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This chapter describes mate selection with particular attention to those relationships that lead to marriage in Kenya. The context of Kenyan couple formation and marriage are examined from a social exchange framework, which posit that individuals evaluate reciprocal relationships through a ratio of rewards to costs. For example a husband may receive benefits of family alliances, status, sexual exchanges, labor, and continuation of the family-of-origin lineage. On the other hand, a wife may receive economic resources, protection, and her adult status as wife and mother. Kenyan couple formation and marriage are the result of a diverse and variegated process reflective of ethnicity, generation, clan, religion and social influences such as urban-rural differences, levels of education and gender attitudes. Mate selection and marriage range from the traditional to the contemporary, and many couples try to mesh the two intergenerational values into a new tradition. A comparison of two ethnic groups namely the Kamba and Maasai paths to marriage is offered to capture the cultural diversity in mate selection in Kenya.

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