringing.

3.3.11 Cheating On Motherhood Status

The desire to get married causes some of the single mothers to cheat a prospective husband on their motherhood status. This accounted for the 3.7% of the responses and was found to be mainly as a result of fear of losing the opportunity to get married. Consequently, some keep the secret until they know the marriage arrangements get to almost an irreversible point. Kingoi who is a priest in A.C.K Church says, “Some manage to keep the secret until few days to wedding or even after wedding ceremony has taken

³⁴ Christine Op.Cit.

place³⁵. This creates a sense of betrayal and has had serious repercussions including complete rejection of such child by the husband or break up of that marriage. This inhibits the proper functioning of parental role since in most cases the cheated husbands tend to have difficulties accepting that child or children.

3.4 Conclusion

From the research, it emerged that there are indeed challenges facing the former single mothers in the vital task of bringing up the children. These emanate from not only the husbands, but also from the children, the in-laws, friends and the community. However, such challenges and their extent vary in different families but generally, they do have impact on the children whose ramifications are an impediment to their proper growth and development. Nevertheless, there are families comprised of former single mothers but have managed to transcend the challenges and the wife and the husband have together actively participated in the upbringing of their children. This can be illustrated by Mama Shiro's account:

I got married with a three year old daughter in 1997. Six months into the marriage, I got extremely sick and I was admitted in the hospital for quite some time. Doctors advised I be tested of HIV/AIDS and I was found positive. My husband was tested but he was found negative and on contrary, he didn't leave us. Later, my daughter got sick too and after being tested, she was found to be HIV/AIDS positive. I love my husband because he had an option of leaving me because I actually became infected with the HIV/AIDS before this marriage. However, he was with me. He would spend a lot of money for ARVs (Antiretroviral Drugs) because around that time it was very expensive. Even to date he spends a lot of money because I and my daughter fall ill frequently. But he loves and cares for us and supports my daughter fully with no reservations³⁶.

³⁵ King'oi interviewed on 5th July 2008 at Gitiha A.CK Church.

³⁶ Mama Shiro Op Cit.

Thus, from the study, some marriages were found to be doing well with children happy and secure in the hands their father and likewise the husband and wife playing the role of parenting together. There were actually fathers who worked very hard to insulate their marriage and children against the imminent threat by the challenges that surround such marriages. But mainly, families comprising former single mothers were found to be bogged by challenges that are obstacles to successful up bringing of the children.

However, it is worth noting that as opposed to the traditional set-up where single mothers were mainly married by infertile men or by polygamous men, the scenario different today. Those marrying them today include young men who are getting married even for the first time. Others are those who have separated or divorced their former wives. Some widowers were also found to marry single mothers particularly the old ones. For them, single mother were a soft landing as opposed to wooing a single young lady. Hence, it is no longer classified to a few category of men as was the case traditionally.

This being the reality, the role of Church in offering interventions cannot be discounted. It is an active participant because it solemnizes some these marriages and moreover, some church members are in families comprised of former single mothers. In the next, Chapter we will find the role and the attitude of the A.C.K Church towards former single mothers. The discussion delves on the A.C.K Church *Githunguri* Parish which was selected as a case study.

CHAPTER FOUR.

4.0 A. C. K. CHURCH, SINGLE MOTHERHOOD AND PARENTING.

4.1 Introduction.

A.C.K Church is part of the Anglican Communion which is a worldwide affiliation of Anglican Churches. It is associated with Church of England in full communion and especially with its primate the archbishop of Canterbury. Full communion here means all rites conducted in one church are recognized by the other. The Communion has over seventy seven million member's world wide who comprise it's thirty eight provinces that are independent of which the archbishop of Canterbury has no juridical authority over them but rather his role is symbolic and unifying.¹

Anglican Communion in Kenya is referred to as Anglican Church of Kenya (A.C.K) and it is one of the thirty eight provinces. It acquired the name in 1998 after it changed from the former one i.e. Church of the Province of Kenya. Currently it has grown to a population of over three million people across the country² a success achieved in a period spanning over 168 years since 1844 when Ludwig Krapf the first missionary arrived and it has established around twenty nine dioceses.

The activities of A. C. K Church in Kenya are administratively carried out using the structures of the twenty nine dioceses and are coordinated by a national office. Githunguri Parish where the study was conducted falls within the Diocese of Mt. Kenya

¹ See Anglican Communion, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Communion.

² The history of the Anglican church of Kenya, <http://www.ackkenya.org/history.htm>

South which was created in 1975 after the sub-division of the Diocese of Mount Kenya. In 1984 the Diocese of Mt. Kenya Central was separated off followed in 1998 by the Diocese of Thika leaving the present Diocese of Mt. Kenya South that now has nine Archdeacons, one hundred and fifteen Parishes with over two hundred and twenty congregations³.

Though the key mission is spiritual growth of the members, A.C.K Church is involved in various social responsibilities targeting the church members and the larger community. One of the Church's special concerns is stability and sustainability of marriage institution and its key responsibilities. In the interest of this study, the researcher investigated on the special value attached to the role of parenting by the church as fundamental for a holistic growth and development of children and hence a healthy community.

4.2 Church and Parenting.

The need for appropriate parenting of the children is highly valued within the church social service. It is motivated by a strong believe that children are a gift from God and thus He (God) expects them to be facilitated for them to grow up well. Parenting is also perceived as a social responsibility in which after providing proper guidance and all other necessities required for child's growth and development there is some certainty of a better society.

³ Ibid.

Against this background, A. C. K has various projects meant to advance the essence of proper nurture to the children. Among them, *Githunguri* Parish in corroboration with other parishes in the diocese runs a children's home named Mother's Mercy Home at *Kianjogu, Ndenderu* near *Limuru*. In the home, destitute children especially those orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS pandemic are offered basic needs, psycho-social services and education. The home as at the time of study had over eighty such children some of whom were taken there in their infancy. The facility was said to be under expansion to accommodate more children. Mother's Union has particularly been instrumental in this project as they give their time to provide both material and time to be with the children according to Waithera (Chairlady of the mothers union for four years at the time of the study)⁴.

Moreover, the Mothers Union as will be seen below is involved in organizing parenting trainings that so far targets the mothers in the church. According to Thinji, women normally select a topic on parenting after which a professional is invited to speak on it. The leadership of the church from a congregation, parish, diocese or even national level as well organizes series of parenting trainings through seminars for the parents although it was found such mainly targets women basically because they readily avail themselves as opposed to men⁵.

⁴ Waithera, Op. Cit.

⁵ Thinji Op. Cit.

4.2.1 A.C.K Church, Parenting and Mother's Union

The Church world over expresses the concern on parenting role and considers the holistic development of a child as paramount. The concern from a broader perspective is about all aspects of a Christian family life with an aim of strengthening and preserving marriage⁶.

The institution of Mother's Union is a key structure in the church through which effective parenting values are taught to the members especially to the married women. It believes that marriage need be portrayed in a positive light in the media, not as a fairytale ideal, but as a real relationship, where the benefits of happiness, stability and security, particularly for children are known and valued. It works extensively in support of marriage through provision of marriage support, through relationship support and through supporting couples who have gone through separation and divorce⁷. The value attached to welfare of the entire family is of essence to former single mothers as they endeavor to bring up their children.

It is worthwhile to note, this Union is an organization that brings women in Anglican Church together particularly the married ones. It was founded in 1876 by an English lady known as Mary Summer who on giving birth to her first born, was overwhelmed by what she saw as the awesome responsibility of parents, not only in caring for their children's physical well-being, but also for their spiritual nurturing and growth.⁸

In Kenya, mother's union was started in 1918 at All Saints Cathedral only for European ladies. Some of its objectives were to help uphold Christ's teaching on the future of

⁶ Waithera Op Cit.

⁷ [Hptt://www.themothersunion.org/projects](http://www.themothersunion.org/projects).

⁸ Retrieved from [Http://www.ack.org/mu.HTM](http://www.ack.org/mu.HTM)

marriage and to promote its wider understanding as well as encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and the life of the church. Moreover, it was geared to promote conditions in the society favorable to stable family life and the protection of children⁹. The principles on which the Union was founded shows a concern and a desire towards effective parenting which goes beyond the church to the entire community by promoting conditions that are friendly to stability of families as a primary institution where the well being of the children has to be guaranteed first and foremost.

Initially in Kenya, the Union members were only the European women but on 4th march 1956, the first African mother's union members were enrolled at *Mongoiya Church* which is within the present Mount Kenya south Dioceses. Thereafter, it became a strong organization with various activities and each diocese has it own arrangements¹⁰. The activity is strengthening the family institutions for effective execution of parental responsibilities.

It endeavors to equip the families with support and skills, giving them the confidence they need to do the most important job they will ever undertake i.e. that of bringing up the children. It established a range of projects to offer support networks, practical help and social contact and encouragement to parents.¹¹

⁹ Provincial Unit of Research C P.K , *Rabai to Mumias; A short History of church of province of Kenya 1844 to 1984*.(Nairobi :Uzima press ,1994) p 155.

¹⁰ Provincial Unit of Research C P.K Op Cit p 157.

¹¹ Parenting; Retrieved from <http://www.thermothersunion.org/parenting.aspx>

The Union has organized smaller groups that facilitate the married women to share experiences with each other and consult on challenges underpinning parenting role and the marriage as whole. In 1999, Mother's Union discovered that whereas there were many resources available for parenting, there was a little training available to especially the group facilitators. This led to introduction of parenting training program which is a course designed to equip members with the skills they will need to facilitate parenting groups. Once trained, these members go on to set up groups that parents can join to share ideas, pick up practical tips and make friends¹².

As noted earlier, it was founded in Kenya in 1918 and over time members of the church have shown keen interest and have actively tried to remain relevant too in their country and therefore are involved with many activities responding to the needs of their communities and showing God's love to those around them. Thus, in 2005 it launched Mother Union Parenting Programme that is open to entire community and specialized materials are available to support different categories of parents such as single parents. It has actively handled other issue touching on the fundamentals of marriage such as HIV/AIDS awareness, increasing awareness on nutrition, food security, and ensuring education for girls and supporting women¹³.

Members of the Union hold conferences, seminars and training sessions including marriage preparations in their branches and dioceses. The aim is to help uphold Christ's teachings on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding in the church.

¹²Parenting [hppt://www.themothersunion.org/parenting.aspx](http://www.themothersunion.org/parenting.aspx)

¹³http://www.themothersunion.org/province_kenya.aspx

Parents are encouraged to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church.¹⁴ In essence therefore, there is demonstration of a general concern for the welfare of the classical family as ultimate to proper upbringing of the children. Besides, there is emerging consciousness of the need to reach out to diverse categories of parents in the contemporary society. The approach is plausible considering that, today there are various forms of families and thus the Church cannot avoid this glaring reality.

The Church equally has fathers union but was found not as proactive as Mother's Union on the area of family concerns. Rather, they are involved in singing groups, fund-raising and social-economic projects.¹⁵ This was founded in Kenya and perhaps the inability to have much impact as the Mothers Union which is world wide. But it plays a role albeit small as it teaches the characteristic of true fatherhood according to Wa Kirabi¹⁶. This is significant because it works towards sustainability of the family and it transcends the challenges posed by being a step father.

4.3 A.C.K Church and former single mothers

Single mothers getting married through church weddings is not a strange phenomenon to the Church today. Wachege in his book *Third Millennium African Single Mothers and Mother Widows; Ethno-Social-Philosophical Touch* observes that a growing number of single mothers are getting married some in lawful and even Church weddings¹⁷. In the case of A. C. K. Church, Wagitunda consents that in the course of his ministry, he has

¹⁴ Retrieved from, www.ackkenya.org/mu.HTM

¹⁵ Provincial Unit of Research C P.K

¹⁶ N. Wa Kirabi Op Cit.

¹⁷ P.N Wachege,(2003) Op Cit p78.

presided over such marriages and equally has received single mothers who marry before joining the Church.¹⁸ Waithera, who at the time of the study was the chairlady of the Mothers union in the Parish, admitted she got married while already a single mother of one daughter¹⁹.

Reflecting on churches attitude towards these mothers, it was found to treat them just like other married women i.e. no form of isolation on former single mothers was traced. Actually, once a former single mother gets married her former status is forgotten and she enjoys privileges of a mother who has a husband which is the most acceptable standard by the Church. The reality of having been a single mother is quickly forgotten as her status completely changes. The advantage is that there is no prejudice neither injurious attitude was found being perpetrated by the Church members against these women. Waithera says that she has not experienced any difficulty in serving the church because she was once a former single mother. Indeed, it can be said immediately on getting married a former single mother is treated equal to other mothers in the Church and thus can be concluded that marriage brings a change of social status. This can be illustrated by Magret's account:

I was very faithful in our church right from Sunday school and when I graduated as youth in our Church; I was trusted with various church ministry duties. Later I joined Kenyatta University and unfortunately I became pregnant. My fiancé disowned me and this was so distressing that at one point I contemplated abortion. The church on its part became hostile to me even after I confessed and repented. Though I was prayed for and accepted back into the fellowship, the attitude of members toward me was discouraging. Parents' protested when I offered myself as a Sunday school teacher claiming that I was not an example to be emulated. My desire to serve in the church became extremely difficult as I was being treated

¹⁸ Wagitunda Op. Cit.

¹⁹ Waithera Op Cit.

with a lot of contempt. Two years later, I got married in a church wedding. Things radically changed and I was acceptable all of a sudden and now I am among the trainers on the effective parenting. I saw a total transformation in the way I was being viewed in the church and it feels good to interact with married women and to share my experiences as a mother unlike when I had not married. I sit in church committees, a thing that could not have happened before I married”²⁰

Nonetheless, there is neither specific service nor a forum that address definite experiences of former single motherhood. They only benefit from the Mothers’ Union activities that are normally general and lack the depth that is necessary to their peculiar context of parenting. Indeed through projects, faith and policy Union seeks to promote and strengthen marriage, while supporting those who have had damaging experiences of married life. It explores ways of supporting marriage around the world through marriage preparation, marriage support and separation and divorce recovery²¹. The inadequacy however, as was found out during the study is that the experiences of former single mothers are submerged in the bigger context of parenting challenges denying them an opportunity to be helped within their peculiar social location.

4.4 Conclusion.

The church particularly through the Mother’s Union has proactively been involved in offering advice to mothers on the ways of bringing up the children. Through this organized institutional structure, values on the upbringing of the children are taught. The organization of fathers union equally helps men to learn values of cultivating and sustaining healthy families. This is of benefit to former single mothers because when their husbands if at all Christians are encouraged to pursue principles of effective families

²⁰ Margaret , interviewed at Wain’gere village on 27th July 2008.

²¹ Waithera Op Cit.

which typically require them to take care of step-children with no prejudice. By practicing what the church preaches in relation to love of children step-fathers are able to portray and practice better parenting. The challenge however, is the assumption that this marriage is just like any other conventional family negating the realities of difficulties that are caused by the presence of step-children in a family as observed earlier in chapter three.

The church shows exemplary concerns on the area of parenting and holding a family together and the need to effectively bring up the children if society is to be healthy. Hence, in the various workshops the Church has experts who train mothers effective parenting techniques. The attitude towards single mothers was found to be wanting. There was lack of full acceptance making such mothers unable to freely benefit from values of proper parenting that the church teaches.

While the Church helps integrate former single mothers unreservedly, there is lack of acknowledgement of peculiar challenges that they face in their parenting role. It shields them from benefiting fully in such forums considering they have some unique challenges. Assuming that the challenges in parenting are the same among all forms of motherhood is a shortcoming that makes such mothers vulnerable with no source of information despite shouldering a bigger burden in parenting role.

Suffice it that, while the Church hold dear the believe on proper parenting, it should be willing to show more vigor in attending to former single mothers who find themselves in the quagmire of difficulties in bringing up their children. It should draw from the

reservoirs at its disposal i.e. in the Christian teaching and as well values present in the community where it exists so that the aspired future which is only secure if the young ones are well protected and impacted with values is guaranteed. As will be seen in the next chapter, A.C.K Church *Githunguri* Parish representing other African Christians has a vantage of using the scriptural teachings on parenting and as well borrowing from the African communities' norms and customs that guarantee well being of families composed of former single mothers and the much desired need to bring up the children acceptably.

CHAPTER FIVE.

5.0 AN INCULTURATIONAL APPROACH TO PARENTING ROLE AND CHALLENGES AMONG TODAY'S FORMER SINGLE MOTHERS.

5.1 Introduction.

This chapter is an attempt to thrash out on the ways of addressing post single motherhood and parenting challenges from both a traditional and a Christian perspective with a reference to values from *Agikuyu* culture and A.C.K Church. The discourse engages an inculturation approach to find out traditional values that can still be applicable today in practicing effective parenting role and are reconcilable with the gospel. *Agikuyu* traditional culture in particular is referred extensively since the dominant community in area of study is the *Agikuyu*. The point of departure is the view that, there are values from the past which have significance in the modern society and the fact that they have been forgotten over time does not mean they are not useful. Nyamiti argues that the past cannot be rejected as a whole for it can have and actually has many positive universal values which can be kept or restored and integrated in today's African way of life¹. Equally, in their pastoral letter of 1979, the Catholic Bishops of Kenya stated, "In promoting the welfare of the child, there are many elements in our traditions that can be of great assistance to us. These are part of cultural heritage that should not be lost".² This view is significant since the challenge of bringing up children is part of experiences of some former single mothers as it was discovered during the study.

¹C. Nyamiti, *Studies in African Christian Theology* (Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 2005) p19

² Pastoral letter of Bishops of Kenya, *Family and Responsible Parenthood*; (Nairobi: Kenya Catholic Secretariat, 1975) p 1.

The researcher found values that were in place traditionally to address the event of post single motherhood parenting. Some of them are still relished especially by the elderly people in the community where the research was conducted. It behooves the study to bring into fore traditional norms that gave guidance to the role of parenting and which are useful particularly in the light of families comprised of former single mothers. As Nyamiti has argued, one has to reject elements unfit for, or unmeaningful to modern Africa and incompatible with Christian teaching³. Thus, only teachings and practices reconcilable with Christian faith are articulated in this discussion.

Similarly, Walligo's argument on inculturation is paramount since he views this theology of inculturation as encompassing the whole of Christian life and teaching. He says:

"The scope of inculturation extends to the totality of Christian life and doctrine, the central Ministry of Christ from which all other ministries derive, their very nature of witnessing to Christ proclaiming his message and worship. The Kerygma proclaimed by the Apostles and the rule of faith developed in the Nicene creed and enriched throughout the centuries has to be presented in language, concepts and theology that are well understood by Christians of every culture"⁴.

This gives credence the effort to incorporate the Christian teachings that will be useful in enhancing the role of parenting. The works and teachings of Jesus, the teachings of the apostles and the developments realized by Christian Faith over time will absolutely be necessary in inculturating the subject of the study. This ultimately indicates that the values from *Agikuyu* culture will be brought forth as important tools to help address the

³ Nyamiti Op Cit. p19

⁴ J. Walligo, A. Roest Crolius, T.Nkeramihigo and Mutiso-Mbinda, *Inculturation: Its meaning and Urgency*, (Kampala: St. Paul Publications, 1986). p19

contemporary challenges of bringing up children as long as they do not compromise Christian faith.

These introductory reflections give a point of reference to the discourse. The findings will be useful to Christian fraternity and society at large in regard to service for the families concerned. It will compliment the effort by various agencies offering interventions to families particularly by drawing their attention to the *Agikuyu* customs and norms and the Christian teachings.

5.2 An Inculturational Approach.

As was noted from the previous chapter, the A.C.K Church has developed over time keen interest on the subject of parenting. This interest is driven by the strong belief that children are given by God and thus the mandate to offer them the best parenthood and bring them up in a Godly way. Drawing from Jesus' teachings, children are of great significance. In Mark 10:14ff, He said to the disciples, "let the little children come to me and do not forbid them, for of such is the Kingdom of God....." He demonstrates clearly and shows the position of the children in the salvation history. An effort for their well being is in accordance with God's desire because they comprise His Kingdom. They are indispensable components in the plan of God for the whole humanity and thus cannot be ignored.

In respect to the area of study i.e. *Githunguri* Parish, whereas it was noted Christian faith has strong influence on people's worldview, the role of cultural norms cannot be ignored. To inculturate the subject of parenting and in this case with emphasis on former single

motherhood, the endeavor to express what indigenous culture has to offer to Christian faith is essential. Similarly, what the culture is to learn from Christian faith is vital. In this context, there will be a more value loaded approach integrating the two perspectives so that the duty of bringing up children in the context of emerging situation of a significant number of single mothers moving to marriage is strengthened. However, it is worthwhile to re-emphasize, whatever the *Agikuyu* culture has to put forward must be reconcilable with the Gospel.

To commence, norms and customs that prevented occurrence of single motherhood deserve some reflections because with rare occurrence of single mothers it meant few cases of former single mothers as well. The few occurrences first as it was found out during the study were strict sexual regulations which opposed unreservedly sex outside marriage. Such act amounted to breaking a sexual taboo which was completely unacceptable. It was made clear and accentuated to the young people that sexual act before marriage could not be tolerated. Gichinga says there was severe punishment and payment of fines which were clearly spelt out for both men and women who contravened the norm. Virginty before marriage was a virtue highly valued.⁵ This went a long way in preventing pregnancies outside a marriage. It is adherence to this strict norm that made single motherhood uncommon. That there were few single mothers meant that families comprised of former single mothers were as well few and this means the challenges of parenting related to such families were also exceptional.

⁵ E. Gichinga, *Answers for unmarried mothers; a counseling guide* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1996) p3.

While still being faithful on the need to reign on ran away phenomenon of single motherhood, today's Church need to integrate the role played by the culture to deal with men who irresponsibly impregnated girls rendering them single mothers in some instances. The consequence should not rest purely on the girl. Among the *Agikuyu*, both culprits were responsible and the norm needed that both be punished. The Church should not have a blind eye on the men who impregnate women and continue enjoying Church membership while the lady shoulders the shame alone. Just as culture could not allow the men to go scot-free, the Christian teachings should encourage the same so that no man gets impunity. It should reprimand both! As a matter of fact, when Jesus was giving the Sermon at the Mountain (Mathew 5: 31 ff.), He demonstrated that accountability to sexual aberrations should be apportioned to both parties involved. There is need to jettison from the view that pregnancy outside marriage amounts from irresponsibility of the lady. *Agikuyu* cultural norms demanded that both be responsible and accountable something that needs be encouraged. The Church should consider involving the women and men in containing the increasing out-of-marriage pregnancies. It is unfortunate the Church expects so much from the women sometimes leaving out men yet both are active participants. As it was in traditional African communities, the Church should be inculcating values in both sexes in order to significantly control birth of children outside wedlock. Cautioning shouldn't appear as though skewed towards women alone.

What is being observed today is conspicuous sexual permissiveness allowing irresponsible sex especially among the young people. The traditional sex education and the taboos therein appear to have little influence if any in the contemporary life of the

Agikuyu people against the traditional values. Significantly, the custodianship of morality is being viewed more and more as the role of the religion. Traditional religion that guided the community's entire life is wobbling amidst the massive influence of Christian values. Whereas Christianity does not condone sex outside marriage, unlike in traditional setting, it is failing to proactively guide on matters of sexuality with gusto and clarity. With lapse of the traditional culture and Christianity in offering advice, the young are finding information from different sources that includes media, peers and schools among others that are leading to a state of confusion on the values to adopt. There lacks a matrix for them to refer when making choices and thus are in a quagmire not knowing the source that holds the key to decision making. Without enough information and a credible source as the case was traditionally, the judgments they make have serious ramifications that may at times include out of marriage and unplanned pregnancies.

It is notable that *Agikuyu* culture didn't compromise on the need for sexual purity something that Christianity should similarly unequivocally advance. The Church need learn the centrality of sexual purity in *Agikuyu* culture without which an individual was reprimanded. More importantly is how it was enhanced. It is distinguished that it began right from the home where the mother and the grandmother talked to the girls on matters of sexuality and the requisite for sexual purity. Likewise, the father and the grand father guided the sons. Christianity should learn the immense potential in the parents and grand parents and empower them so that they play their roles. They should be concientized on their mandate which stretches beyond providing basic needs to offering moral guidance and psycho-social support to their children. The role of the family to the child

traditionally was paramount and requires be rediscovered and recognized by the Christian fraternity for it will compliment the onerous task of cultivating values that will particularly reduce the occurrence of pregnancies before marriage.

However, it is notable that, the contemporary life presents challenges to parents and grand-parents. It is a state where parents and the children are away from home most of the time and hence time to be together is limited. The Church as a show of concern for the children, particularly on their social and moral well being should have a more concrete strategy that seeks to impact on them. It is of ultimate essence to have programs in the church dedicated to assist in parenting of the children.

The role played by initiation rite is critical in understanding how morals guiding sexual relation were cultivated. During this period, the boys and girls were put under seclusion and were taught values as prerequisite before passage into adulthood. This rite is gradually losing its value in the modern life of *Agikuyu*. However, there are some Churches including A. C. K Church that are trying to rediscover this forum by taking the teenagers to an environment where they are instructed as they move into adulthood. Nevertheless, these Churches should utilize this space to instruct them on fundamental issues such as those involving sexual purity as opposed to spiritual teachings only which may be done in regular Church service. If there is endeavor to empower the youth who are mostly vulnerable to sexual explosion, then there is a hope that single motherhood can significantly reduce. Suffice it that, the ability of the Church to engage traditional values that are reconcilable with the gospel and also the means of transmitting them to

the children will in respect to this study assist in controlling sexual permissiveness which in return will reduce pregnancies out of marriage that are leading to increase of single mothers today. The viewpoint is that, with reduced number of single mothers there will be reduced post single mother marriage institutions and hence reduced parenting challenges that bedevil these families.

Having noted the value attached to sex education traditionally which the Church can integrate in its call for anti-pregnancy before marriage, we need to reflect on the position of the child in *Agikuyu* worldview. Children are viewed as a gift from God which agrees fully with fundamentals of Christianity regarding children. Christians perceive children as gift or a heritage (Psalms 127:3a) from God. Parents are thus guardians whose charge is to bring them up to be socially accomplished individuals. This important Christian teaching would be more effective if it was to be reformulated in such way that it recognizes and appreciates the *Agikuyu* perspective of bringing up the children. Included in this perspective is the fact that the onus of impacting values on children was not a preserve of parents alone but rather a communal responsibility. Harmony was desired in the community and everybody was to be a participant in helping the children grew up maintaining the norms and values of the community. Recognizing that parenting is an onerous task, participation of everybody was expected. Hence, Christianity should endeavor to prepare everybody in the community to be an agent of helping children acquire the acceptable values that will lead to harmony in the larger community and for their own well being. Communal participation in parenting would of essence help the former single mothers because whereas she might be experiencing difficulties that

impedes her effectiveness in parenting, at least the other members of the community would avail themselves for the social and even economic welfare of the child. The community participation can in today's context be realized by forming community support groups that would help parents come together and help each other with ideas and material support that will assist them in parenting and facing challenges involved.

Taking into account the worth attached to children in Agikuyu community is of essence. This will go a long way in reconstructing the plummeting concern of children's integral welfare. Christian teachings do expect parents to love and instruct their children as they grow up. This can be illustrated from the letter to Ephesians (Eph. 6:4) where fathers are commanded not to provoke their children to wrath but bring them up in training and admonition of the Lord. The aspiration is to propagate proper parenting. Nevertheless, this is only possible if the community concerned values children and what is learnt from *Agikuyu* culture is that they were highly treasured and it is relevant to point out that such enhanced the need to protect and a communal responsibility of bringing them up. Amidst the concerns of some children belonging to the single mothers against the community's tradition, there was that overriding concern on the need to protect every child. In the family context, Leakey noted that the young ones were greatly desired,⁶ and God was considered as the giver. Children helped an individual perpetuate his or her name and survive ones descendants and the need for a concrete object of love for ones activity⁷. The emerging reality is that children were of insurmountable value in the traditional

⁶ L.S.B. Leakey Op. Cit. p 511

⁷ E. Cavicchi, *Problems of change in Kikuyu Tribal Society*, (Milan: Pontifical Institute for Foreign Mission, 1953) p 31

setting. Desire to have children is deep rooted in the hearts of both man and woman and on entering matrimonial union, they regard procreation of children as their first and most sacred duty.

Part of the reason as to why the Church should be interested with importance of children to the *Agikuyu* is because it played a role in enhancing growth and development and can be applied in a Christian context without contradicting the gospel. When the approach appreciates the place of a child in *Agikuyu* community, it will be possible to stir up the people to easily embrace the need to accord children proper parenthood. Such worth of the children like continuation of the clan and the community, source of prestige to the man and being a source of security to parents at their old age are cherished by the community and a Christian approach to parenting children that acknowledge these facts will easily be embraced.

But in the context of single mothers getting married, it is worth noting that, if a man married a single mother, the step-child would legally belong to his family provided that he paid one '*ngoima*' beast and ten goats and sheep in order to have his position as the legal father of the child recognized'⁸. This is critical since the custom makes the man integrate the step children and accept them as his own by symbolic price negotiated during marriage negotiations. Now that being the case, the Church has a platform to make teachings on parenting more embraced by instructing *Agikuyu* from their cultural perspective on importance of children. It will be possible to advocate for proper parenting

⁸ L.S.B Leakey, Op. Cit p802.

of the step-children by the step-father from this approach where the importance of the child is emphasized from both Christian and *Agikuyu* culture point of view. Also, where a man is marrying a single mother, the place of the step-child should be brought into fore during marriage negotiations such that a binding contract to care and protect the child(ren) is agreed.

There was what can be viewed as discrimination of children born to a single mother referred to as '*aicakamuyu*'. From the contemporary Christian teachings which are also influenced by modern concerns on human rights, no child should be subjected to any form of discrimination. The equality of all children is emphasized.

Regarding the role of a step-child, he/she was expected to respect his step-father and demonstrate absolute loyalty. This in return enabled the father to feel secure, a state necessary for his role in parenting. While attending to these families, the Church should help cultivate this value to protect fathers from the emerging tendencies whereby the step-children fail to recognize him maintaining their loyalty to the biological father. The position of the fatherhood in *Agikuyu* aspect requires to be maintained in such circumstances so as to ensure stability in a marriage. The Church needs to challenge former single mothers and their children to ultimately owe loyalty to the father which is the ideal in the traditional culture. Supporting the position of fatherhood as found in *Agikuyu*-Christian view will help in stability of families.

Moreover, *Agikuyu* people value marriage since it helped build a family an institution very significant in social organization and procreation and thus guaranteeing the community a future. It is this importance that made the former single mothers lucky because on getting married, they enjoyed the privilege of married mothers. Today, things are seemingly different. Step-children are considered a threat to marriage. The primacy of marriage should be cultivated because it is both a value cherished in the community's traditional way of life and Christian perspective. When people are made to understand the need to protect the sacredness of marriage from the culture's view, chances are that they will accept it more readily. For the community studied, marriage guarantees posterity through procreation where an individual participate in extending and prolonging his/her clan. It is a source of prestige in the society and social security to rely upon at his/her old age. This can be deemed as safeguarding the preeminence in marriage for community's existence. This does not in any way contradict the fundamentals of Christianity's position on marriage. The Church has a challenge to promote stable marriage so that those former single mothers who are married may get an assurance to have safe and stable marriages. Furthermore, it will prevent occurrence of more single mothers.

Owing to the fact that the survival of the community depended on role of procreation vested on the marriage, it was therefore not an individual affair but rather communal and customs and norms demanded stability. It was the desire to have harmony in the community that made stability of marriage everybody's concern. Today, the success of a marriage should not be left purely to the couple but rather a concern of the community as well as the church. It can draw the value of getting involved in championing stable

families that will facilitate an environment suitable for bringing up the young ones. Indeed the harmony, the success, the stability that is required for a successful society is achievable if the families are functioning. They are the basic institutions that form the foundations on which the community derives its existence and thrives. This made it a concern for the *Agikuyu* culture to see the marriage prevail even in acrimonious times. Misunderstanding would emerge but arbitration would be facilitated quickly. Today, if the Church makes an effort to actively participate in encouraging stable marriages, it will reduce the emergence of single motherhood and secondly, instances where single mothers get married, they will do so with some certainty that the marriage will last because the community is offering the moral and social support required.

The Christian teaching on family life is a state where there is stability with every body playing his/her role. It is a place where constructive relationship is nurtured enabling everyone to grow and develop. Leakey observes that in the average Kikuyu homestead the bonds of friendship and love which linked a man, his wives and their children was very strong⁹. The reality today is that of challenge as can be noted in the discussions in chapter three. It shows a grim reality to families comprised of former single mothers. But the value of family has potential to override the appalling state and help in making the home a haven of peace where everyone feels safe which was the case traditionally. Among the *Agikuyu*, a former single mother was entirely integrated and there was neither prejudice nor biases and this cushioned children against unnecessary segregation witnessed in some families today. Suffice it that, church should endeavor more and more

⁹ L.S.B Leakey, Op Cit. p 2

to make families a sanctuary where the children and other members will feel safe as was the case traditionally and especially in families comprised of former single mothers.

The value attached to women traditionally should be an asset today in the instance of former single mothers. Women were highly valued among the *Agikuyu* in the traditional life. This is worth of consideration because the value attached to a woman will determine how she is treated as a mother and in this case with reference to the aspect of former single motherhood which is the subject of the study. They (women) are a critical factor in the continuation of a community not only for procreation but also nurture something that is esteemed in traditional culture. They are important and the society cannot do without them. They are the salt of the earth; they have the most sacred duty of creating and rising the future generations.¹⁰ That being the case, it is an immense call to the Church to consider emphasizing the importance of the women so that the men who marry will respect them and their role. Once a single mother gets married she should be supported as a mother who find herself in extraordinary circumstances of have children from elsewhere.

Divorce, has become common and is contributing to the number of single mothers and also a quick option for former single mothers in the event of difficulties in marriage. On the contrary, traditionally it was unpopular and rare since it threatened the family as a basic unit for the community's survival achieved through procreation and nurturing of the young ones. In Christianity as can be learnt from Jesus' teachings, divorce is discouraged

¹⁰ J. Kenyatta, Op. Cit p 175

(Matt. 5:31-32, Matt. 19:3-9, Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18). It throws the family concerned into a state of instability compromising its functioning. Parental role is thrown into disarray negating the principle of parenting particularly in African context where the father and the mother are absolutely imperative. The distaste of divorce in *Agikiyu* culture and the reasons upheld require be incorporated in the Churches attempt to discourage it. It is more understandable to people if the Church is able to do it from within their cultural milieu.

To deal with single motherhood resulting from widowhood, there were customs and norms which ensured that a widow was immediately integrated in her husband's family. Cultural practices ensured that widows were taken care off. There was no destitute widow¹¹. This was good not only for the welfare of the widow but also the children left by the deceased. The lesson derived here is that a widow did not become a single mother as the case is in the contemporary society where on the death of the husband the survived widow and children are left alone. There was leviratic custom where Kirwen says a younger brother took full responsibility of taking care of the family of his departed brother. Furthermore, it ensures each marriage maintains its identity and achieves its goals even in the face of physical death. The deceased's brother takes full responsibility for the widow and her children¹². This integration in today's society would prevent widows falling gullible into remarriage which might expose them to challenges that go together with the post single motherhood challenges of parenting. The inadequacy of today's way of life in taking care of widows is indeed leading some of them to jump into

¹¹L.S.B Leakey, Op Cit. p 12.

¹² Kirwen, Op Cit. pp 302-312

a new marriage which in some instances has caused serious trouble to them and their children. Christian teachings can articulate the need for the families to take care of the widows by ensuring they are integrated. It may oppose the element of sex responsibility on the younger brother who took the role of bearing children for the deceased brother but should not ignore the immense value of providing physical and socio-psychological needs to the widow. This is substantial for it will enhance their responsibility of bringing up their children without necessarily seeking remarriage which has a probability of impairing parenting role. If the allocation of responsibility on the younger brother may be challenged by time, then the families should be encouraged to seek to support the widows in the interest of the children and the wife of the deceased.

5.3 Conclusion.

What emerges from this inculturation discourse are strong values found in the *Agikuyu* traditional culture. They do not necessarily contradict the Christian teachings but rather are exhibiting immense potential usefulness to the Church if it is to effect concerns on challenges confronting former single mothers in their role. Ideally, the norms and practices operating within their cultural milieu can be harnessed by the Church and be incorporated in its teachings. That will make it more clear and acceptable to the community because that message will not be seem to demean what they consider as right.

When instructing, the church has an opportunity to make the gospel feel more at home by acknowledging the contributions of *Agikuyu* culture. What is of use and acceptable by the gospel should be embraced. For example, discouraging sex before marriage which is a

significant cause of single mothers should be approached from a cultural and a Christian perspective by the Church. The responsibility to prevent pregnancies before marriage should involve both sexes but not skewed to women folk.

The forums of educating the youth should be strengthened. Key among them is emphasizing the significant role of the father, the mother and the grand parents. The Church should be seeking to concientize and empower them so that they play significant role of instructing the young as was the case traditionally. Moreover, the initiation rite though not in entirety because such practice as circumcision for the girls may not be medically fit, should be enhanced to help in inculcating community values.

The importance of a woman as realized in the culture is vital and will help men married to former single mother honor them and support them in their noble duty of nurturing the children. Moreover, the worth attached to marriage as an institution from *Agikuyu* tradition goes a long way in helping Christianity concretize the significance of marriage making it safe even for women who in diverse circumstance get married while already having children. Just as divorce and separation was made difficult, the Church should be seeking to incorporate similar approach to help sustain marriage and also make it conducive for the wellbeing of all. The custom of taking care of widows especially the provision of help agrees with Gospel and should be used to help cushion widowed single mothers falling into a trap of remarriage that may cost them and children dearly. In the event where a man marries a single mother and the church is involved, it should encourage the parties to discuss the place of children before hand as the case was

traditionally. In essence therefore, the norms and customs contained in *Agikuyu* culture are useful in addressing the reality of former single motherhood and their experiences in parenting without necessarily contradicting the Christian faith. They should be utilized where necessary in the effort to make former single mothers more effective in their role as mothers tasked with the duty of raising moral beings on whom rests the future of the community. But this is as long as they will not contradict the Christian teachings.

CHAPTER SIX.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

6.1 SUMMARY

Towards this end, I reflect on this study with intention of highlighting the key findings.

The problem that was under investigation was the role and challenges of parenting among today's former single mothers. This was to help fill the gap by presenting documented information which was found to be lacking. To begin with, the study endeavored to find out the causes of single motherhood which was found to be a status preceding marriage involving a single mother. As discussed in chapter three, it was discovered that there are myriad causes that include rejection of single mothers in their maternal homes, need for a partner to help them bring up of the children, a need of companionship, a need to fulfill cultural obligation among others.

The objective to investigate on challenges of parenting facing former single mothers revealed that there are indeed real and substantial difficulties. These emanate from not only the husbands, but also from the children, the in-laws, friends and the community at large. However, such challenges and their extent vary in different families but generally they have impact on the children whose ramifications are an impediment to their growth and development. Nevertheless, there are cases of families comprised of former single mothers that have managed to transcend the challenges with the wife and the husband harmoniously participating in the upbringing of their children regardless of biological paternity. But the above confirms the initial assumption of the study that former single mothers face some peculiar challenges. Though, it is not in all the cases as some former

single mothers were found to be happy in their marriages with support of their husbands in bringing up their children.

Regarding A. C. K Church and its relation with former single mothers, it was found to integrate them into the congregations albeit unconsciously. Whereas this was found to help these mothers out from their former experiences of prejudice and biases as single mothers, it is disadvantageous because it veils the Church from being concerned with peculiar challenges these women go through as they parent their children. The intension of the study to find out the attitude and the response of A.C.K Church *Githunguri* Parish to former single mother in their parenting role brought to light a state of indifference.

The church particularly through the Mother's Union was found to proactively be involved in offering advice on better ways of bringing up the children. This was found useful even to former single mothers because some challenges of parenting cut across all motherhood status. But, there still lacked a clear mechanism addressing the peculiar circumstances of post single motherhood status confirming the hypothetical view of the study proposal that A. C. K Githunguri Parish is not responsive enough to challenges that post single mothers face. There was found a preconception that this marriage is just like any other classical family discounting the realities posed by the presence of step-children in a family and especially in relation to former single mothers.

The church's show of concern on the area of parenting and sustainability of family institution has to be applauded. However, the attitude towards single mothers was found

to be cold which is unfortunate considering that they are first and foremost mothers with the burden of bringing up the children and besides they are potential married mothers. Lack of full acceptance which was noted hindered such mothers to freely benefit from values of proper parenting that the Church propagates.

But in light of the above, it behooves single mothers to be cautious before they consent to a marriage and especially consider the ability and the potential of the man to provide for her and the child(ren). Equally, they should not be subdued into believing that marriage is a panacea to the challenge of parenting single.

Finally, inculturation theology was found to be very useful in the Church's continued mission to make the message of the gospel even more dynamic in helping the former single mothers in the context of their parenting role. It was found that there are strong values found in the *Agikuyu* traditional culture that do not actually contradict the Christian teachings and can be employed so that the role of parenting among former single mothers can be enhanced. The opportunity provided by the cultural milieu need be utilized to the maximum for the betterment of families. The personnel i.e. the mother, father, grandparents and the community should be empowered and used to help such marriages function. This confirmed the assumption of this study that inculturational theology is indeed fundamental in helping families and particularly those of former single mothers and the Church as it tries to be relevant to the people's socio-psychological needs.

6.2 Recommendations for further research.

- (i). Similar research need be done on former single fathers i.e. those who were left to take care of children solo but latter married.
- (ii). There is need to also study the challenge of parenting among other categories of single motherhood status as this study only concerned itself with former single motherhood in the contemporary society. They include; widowed single mothers, raped single mothers, post commercial sex workers single mothers, incest-ed single mothers, Divorced/separated single mothers, schools/colleges drop out single mothers among others¹

¹. P.N Wachege Op Cit (2003).

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APPENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRES.

Introduction.

My name is Pharis Muranga`i from University of Nairobi. I am conducting a research on the role and challenges of parenting among former single mothers who are now married. I considered having A.C.K church as one of my Key Institution representing the Christian fraternity basically because of its establishment which stretches back many years in the country. I kindly request your opinion on the following areas of concern.

A. TO A CHURCH LEADER.

1. (a) Name..... (b) Position in the church.....
2. (a) Do you have members of your church who were formerly single mothers (single mothers who are now married)? Yes..... No..... (Tick at the dotted line).
b) If Yes how does the Church relate with them considering that they had a past life as single mothers?
.....
3. (a) In the course of your service to the church, are there challenges you have observed that face these women when they get into marriage? Yes....No.... (Tick at the dotted line).
b. If yes, please briefly explain showing also how it affects their parenting role.
.....
4. How would you describe the relationship between the children and their step-father in such marriage?
.....
3. What are some of the challenges do children in such a marriage go through if any?
4. Does the church respond to these challenges? Explain.
.....

5. What difficulties does the church encounter in trying to give service to such families if any?
.....

6. What Christian advice from the scripture can you give to these;
a) Mothers?
.....

b) Their husbands?
.....

c) Their children?
.....

7. Is there any wisdom or values from the *Agikuyu* traditional culture that can be utilized to enhance effectiveness of parenting by families composed of former single mothers in this parish?
.....

8. What advice would you give to those preparing to get into such marriage?
.....

B. TO THE FATHERS.

1. (a) Name.....(optional) (b) Age..... (c)
Profession/occupation.....

2. What prompted you to marry your wife yet she had children?
.....

3. Would kindly explain the reaction of your relatives when you married your wife who already had child/children?
.....

4. (a) Did the child/children accept you as their father? Yes.... or No.....
(b) If No, please explain some of the things that happened.
.....

5. Explain how it has been bringing up these children including the difficulties experienced and achievements/successes.
.....

6. Sometimes it is argued that men are biased against the children who come with their mother into marriage. What is your response to that?
.....

5. What is your advice to the women who marry while already having children?
.....

6. What advice would you give to the children in such marriage?
.....

7. What advice would you give to the church if it is to be instrumental in aiding such families bring up their children well?
.....

8. Do you think there are values from your traditional culture that can be useful today to help in bringing up of children?
.....

9 what advice would you give to other men who want to marry women who have child/children?

C. TO CHILDREN OF FORMER SINGLE MOTHERS.

1. (a) Name.....(optional) (b) Age.... (c) Profession/occupation.....
2. How old were you when your mother got married?
.....
3. Explain how relation has been between you and the mother and between you and the father?
.....
.....
4. What have been challenges of being brought up in this family?
.....
.....
5. What are the greatest challenges would you say children in such marriage face?
6. What do you think the church should do to help strength such marriage for the sake of the children's well being?
.....

TO A PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKER OR A COUNSELOR.

1. (a) Name.....(optional) (b) Position in the church.....
2. In your own opinion what prompts single mothers to move into marriage?
.....
3. What challenges do these mothers face while parenting their children?
.....
4. Can we say there are benefits in such a marriage? Please explain?
.....
5. How are these children affected?
.....
6. What advice would you give to those single mothers willing to move into marriage?
.....
7. What role should the church play in the face of these realities considering that it solemnizing even some of these marriages?
.....
8. Are there values of parenting from your (*Agikuyu*) culture that can be applied in helping such mothers to be effective mothers?
.....

TO THE FORMER SINGLE MOTHERS.

1. (a) Name.....(optional) (b)
Profession/occupation.....

- 1. How many children did you have when you married?
.....
- 2. Kindly explain reasons that made you decide to get married.
.....
- 3. What would you say was the reaction of the children to the step-father?
.....
- 4. (a) Are there challenges of parenting that you can say emanates from the fact that you came into marriage with some of the children? Yes....No..... (Tick On the dotted line).
b) If yes, please briefly mention them.
.....
- 5. What would you say is the attitude of the church towards former single mothers?
.....
- 6 Kindly explain if and how A. C. K church has been of help to you to be an effective parent.
.....
- 6. What advice would you give to the church so that you and others can be helped appropriately in bringing your children?
.....
- 7. What advice would you give to men who marry women who already have children?
.....

APPENDIX 2.

GUIDING QUESTIONS.

Introduction.

My name is Pharis Muranga'i from University of Nairobi. I am conducting a research on the role and challenges of parenting among former single mothers who are now married. I considered having A.C.K church as one of my Key Institution representing the Christian fraternity basically because of its well established institution of mother's union which cares for women and their diverse needs.

No.	QUESTIONS	PROBE AREAS.
	Warm up questions.	
1	What is your general view of parenting role today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenges.• Comparing and contrasting with traditional ways.
2	How is parenting former single mothers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the <i>Agikuyu</i> Traditional Setting.• In today's setting
	Core questions.	
4	How would you describe parenting among former single mothers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenges today.• Successes• Compare and contrast with <i>Agikuyu</i> Traditional setting.• Challenges to the child(ren).

<p>5 In light of the above, does A.C.K <i>Githunguri</i> Parish have a ministry to these mothers and their families?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's justifications for solemnizing such marriage • Psychological Preparation of the couple before matrimony. • It's service for children in such marriages.
<p>6 Are there cultural practices that inhabit post single mothers in their role?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values that need to changed.
<p>7 What challenges do children of former single mothers face?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of having a step father i.e. for Girls, boys.
<p>8 How can A.C.K be of help to enhance parenting duties among former single mothers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some traditional values that can be used by A.C.K to enhance parenting.
<p>9 What are some <i>Agikuyu</i> cultural values that can be used to assist mothers in this condition?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How these mothers were treated traditionally. • How their children were treated traditionally.
<p>10 Anything that you would like me to Know about former single mother and parenting role? Thank you very much for availing yourself to this interview.</p>	

**Appendix 3.
Informants.**

No	name	Place of interview	Date.
1	Veronica Nyambura	Kianugu village Kambaa , Githunguri	6 th July 2008.
2	John Kamau Kigera.	Kambaa.	28 th June 2008.
3	Thinji	Gathangari A.C.K Church.	5 th July 2008
4	Rev. N'dung'u wa Kirabi.	Githunguri A.C.K and Riabai Kiambu	18 th and 23 rd July 2008.
5.	Mrs. Gachuna.	Githunguri shopping Centre	28 th June 2008.
6.	Wanjiku	Kiaria village	5 th July 2008
7	Christine	Nairobi	8 th July 2008.
8.	Njeri	Gatwe village.	28 th June 2008
9	Mama Shiro.	Gitwe village	27 th June 2008.
10	Muggy	Githunguri hopping Centre	24 th June 2008.
11	Ann	Githunguri. Shopping Centre	24 th June 2008.
12	Ev. Wagitunda	Gathangari A.C.K	5 th July 2008.
13	John	Githunguri shopping centre	12 th July 2008.
14	Waithera wa Mathew	Kambaa village	19 th July 2008.
15	Pamela	Nairobi village	21 st July 2008.
16	Monica	Waing'ere vilaage	9 th july 2008
17	Kin'goi	Gitiha village	5 th July 2008
18	Kiriro	Gathungari village	5 th July 2008
19	Wa Ciku	Gitwe village	20 th July 2008
20	Gladys	Gitwe village	29 th June 2008.
21	Anonymous Interviewee	Kamba Village	25 th July 2008.