THE WELL-BEING OF KENYAN-CANADIAN PARENTS AND YOUTH LIVING IN MIXED FAMILIES IN MONTREAL

by

ALEXANDRA WILLIAMS
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Abstract

This thesis examines the well-being of Kenyan-Canadian parents and youth living in ethnically- and racially-mixed families in Montreal. The objectives of the thesis are to determine whether there are challenges unique to immigrants belonging to small ethnic communities and living in racially- and ethnically-mixed families, and to educate policy makers and health practitioners as to needs that may be specific to this understudied group. The participants generally seem to be adapting well to life in Montreal, although the experience of racism and difficulty with language policies do generate some stress. Notably, the parents have taken advantage of possibilities afforded by other immigrant communities with greater institutional completeness to promote the well-being of their children. This suggests that an important role can be played by established immigrant communities in welcoming and assisting individual migrants without a receiving community, even when ethnic affiliation may be lacking.

Résumé

Cette thèse s'intéresse au bien-être de parents et d'enfants canadiens originaires du Kenya et vivant à Montréal dans une famille mixte sur le plan ethnique et racial. L'objectif de la thèse est de déterminer si les immigrants appartenant à une communauté immigrante de petite taille et vivant dans un contexte de famille culturellement mixte font face à des défis particuliers. Les retombées permettront de sensibiliser les décideurs politiques et les professionnels de la santé aux besoins particuliers de cette population encore peu étudiée. Les participants à l'étude ont, de façon générale, réussi à bien s'adapter à leur vie Montréalaise et ce, malgré un certain stress associé à des expériences de racisme et aux

difficultés inhérentes aux politiques linguistiques. Les parents vivant en famille mixte ont quant à eux pu profiter des possibilités offertes par la communauté du conjoint, et ainsi eu accès à une plus grande complétude institutionnelle ce qui a favorisé le bien-être de leurs enfants. Ce constat met en lumière le rôle important qui peut être joué par les communautés immigrantes bien établies dans l'accueil et le soutien des immigrants qui ne peuvent compter sur une communauté d'accueil et ce, même si l'affiliation ethnique s'avère inexistante.

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Introduction

This thesis is an exploratory examination of the well-being of Kenyan-Canadian parents and youth living in racially- and ethnically-mixed families. The research as first proposed intended to focus exclusively on the psychological well-being and social adjustment of Kenyan-Canadian adolescents in Montreal, but difficulties with participant recruitment necessitated a change in focus. The majority of the adults recruited for this study were married to non-Kenyan spouses, and as this did not appear to be the result of a particular bias within the recruitment process, questions involving mixed-families emerged as a potential focus for the study.

One of the main motivations for studying Kenyan-Canadians in Montreal was to examine challenges facing members of small immigrant populations. Kenya is 71st on Citizenship and Immigration Canada's list of immigrants by source country, with only 567 immigrants in 2008. This might seem to make Kenyan-Canadians an odd choice for study. Kenya, however, is one of more than 117 countries that contributed fewer than 1,000 immigrants in 2008. Collectively, these countries accounted for 34,898 immigrants in 2008 – 14% of the total (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009). In Quebec the situation is similar: only 146 Kenyans immigrated to Quebec between 2008 to 2012, accounting for 0.2% of immigrants the province received during this period (Immigration et Communautés Culturelles Québec, 2013). It is important for researchers to address the needs of immigrants from these smaller communities even though they may be less visible. Members of such communities may have fewer local marriage options within their own ethnic group and may have higher rates of inter-ethnic marriage (Heaton &

Jacobson, 2000; Kalmjin & van Tubergen, 2006; Lievens, 1998; Song, 2009). The shift to a research agenda specifically addressing inter-ethnic and inter-racial marriage may therefore still contribute to the original desire to better understand the challenges facing small immigrant populations.

Beiser and Edwards (1994) argue there is a need for research that represents Canada's diversity while Zayfert (2008) emphasizes the value of "rich and clinically meaningful portraits of various cultures" (p.68). This thesis's emphasis on inter-ethnic and inter-racial families may highlight weaknesses in research agendas that focus on individual communities or cultures. It is unclear how and whether the conclusions from such studies will apply to mixed-ethnicity families that are not easily categorized as belonging to a single community. Further, Song (2009) suggests that rates of inter-racial and inter-ethnic marriage are increasing in much of the world, and the demographic shifts that result may lead to significant societal changes (see also Lee & Bean, 2004). Since researchers often play an important role in informing immigrants of rights, challenges, and opportunities here in Canada, research agendas need to include families that do not belong to a single ethnic group or community.

The interviews were all undertaken with a focus on the social adjustment and well-being of Kenyan-Canadian youth. There seems to be wide variation in terms of how children adjust following migration. Researchers have identified a number of risk and protective factors, but there is little consensus on how these contribute to social adjustment and well-being. Greenman and Xie (2008) suggest that the lack of consensus comes from the difficulty of generalizing across different locations, ethnic communities, and experiences. This difficulty may be even greater when examining ethnically- and

racially- mixed families (Caballero, Edwards, Goodyer, & Okitikpi, 2012). Even among the small sample examined in this thesis, no two families contain the same ethnic mix. For this reason, the thesis is primarily descriptive and exploratory, and will highlight the subjects' own perspectives on the challenges and opportunities facing their families. In this way, this study hopes to contribute to a growing body of work that stresses the need for qualitative research on mixed families (Caballero, Edwards, & Puthussery, 2008; Edwards, Ali, Caballero, & Song, 2012).

In their study of mixed families in the United Kingdom, Caballero and colleagues (Caballero et al., 2012; Caballero et al., 2008; Edwards, Caballero, & Puthussery, 2010) stress the importance of paying close attention to daily life. They are particularly interested in how parents negotiate questions of "difference and belonging" in social environments where children may have to deal with a variety of positive and negative consequences associated with different ethnic and/or racial identities. Crespi (2011) also emphasizes the need to pay close attention to the ways ethnic differences emerge in the daily life of mixed families. She examines how language, habit and tradition, religion, and even foods work in the context of intermarriage. As suggested by these works, identity is a major focus of much of the literature on intermarriage and bi- and multi-racial families and youth (Brunsma, 2005; Caballero et al., 2012; Campbell & Eggerling-Boeck, 2006; Cheng & Lively, 2009; Crespi, 2011; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2003; Song, 2009). Because racial and ethnic identities can be easily essentialized, Caballero, Edwards, and Puthussery (2008; 2010) suggest that "thick description" of daily life is needed to acknowledge the diversity of experience within these communities. In this thesis, this is accomplished by extensive use of interview transcripts.

The thesis is composed of two papers. The first is methodological in its orientation and examines the role and significance played by laughter in the interviews. The goal of the paper is to consider the relationship that emerges during the interview with the researcher, who like the participants, also migrated to Canada from Kenya. The emphasis on laughter highlights the emotional significance of the ethnic match between researcher and interviewees, a significance which may be even greater in the case of such a small community. The second paper analyzes the content of the interviews so as to address the research questions. Particular attention is paid to parenting strategies and the well-being of youth. Further, the paper devotes considerable attention to the ways Kenyan-Canadians foster links with other immigrant communities, as well as the institutions maintained by these communities, and suggests that integration in a large and ethnically diverse city such as Montreal is complex.

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Ndio na cheka: That's why I laugh

Alexandra Williams

Department of Psychiatry, McGill University, Canada

Corresponding author:

Alexandra Williams

Div. of Social and Cultural Psychology, McGill University,

Youth Mental Health, CSSS de la Montagne (Parc Extension)

7085 Hutchison Street, Room 204.2,

Montreal, QC H3N 1Y9

Tel: (514) 273-3800 ext. 6593

Email: alexandra.williams2@mail.mcgill.ca

Abstract

Researchers who often code and analyze transcripts thematically frequently ignore laughter as an "event" in interviews. Laughter, however, can play an important role in shaping the rapport between interviewer and interviewee. This reflexive paper examines incidents of laughter that occurred during separate interviews between a Kenyan-Canadian mother and her daughter, and the author, herself an immigrant from Kenya. The interviews were undertaken as part of a broader project examining the well-being of Kenyan-Canadian parents and youth in Montreal. The analysis suggests that a consideration of laughter can help to highlight the different kinds of interaction that occur during an interview, and hence the kinds of emotional relationships that can emerge between researcher and participants. In these interviews, laughter served to ease tension, particularly during sensitive discussions of difficult topics, and to highlight the prominent role played by nostalgia in discussions of migration and adaptation. Notably, the examination of what both interviewer and interviewee laugh at complicates any simple insider/outsider dualism and demands recognition of the complex identities that each participant brings to the encounter.

Keywords: Laughter, Kenyan immigrants, migration history, positioning and positionality, reflexivity, native anthropology, situated knowledge

1. Introduction

Laughter as a "specific event or non-event" within the interview offers an opportunity to examine the positionality of the researcher as a "native" anthropologist (on "events and nonevents" see Bucko, 2006; Fogelson, 1989; on "native" anthropologists see Narayan, 1993). The complexities of the relationships that arose between the participants and the researcher are highlighted through an analysis of how laughter emerged in research interviews of a Kenyan mother and her daughter living in Montreal. Laughter often emphasized the cultural references and experiences that were shared: as expatriate Kenyans, people and women of colour, immigrants, and mothers. In the interviews, laughter both accompanied the memory of humorous events, and functioned as a way to resolve the tension that accompanied the discussion of painful experiences. At the same time, laughter also occurred for little reason at all and must be considered as a dynamic of the interview that can exist independent of subject matter (cf. Glenn, 2003). In these respects, laughter speaks to the interview as a moment of interaction between two individuals that is often particular and difficult to generalize (Carty & Musharbash, 2008).

2. "Native" Anthropology and Laughter

There are many parallels between my own life and those of the participants in my research project. Like the parents I interviewed for this study, I grew up in Kenya and immigrated to Canada as an adult, and I too had to adapt to a new way of life. Again like them, I am raising children in Canada. Further, because I come from Kenya, I am able to

understand frequent references in the interviews to: neighbourhoods, events, people, institutions, culture, and history. I am also comfortable reading behavioural cues that might be particular to Kenyans: body language, facial expressions, ways of speaking, and knowledge of appropriate responses (cf. Marsh, Elfenbein, & Ambady, 2003). But I am also aware that my Kenyan background and my ability to speak the national language – Kiswahili – does not necessarily give me an "in" with the participants. I was meeting them for the first time as I arrived for the interviews and there was no guarantee we would get along. Also, the mere fact that I am from Kenya does not mean they would necessarily agree to speak with me about private matters involving their families. Nor does having come to Canada erase the differences that can exist between Kenyans.

An increasing number of anthropologists are studying their own communities. In an article addressing what it means to be a "native" anthropologist, Narayan (1993) suggests that she often shares "an unspoken emotional understanding with the people with whom … [she] work[s]" (p. 674). For her work in India, she observes that her status as a "native" anthropologist gave her numerous advantages. She writes of the benefits that came with pre-existing relationships with particular individuals, and with knowledge of the language and culture, and notes she was also able to take advantage of kinship ties and familiarity with specific places. Finally, she was able to begin her study already aware of many of the expectations her subjects would have of her. Like Narayan, Mahtani (2012) also believes her work benefited from the fact that she chose to study a community to which she belonged, women who identified as mixed-race. She suggests that her status helped "foster dialogue":

> At moments, I discovered that my own mixed-race identity may have helped diminish the fears of participants who

> were wary of my reasons for carrying out this study. I became very familiar with the phrase, "Oh, you're mixed too? Oh well, then I'll definitely be interviewed! (p. 158)

As her work progressed to interviews, Mahtani (2012) suggests that her status, and "shared complicity" helped create "a more comfortable space for these women to tell their stories" (p. 159).

Discussions concerning "native" anthropologists, however, often choose to highlight the potential difficulties encountered when scholars choose to study their own communities. Abu-Lughod (1991) characterizes these anthropologists as "halfies" – because they have connections to both the culture being studied and the anthropological community. For Abu-Lughod these two sides can give rise to dilemmas over representation, as tensions can emerge between the expectations associated with each community: "because of their split selves… halfie anthropologists travel uneasily between speaking 'for' and speaking 'from'" (p. 143). Adding to this, Mahtani (2012) notes that the complicated relationships engendered by scholars studying their own communities have implications not only for representation, but for elicitation as well. She suggests her ability to identify with her participants actually served at times to limit discussion: "this sort of shared complicity... also prevented them from divulging further detail, given that they simply thought I 'understood' what they were saying" (p. 159).

Yet, as Narayan (1993) observes, Abu-Lughod's idea of "halfie" cannot fully explain the diverse ways people identify: "two halves cannot adequately account for the complexity of an identity in which multiple countries, regions, religions, and classes may come together" (p. 673). Mahtani (2012) echoes this sentiment:

> As a woman identifying as mixed race, I indeed share commonality with the women I interviewed and at times

> assume this core basis of unity with them, but it is important to question the expectation for 'mutual recognition' among these women who had very different life experiences and who held very different, often opposing, perspectives. Consequently, it is erroneous to assume all mixed-race women are sisters... (p. 159).

The ability of anthropologists to claim membership in a community then depends in large part on the ways they choose to frame their own identities, and those of their subjects.

As a consequence of such dilemmas, these authors warn against the dangers of generalization. Narayan (1993) writes, "to use a clump term is to assume that all natives are the same native, mutually substitutable in presenting the same… point of view" (p. 646). Abu-Lughod (1991) agrees, going so far as to question the value of "culture" itself as a concept, but suggests a potential solution: "that we experiment with narrative ethnographies of the particular… in telling stories about particular individuals in time and place" (p.153). Narayan (1993) draws upon Abu-Lughod's "ethnographies of the particular," and concludes:

> One wall stands between ourselves as interested readers of stories and as theory-driven professionals; another wall stands between narrative (associated with subjective knowledge) and analysis (associated with objective truths). By situating ourselves as subjects simultaneously touched by life-experience and swayed by professional concerns, we can acknowledge the hybrid and positioned nature of our identities. Writing texts that mix lively narrative and rigorous analysis involves enacting hybridity, regardless of our origins (p. 682).

Following the emphasis these scholars place on the value of narrative detail, the actual stories of the participants will guide the research.

For Abu-Lughod, Narayan, and Mahtani the kinds of connections forged with the

people being studied are more important than the identity of the anthropologist in question. I intend to focus on laughter because it can be used as a reference point to explore the kinds of connections and relationships that emerge in the interview. I will focus on specific instances where laughter occurs, and examine what this suggests about me as a researcher, about the participants themselves, and about the relationships that are established during the interview. As Carty and Musharbash (2008) note, laughter is ideally suited for ethnographies of the particular: "Returning analysis of laughter to the social contexts in which anthropologists specialise also returns our focus to the individuals, the personalities and bodies engaged in or by humorous phenomena" (p. 214).

The laughter, and emotions more generally, that occurs during fieldwork is often ignored in analysis (Bucko, 2006; Carty & Musharbash, 2008). Yet, I contend that laughter highlights and speaks to the interaction between the researcher and their informants. Laughter may point to levels of anxiety, to bonds being formed, to the personalities present, and to the various social contexts that may influence the interaction (ie. age, gender, class, caste, race, etc…). Laughter can also constitute an important event in-and-of-itself that can influence the emerging relationship (Glenn, 2003). As Raymond Bucko (2006) argues, those who do not write of laughter risk turning such an event into a "non-event," thereby denying its significance.

Anthropologists have long recognized that one of the main functions of humour is to relieve tension (Bricker, 1980; Dundes & Hauschild, 1983; Linke & Dundes, 1988). As Linke and Dundes (1988) note in their discussion of Auschwitz, "most comedy upon examination consists of treating tragedy lightly" (p. 8-9). As stories are told during the

interviews, we often laugh while discussing serious matters. In particular, experiences of being subjected to, or confronting the realities of living as a racialized minority elicit laughter. Although this may be somewhat surprising, it agrees with what many have written. As Carty and Musharbash (2008) observe:

> laughter and humour are significant phenomena for anthropologists attempting to understand and interpret human responses to social inequalities. Over and over, laughter and humour here erupt out of the fissures in colonial facades, and they are never far from the question of discrimination, domination and power imbalances (p. 213).

3. Memories of Kenya

The two interviews were carried out as part of research that examined the wellbeing of Kenyan-Canadian children in Montreal. The Kenyan community in Montreal is very small, and I hoped not only to examine the experience of the Kenyans but also the challenges that confront members of such a small group as they adapt to life in Canada. However, working with a small group comes with challenges. There were times when I struggled to find participants that meet the criteria for my study, relying on referrals from Kenyans who often knew of only a couple of other families – the "snowball sampling method" (Abdul-Quader, Heckathorn, Sabin, & Saidel, 2006; Spring et al., 2003). When I did find a suitable family, I arranged interviews by phone. The actual interview would be the first face-to-face meeting I had with my participants. As a young researcher I often arrived for these interviews with considerable anxiety. Would I be able to gather the sorts of information that would allow me to write a thesis? After the interview with the parents, would I be granted permission to interview their children?

In the case of the family considered here, I interviewed the mother first. Laughter began to disarm my anxiety almost as soon as the interview starts. During this early stage of the interview, the laughter frequently revolved around memories of Kenya. In this way, it was almost as if the laughter signaled the ways in which shared memories allowed us to connect. To begin, I asked: "how was life back home in Kenya?" The response she gave was punctuated with slight laughter from the very first sentence:

> MOTHER: I was comfortable [she laughs a little]. Actually, I had a good life [continues to laugh]. I had my children, my husband, I had a house girl, I had a houseboy. But when I came here everything changed.

As she spoke about having house help, and as I began to get a sense of what she left behind in Kenya, her laughter seemed ironic. She appeared to be laughing about the loss of social status that accompanies many new immigrants as they start new lives in Canada (on loss of social status see Lashley, 2000).

As we discussed further, references to Kenya frequently elicited laughter. I was able to relate to some of the examples she used as she spoke of Kenya, and as the interview progressed and we started to feel more comfortable we frequently slipped in and out of speaking Kiswahili:

> MOTHER: The food was a big thing [inaudible]. The only thing I liked when I came was bread. I saw there was a variety of bread, that one I loved it. You know in Kenya we eat almost only one type of bread. *Ilikua inaitwa nini?* [what was it called?]
>
> AUTHOR*: Akida* [a brand of bread]
>
> MOTHER: *na hiyo ingine ilikua inaitwa Elliot*, now that big loaf, now when I go to "*gishag" mama yako ananua* the big loaf [we both laugh]. [The other one was called *Elliot*, now that big loaf, now when I go upcountry my mother would buy the big loaf – we both laugh]

AUTHOR: and the funny thing they are all white.

For Kenyans, as with many immigrants, memories of home are often associated with, or expressed through, references to food (Williams, 2010). Ironically, however, in this interview it is not the classic Kenyan foods like *ugali*, *sukumawiki*, or *chapati* that drew our attention but rather North American style white bread. Growing up in Kenya, I remember exactly what she is describing: my mother used to buy the "big loaf" when expecting guests or relatives from "upcountry."[1] The big loaf, however, was often referenced using a risqué word in Kiswahili, and I could not help but wonder whether we were also both laughing at memories of something we both decided was better left unsaid.

The daughter came to Canada at a very early age, and has few memories of her life in Kenya. She has been to visit, however, and memories of Kenya did find ways into my interviews with her. Just as they did when I spoke with her mother, these memories did elicit laughter:

> DAUGHTER: coz when I went back to Kenya and I spoke to my cousins and they told me about what they went through in school compared to what I went through [I laugh]
>
> AUTHOR: and you thought
>
> DAUGHTER: does not compare just the extra stuff like the boarding school hell [we both laugh]. My mum used to tell me when you are in boarding school, when you are the first one they used to make you wake up in the middle of the night
>
> AUTHOR: the *monos*, the *monos* they used to call them[2]

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[1] "Upcountry" is the term used in Kenya to refer to the rural areas where one's ancestral land is located, and where one's extended family comes from. It is also often the place where one's grandparents live.

[2] *Mono* is a slang term used to refer to a first-year high school student.

DAUGHTER: yah, and you would think that was only my mum's time but my cousins told me the same thing

AUTHOR: yah it's the rite of passage [I continue laughing]

DAUGHTER: yah I don't know if I could have made it through that [we both laugh]. Everything is whatever you can handle. It's whatever you are supposed to go through coz if I went through what they went through I don't know what kind of child I would be now, that's hell [she laughs]

AUTHOR: but sometimes I think there if you come home and tell your mum she would be like "ah I went through that you'll do fine" [I laugh]

DAUGHTER: I don't like that no [I continue laughing]

In this passage, I was able to confirm memories the daughter had received from her mother and cousins in Kenya. I never experienced such bullying myself, though I did at times fear it, and here I was actually relating the same kind of narrative she was: stories that I had heard from family members about their experiences in school. As with the mother, the familiarity of the stories seemed sufficient to make us both laugh. However, towards the end when I pointed out that such experiences are often considered "a rite of passage" she stopped laughing. The different environments that we have grown up in made this experience elicit different reactions. Here I could not help but wonder whether her mother or cousins would have found this funny.

4. Experience as New Immigrants

As the interview with the mother progressed to stories of her adjustment to life in Canada, we soon found ourselves laughing together, with a much greater intensity:

MOTHER: That was the biggest thing for me. And then when I go shopping I was not used to carrying my children all the time, *nikienda mahali mpaka niende na hao wote* [when I go somewhere I have to take

> them all]. I used to work and I come home everything is done for me. I used to leave my girls free I never told them "I want you to make this", unless I wanted something specific. They knew what to cook that day. I never told them what to do so long as there is food in the house. That's it. Then I came here I had to do everything. Then I did not know how to use the washer and dryer [we both laugh]. So that was another [she stops to laugh] and then we didn't have one in the house, we had to go the laundry mart, with money. To save money I used to put so many clothes in and they don't dry [she tries to tell this through laughter from both of us] and then it came September. I remember washing clothes by hand and putting them outside but then it was so cold, by the time I went to get them because it was deceiving me the clothes were hard. *kama mbao, kama cardboard nikashanga ai na nini si kuna jua* [like wood, like cardboard I wondered why this is so] [laughter continues] then when you bring them inside they start dripping water, *nashangaa kwani nilikuwa nimefikiria zilikuwa zimekauka*…[I begin to wonder why this is so because I thought they had dried…] [uncontrollable laughter]

> AUTHOR: You know why I laugh so hard, because ask any Kenyan when they come they do the same thing. They hand wash their clothes and hang them outside. I did the same exact thing, *ndio na cheka* [that's why I laugh]

In these exchanges our subsequent experience of life in Canada made us both laugh at the sorts of challenges we both faced shortly after moving to Canada. Frequently, these stories revolved around very simple problems or misunderstandings, in this case how to do laundry.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the stories of adjustment centred around how to learn to live with winter. For the mother, one memorable experience involved the need for winter boots:

> MOTHER: The first thing I remember was when he [husband] took me shopping to buy boots. He told me it was going to be cold, "you need to dress for this and this." So me I was used to that Kenyan life of putting on heels, I have never put on flat shoes except when I go

> to the market, *hiyo rubbers* [those rubbers].[3] So I asked whether I will be going to the street with these flat shoes, he said yes these are the good ones. I refused completely to buy flat shoes. So what I did I told him I want to choose what I want to wear, I went and took a nice boot. A winter boot but it has got a heel, I said this is what I want. He did not say anything. The first day I walked out in the freezing rain did I fall down – I never wore that boot again [breaks out laughing]. We had to go back and buy the flat ones. I could not even walk by the time I got home I was so tired, you know you have this long boots and the snow, I was walking like a duck.

AUTHOR: It's sad but its funny [we both laugh]

This experience of weather also stayed with the daughter, who offered an example of one of her earliest memories of life in Canada:

> DAUGHTER**:** I remember when I first moved here I missed it. I missed just being with my grandparents I missed them a lot. My cousins' coz we were always together, it was cold here
>
> AUTHOR**:** you came when it was winter
>
> DAUGHTER**:** no we came in August. August was cold when you come here. We had ear muffs [I laugh] by the time we got here we had ear muffs on, we were so cold so miserable

The daughter's memories resembled those of her mother, but with an important difference. The mother's stories drew much of their humour from the fact that what works in Kenya does not necessarily work here. The daughter's memory, however, had much less to do with the specifics of life in Kenya. Rather, it drew its humour from the absurdity of wearing earmuffs in late summer.

In these three examples, we all laughed about experiences that today seem naïve and speak to the learning processes that surround everyday life in a new country. Although I relate to these experiences, there is little that is specifically Kenyan in these

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[3] *Rubbers* refers to a simple, old-fashioned sneaker.

memories. Here I cannot help but ask to what extent it matters that we share these experiences as Kenyans. These are adjustments that most immigrants coming from warmer climates face, and I could easily see myself laughing about these stories with many non-Kenyan friends.

There are very few Kenyans in Montreal, and because of this there is not a very obvious or established Kenyan community. I was interested in whether the daughter associated with other Kenyans here in Montreal. This line of questioning led to the daughter recalling gatherings she attended with her parents when she was younger:

> DAUGHTER: My parents always had friends, there was always like a little get together. Before they used to have these Kenyan things that used to happen. I remember but there was always fights and when fights happen the Kenyan community would die [we laugh]. Somebody would get mad at somebody. Somebody would owe money to somebody then it would die. So I remember when I was young we used to go to [another city] for Independence Day. For a while after a certain age I stopped going to this Kenyan things
>
> AUTHOR: so you used to go when you were a kid coz you had no choice then, you are just going to go
>
> DAUGHTER: exactly, but when you had when I finally had a choice I didn't want to go
>
> AUTHOR: you even didn't want to associate with them
>
> DAUGHTER: no!
>
> AUTHOR: even now
>
> DAUGHTER: no! [we both laugh]
>
> AUTHOR: and why is this so
>
> DAUGHTER: compared to other ethnic groups Kenyans they are the most, I don't know how to explain it. There is just, there is no fusion within the community like you'd see Ghanaians they are so close they help each other out. They have little bouts here and there but they help each other out they get somewhere. Forget Africans period you'd see the way the Sri Lankans do things. They get together they do this

> they help each other out they live ten people in a home one person gets a house everybody gets a home. I find Kenyans its always about who is doing better than the other…
>
> AUTHOR: do you think because it's a small community or its just Kenyans, or is it just how we are?
>
> DAUGHTER: I really couldn't say it's just because it's a small community. But I have seen smaller communities that really stick together. Because they are a small community they should have stuck together even more. Maybe also because of the resources it was always dependent on someone who would say okay I'm going to start this and that person's head gets pretty big you know. There is no committee to kind of pick you out of that spot and then people get greedy. It happens also in any group of people in short. But I find there was no, all they did was hang out together get drunk get belligerent and then boom!
>
> AUTHOR: that was it, that's what you saw
>
> DAUGHTER: that's all I had seen [we laugh]

Here, the daughter directly addressed one of my main research questions: whether or not adolescent Kenyan-Canadians associate with other Kenyans. She laughed as she recalled gatherings that left her with little desire to associate with other Kenyans. Because she was a child when she witnessed these events, and because the mother did not discuss them, I have difficulty assessing the nature of the disputes she described: whether they involved passionate discussions of politics or whether the disputes were temporary or long lasting. As she spoke, I laughed because I felt free to laugh at Kenyan culture and I too have my own childhood memories of going to similar gatherings with my parents where heated discussions of politics took place. As I write, however, I wonder how best to respectfully situate the passage without having sufficient context. After all, those who were at these gatherings could consider such laughter as disrespectful (cf. Beckett, 2008). Here, Abu-Lughod's characterization of the dilemmas faced by "halfies" seems relevant:

> Identified also with communities also outside the West… they are called to account by educated members of those communities. More importantly, not just because they position themselves with reference to two communities but because when they present the Other they are presenting themselves, they speak with a complex awareness of and investment in reception (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 142).

5. Being Black in Canada

Many of the examples discussed thus far have been either overtly humorous or nostalgic. However, there are times when laughter is expressed while discussing issues that elicit more complex emotions. Laughter is not only used to find humour in otherwise sad or serious situations, but also served to mask tension or relieve anxiety. For an immigrant coming from a country where they did not experience life as a racialized minority, one of the challenges was learning how to navigate this:

> MOTHER**:** And the mother was crying because he was charged with assault and my daughter said no "I tried to take a picture with my cell phone" [laughs] but it didn't work. They started to know about their rights and educate themselves and tried to be careful and to watch out. They are very good at watching out for others. Like when they see a black person and the police are trying to harass them they stand around them. Like another time one of their friends came and the girlfriend has a nice car, she is white and the guy is black. He was the one who was driving and the police stopped him because they saw him in a good car and my daughter, we were living here actually it was two years ago. She saw them and she ran and she asked the police "why are you stopping them just because they got a good car" [we laugh]. For her, she has the type of air that when she stands her ground even the police they don't get her out. She is fluent in French and English, so when she asks them [makes sound of quick talking – imitating daughter] in that case she is able to make them go away

This excerpt is part of a wider discussion I had with the mother about her children's experience of racism. The tone, the voice, and the emotions changed when discussing these hurtful memories. The laughter was a part of a broader and more serious discussion

and served to relieve tension and point out the often-ridiculous nature of racism. As we stepped back to consider the absurdity of racial profiling, the fact that someone might be stopped simply for driving a nice car ceased being tragic and became, for a moment, funny. As the discussion of discrimination progressed, laughter allowed the participants to talk about vulnerable situations. The daughter's courage when standing up to the police officers made us both laugh even though such behaviour can often have very serious consequences. In this conversation, a connection formed to join three mothers of black children: the mother in the story, myself, and the mother I am interviewing.

My research focused on the experiences of the children, and therefore much of the discussion centred on their experiences in school and the neighbourhood. For the daughter the difficulties she encountered in terms of being black were primarily in school. Both she and her mother spoke of difficulties she faced because of her skin tone:

> DAUGHTER: I don't know I always found I had a knack to being made fun off [we both laugh].
>
> AUTHOR: you just had it bad like it's like everywhere you went
>
> DAUGHTER*:* I don't know one thing for me, me being dark skinned was a big problem to a lot of people,
>
> AUTHOR: and like how did it make you feel?
>
> DAUGHTER*:* it made me really get down. I was down, down, down. I was trying to keep up but my emotional side of me was down. That whole thing it was not worth to be there, they were just like, you're ugly, and I was very skinny too. So like you're ugly, you're skinny you don't eat, but I have a fast metabolism, see therefore that didn't help. They just looked at me like look at you. And my clothing also again that school was not a uniformed school so my clothes were never up to par
>
> AUTHOR: up to par with the other kids
>
> DAUGHTER: never, never my shoes [sighs] it was always something. But I

still made, I always made a friend

AUTHOR**:** so you always had someone

DAUGHTER*:* I always had a friend but it was never a black person, it was always a white person

AUTHOR**:** so like the black kids made fun of you and they just didn't want to hang out with you, because they just

DAUGHTER**:** I found it was just ignorance, when I look at it now it's ignorance

AUTHOR**:** but what did you think of it then

DAUGHTER: at that time I thought it was something wrong with me. I thought something was wrong with me, maybe something, something. I didn't know what but I just knew something was wrong with me. It's not like it's just at school it's at church too. You know something was wrong with me, that's all I thought of something was wrong with me and I needed to make change. When I get older when I get the chance I'm gonna change it, I don't know how but I was gonna change it

AUTHOR: you were gonna change it

DAUGHTER: so that was elementary [laughs].

AUTHOR**:** okay that's just elementary it was not even high school yet

DAUGHTER: no [we laugh]

Here, laughter served to punctuate the discussion. She laughed at the beginning as she suggested that she had a knack for being made fun of, as if being bullied for your skin colour is something you can or cannot bring on through your own actions. Our concluding laughter signaled relief at having finished the discussion, as well as disbelief that a child could face so much in elementary school. On the one hand, the laughter seemed like it had little to do with some sort of "native" connection, but was generic. There was no such specificity because most people could have related to laughing at

one's own bad luck, or to the need for relief after such a story. On the other hand, however, the fact that I am black means that I can potentially relate to the experience of racial bullying, and I am left wondering whether it would be considered appropriate for a white interviewer to laugh after such a story.

These issues re-emerged as we discussed the daughter's attempt to lighten her skin tone as a teenager:

> DAUGHTER: For me again as I said when I was [a teenager][4], I started to bleach my skin. Because of being made fun off…. I started to bleach my skin with bleaching creams
>
> AUTHOR: this is because when you were younger coz you said in high school there wasn't but it still stuck
>
> DAUGHTER: it still stuck in the back of my mind. I was told I was not pretty unless I was light. So I started bleaching my skin up until finally I started doing modelling…. I would do fashion shows, photo shoots and my skin was getting lighter too so I was able to get different things and do different stuff. I don't know at [a slightly older age] I just had this epiphany like what am I doing to myself…. I looked at my skin and I'm like "I can't go in the sun and I can't sleep on a pillow that doesn't have silk." I had tried so many different things to make myself lighter. I had found this one agent that really worked it was [a prescription]. Its not even to lighten the skin its something that you use, it's a [dermatological] cream its something for allergies or eczema. I found out that this thing could lighten your skin I used that. That's what I used for three years straight; my skin was so thin
>
> AUTHOR: oh it got thin
>
> DAUGHTER: very thin coz its [a dermatological] cream it thins out your skin…. anything could cut me, anything could burn me anything! So I said, "what am I doing to myself seriously," and I had already started reading. I had already started doing natural, holistic "what am I doing to myself" so I just stopped
>
> AUTHOR: just like that

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[4] I have changed ages to make them vague so as to ensure confidentiality.

DAUGHTER: I stopped and it took a while about two years for my skin to regulate. So I did everything natural, cocoa butter and take care of my skin. But now I love my skin now, I don't know what I was thinking [we laugh]. I mean when I see a lot of young people who are, like my little sister she is dark skinned I tell her she is beautiful everyday. Coz she is a replica of me and I see myself in her so much its scary so I tell her she is beautiful all the time. I do her hair to make her feel beautiful I talk to her. I tell her what I went through

Again, the discussion was serious and laughter served to release tension at the end. Here, we laughed at the very idea of using chemicals to alter one's skin tone and the laughter also reinforced the maturity that she had as she looked back. Our discussion of these issues spoke to the realities faced by black women because of the emphasis placed on lighter skin tone. In turn, this emphasis on light skin tone is but a part of broader pressures women everywhere face related to body image.

The daughter's struggles with respect to skin tone were corroborated in my discussions with her mother. Once again, laughter emerged following the discussion of otherwise very serious matters:

AUTHOR*:* and your daughter?

MOTHER: My daughter can speak for herself. But I never had problems with the daughters.

AUTHOR: Even at school, she had mentioned being bullied

MOTHER: yes just being bullied and because she is very dark, saying that, "oh she is too dark." Because here they associate when you are too dark [inaudible] there was a time she used to put things in her face.

AUTHOR: So how old was she when she was getting such comments?

MOTHER: She was a teenager

AUTHOR: And she was getting them from other black kids or white kids?

MOTHER: Mostly it was black kids. I'm sure she has told me, "people always thought I was ugly, there was a time I used to think I was ugly," because me I always told my kids, "you people are beautiful."

> So mainly it was problems with the children, not the teachers. I don't think she had any problems with the teachers except when she was in that French school she had one problem with a teacher. But because the teacher would speak in her face and she is a fighter and she would tell the teacher "don't speak on my face you are spitting on me." [we both laughter]

The mother began our discussion by emphasizing her daughter's strength and the fact that she rarely had to worry about her daughters. Her mother discussed the bullying and skin bleaching, but in a way that emphasized the daughter's resilience. To conclude, and to illustrate her daughter's strength, the mother turned to another example where her daughter was not afraid to challenge authority. Her memory of her young daughter standing up to a teacher made us both laugh. As I went on to explain to her, my son shares her daughter's defiant personality and as I laugh I could not help but think of my son doing the same.

6. Conclusion

The excerpts I have presented in this paper do point to a number of significant advantages I had as a "native" researcher: I could speak Kiswahili, I understood references to life in Kenya, and I enjoyed being able to speak with others who understood where I come from. These factors were particularly important when interviewing the mother, who, like me, immigrated to Canada as an adult. I am much more than just an immigrant, however. As Narayan (1993) observes, our identities are complex. I was able to relate to these women as a mother, as a black woman, and as a young woman. These latter two factors played an important role in my interview with the daughter, who left

Kenya at a very young age. Despite very different experiences and memories of Kenya, we often related to one another on the basis of our experiences as young black women in Montreal.

The interaction also illustrates the value of paying close attention to cues that occur during an interview, in this case laughter. Locating instances of laughter in the interviews led me to some of the most important issues discussed: life in Kenya before immigration, the process of adaptation to life in Canada, and the struggles that come with belonging to a racialized minority. These issues are all important and would have been examined regardless. Laughter, however, allowed for an examination of an important issue that might otherwise have been overlooked or ignored: my positionality during these discussions. Considering laughter as a significant "event" in its own right helped me to develop an understanding beyond my Kenyan background and to evaluate the other kinds of connections that I shared with the participants.

But laughter is much more than a cue. Because it always invites a response and can serve to draw the interviewer and participant together, or perhaps drive them apart, it plays an important role in the dynamic of the interview itself (cf. Glenn, 2003). In this way, laughter not only served to help examine questions of identity subsequent to the interview, but may also have played a role in shaping how questions of identity emerged at different points of the interview process itself. On the basis of her interviews, Mahtani (2012) came to conclude that:

> ...the insider/outsider dualism was simply not a useful metaphor through which to understand my experiences. The boundary between myself and the interviewee was rarely stable and often porous, and I draw from Mullings, who insists that we pay greater attention to the 'situated knowledge of both parties in the interview encounter [and

> how it] engender[s] a level of trust and co-operation' (Mullings, 1999, p. 4 [sic]). She suggests it may be more productive to consider 'shared spaces' that are not informed by identity-based differences because identities based only on markers such as gender, race and class are not necessarily 'fail-safe indicators of an individual's positionality' (ibid.) (p. 159).

Perhaps the space occupied by laughter in an interview is one such "shared space." After all, laughter played an important role in easing the tensions that could have arisen as we discussed difficult topics, and helped us to recognize sameness whenever we both found humour in a given situation. In these ways, laughter encouraged a sense of camaraderie, and as a shared space may have encouraged the recognition of common identities at particular moments in our discussion.

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Bridge

In its entirety, this thesis examines the parenting strategies and well-being of Kenyan-Canadian parents and youth living in mixed families in Montreal. The first study is methodological, and examines the nature of the interaction between the researcher and the participants. It uses the occurrence of laughter during two interviews as an entry point to observe the relationships that emerge during the interviews themselves, and seeks to examine how this study is shaped by the fact that the author is also an immigrant who came to Canada from Kenya. Despite the methodological orientation, the study still introduces many of the major themes that will provide the basis for the analysis of parenting strategies and the well-being of youth. Following laughter through the two interviews, the paper includes discussion of the challenges that accompany adapting to life in Montreal, learning to live with racism, and the problems encountered in schools – all themes that will be further developed in the second paper.

The first study also establishes the manner in which the interview transcripts will be used throughout the thesis. Drawing upon the work of Abu-Lughod (1991), Narayan (1993), and Mahtani (2012), it suggests the need to pay close attention to the ways words and narratives emerged during the interviews. Because of this, both studies make extensive use of the transcribed interviews, and frequently include contextual exchanges between the interviewer and participants as well as the frequent code-switching between Kiswahili and English that characterizes Kenyan speech. This material is included so as to provide a more in depth understanding of the nature of the discussions themselves, and to offer as much detail as possible in order to inspire further study.

The second paper continues to use the interviews in a similar vein, but represents a more concerted attempt to examine the content of the interviews in a thematic way so as to directly address the research questions. This paper treats a number of themes that are of consequence for the Kenyan-Canadian parents and youth, including the willingness of the Kenyan-Canadian parents to accommodate the cultures of their spouses, the importance for the families of institutions maintained by other immigrant communities, and the challenges posed by Quebec's French language policies. The thesis is an exploratory study, and hopes that the discussions in the second paper will demonstrate the need for further studies of both small immigrant communities and other Anglo-African populations in Montreal.

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"My child is going to learn both cultures": Parenting Strategies and the well-being of Kenyan-Canadian youth living in mixed families in Montreal

Alexandra Williams

Department of Psychiatry, McGill University, Canada

Corresponding author:

Alexandra Williams

Div. of Social and Cultural Psychology, McGill University,

Youth Mental Health, CSSS de la Montagne (Parc Extension)

7085 Hutchison Street, Room 204.2,

Montreal, QC H3N 1Y9

Tel: (514) 273-3800 ext. 6593

Email: alexandra.williams2@mail.mcgill.ca

Abstract

Studies of immigrant well-being tend to orient themselves towards discrete, established, and highly visible ethnic communities, and thus risk ignoring individuals and families who belong to very small immigrant populations who often tend to marry across ethnic and racial lines. The purpose of this study is to examine the well-being of one such group: Kenyan-Canadian parents and their children living in ethnically- and racially-mixed families in Montreal. By exploring how they have adapted to life in their receiving society, this qualitative and ethnographic study hopes to address whether there are issues that are specific to such families. Five families were recruited using snowball sampling, and open-ended in-depth interviews were conducted. The results show that the Kenyan parents adopted a number of strategies to promote positive well-being in their children. Among these, they accommodated the cultures of their spouses and built important ties to institutions established by other ethnic communities in Montreal. Perhaps as a result, these families integrated into other immigrant communities sometimes as much, or more, than they have into the dominant francophone society. These results suggest that it is overly simplistic to frame the experience of immigrant families in terms of their relationship with a homogenous host society and underline the need to do more research on the lives of children within mixed families.

Keywords: Kenyan immigrants, mixed families, small immigrant populations, parenting strategies, integration, institutional completeness, transnationality, cultural brokerage, immigrant well-being

1. Introduction

MOTHER: ...they don't tell me, but from their faces I can tell they are, like, what are you doing here?

AUTHOR: Ok. And they didn't know you were her mother?

MOTHER: Yes. In fact one day I want you to ask when you interview [my daughter][5], ask her one day, there was this, near Christmas time we went to church. It was jam packed. We could not even get a seat. So when we were trying to find our way into the church, some ladies behind said, "What is this black person doing here?" [My daughter] overheard them because they did not expect that [she] speaks French, no ... [my husband's language].

AUTHOR: They said it in [your husband's language]?

MOTHER: They said it in [his language]. [My daughter] looked at them and [she] told me in [his language] "mummy" – she said it in [his language] to make sure that they heard – "mummy, they are asking what are you doing here, what is the black person doing here?" They were very shocked.

AUTHOR: Do you understand [your husband's language]?

MOTHER: Little bit.

AUTHOR: So she spoke to you.

MOTHER: She spoke to me and they were very, very shocked. They could not even look at me. I just told [her], "it's ok [my daughter] we are in the house of God (she pauses). You need to interview [her] about that. It shocked me, see. What I'm talking about – people, we must talk. Imagine we are in the house of God where we are supposed to be as one and we can still feel the rejection.

AUTHOR: And has that happened to you before?

MOTHER: In fact these are people who don't even come to church every Sunday, regularly like we do with [my daughter]. These are people who come once a year...

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[5] Names have been omitted to protect the identities of the participants. The ethnic identities of the participants and their spouses have also been omitted as this could allow for the participants to be identified given the small size of the Kenyan community in Montreal.

The mother in this story is a Kenyan-Canadian woman living in Montreal. She is describing an incident which took place at the church she attends – a church associated with her husband's community. The story illustrates some of the complexities that can emerge when one marries across ethnic and racial lines. She has clearly made efforts to integrate into her husband's community – she attends their church regularly and feels she belongs. She has acquired a basic knowledge of the language, while her daughter speaks it fluently. And yet, as she participates in an important community event, she is confronted by the fact that many will not accept her because of her skin colour. She is eager to tell this story, however, as the incident represents a victory over such prejudice: her daughter confronts the two women and helps her to assert her right to be there.

This study will examine the experiences of Kenyan-Canadian parents and youth in Montreal who belong to ethnically- and racially-mixed families. The goal is to document how children belonging to inter-racial and inter-ethnic families in small immigrant communities adapt to life in the receiving societies. The research is motivated by the following four questions. First, how do parents and children in mixed Kenyan-Canadian families perceive their own well-being? Do parents attempt to manage their children's impressions of life in Canada? Second, how are children living in these families constructing their identities? That is, how do they relate to the different communities they belong to, including the host society? Third, how do parents negotiate the diversity of values and cultural references within the family in order to provide guidance to their children? Finally, does the lack of a large Kenyan community in Montreal affect mixed Kenyan-Canadian families? The goal of this small qualitative study is to provide an exploratory in depth discussion of the experience of those families that can hopefully

motivate further research on the relatively understudied domain of mixed families' wellbeing.

2. Literature Review

2.1: Postcolonial Legacies and the Scholarship on Inter-racial Relationships

Ethnic and racial mixing has been the focus of a great deal of attention for centuries. The slave trade and European colonization of much of the world created environments where colonial powers devoted a great deal of energy to controlling, categorizing, documenting, and at times preventing, inter-racial marriage and sexual relations (Carrera, 2003; Stoler, 2010). The colonial need to categorize is best exemplified by Spanish *casta* paintings which attempted to delineate hundreds of racial categories resulting from the mixing of Europeans, Africans, and Amerindians (Carrera, 2003). In the United States, the infamous "one-drop rule" emerged from such codifications of race and ensured that the children of inter-racial couples were classified as being black, and thus subject to legal discrimination (Ho, Sidanius, & Levin, 2011).[6] Again in the United States, laws against inter-racial marriage remained in effect until as late as 1967 when the Supreme Court deemed them unconstitutional in *Loving v. Virginia* (Chito Childs, 2005; Golebiowska, 2007; Jacobson & Johnson, 2006). Canada did not criminalize racial mixing, but Thompson (2009) notes that "an informal and extra-legal regime" did exist to discourage such unions. Although these kinds of laws are generally no longer in place, contemporary attitudes and scholarship continue to be shaped by their legacies. Recent studies in the United States suggest that mixed-race individuals continue

[6] The "one drop rule" refers to the idea that any individual with any African ancestry is to be considered black (Ho et al., 2011; Khanna & Johnson, 2010).

to be perceived as "belonging to more than one racial group, but belonging more to their minority parent group than to the dominant parent group" (Ho et al., 2011, pp. 503-504). Further, Ho et al. (2011) have suggested that the threshold for recognition as white is higher among individuals with black and white parents than it is for either hispanic-white or asian-white mixed individuals, a fact that the authors have attributed to the existence of a racial hierarchy in the United States.

Popular attitudes towards inter-racial marriages are also influenced by such legacies. Brunsma (2005) notes that the end to legal prohibition in the United States, which he suggests amounted to a socio-cultural and legal endorsement of inter-racial relationships, produced a "biracial baby boom" that continues to this day. Bagley (1981) argues that colonialism left a "deeply rooted British racism," and that colonial policies rejecting "half-castes" resulted in pronounced negative attitudes towards racial mixing (p. 33-34). Song (2009), however, observes that rates of inter-racial marriage in Europe and Britain are much higher than in the United States, again likely in part a result of the latter's recent history of legalized racial segregation. Batson and colleagues (2006) surveyed inter-racial marriage patterns among native-born and immigrant black populations in the United States and suggest that the appreciation of the country's history of oppression is a key difference between the groups. They suggest "West Indian, Jamaican, or other immigrant Blacks in New York do not identify strongly with the history of racial oppression and discrimination experienced by native-born African Americans" (p. 660). The present author speculates that to the extent that this gives rise to different attitudes towards the white majority, it may affect the willingness of the various populations to engage in inter-racial marriage with whites inasmuch as it suggests

populations coming from places with histories of colonial and racial oppression may not draw parallels between their own pasts and those of their receiving society. This is, possibly due to the fact that African Americans remained a minority and continued to suffer discrimination in ways that those from postcolonial black-majority countries did not. It also suggests that divisions within the black community, which are often overlooked in discussions of intermarriage, may be significant.

Given the fact that historical legacies shape current attitudes, where intermarriage takes place may be an important consideration. In her discussion of intermarriage in the United States, Song (2009) suggests that "experiences of intermarriage will vary across and within different groups according to class, gender, and region. For example, being in a Black/White relationship in the Deep South of the USA will differ considerably from the experiences of a Black/White couple in New York City..." (p. 343). Therefore, she notes, "the specific ways in which intermarriage may or may not engender forms of integration must be explored in relation to different kinds of 'mixed' relationships in specific locations" (p. 343).

The scholarship on inter-racial marriage in Canada and Quebec is not nearly so developed as that in Britain or the United States – likely because of the much lower profile of Afro-Canadians in the country's history and politics (Hamplova & Le Bourdais, 2010). Hamplova and Le Bourdais (2010) note that slavery played a much smaller role in Canada's history, and the country's black populations are mainly the result of voluntary migration. Their study of inter-racial marriage found that blacks in Canada intermarried much more frequently than in the United States, where they are among the least likely to marry across racial lines. These findings were also supported by Hou and Myles (2013).

Hamplova and Le Bourdais (2010) also observed that there existed significant differences within the country, and that rates of inter-racial marriage were lower in Quebec where the French-Canadian population more generally displayed a "lower propensity to marry or cohabit with an immigrant" (p. 1552). Further, they suggest that this may also promote an increase in marriage between different ethnic groups because "as immigrants are 'pushed out' of the native [French Canadian] conjugal market, they are 'pushed towards' unions with other immigrants, including those of different racial origins" (p. 1552).

Similarly, there is very little scholarship on inter-racial marriage in Kenya. Although there is no longer a British colonial population, there are populations of European, Indian, and Arab descent in Kenya which means that inter-racial relationships can and do take place. There is also a significant tourist industry which may give rise to inter-racial relationships with Europeans and North Americans. Tensions can emerge from these relationships in cases where there are great disparities in wealth, as is often the case in those involving tourists (Kibicho, 2009; Meiu, 2009; Omondi, 2003). Although there is little academic research of inter-racial relationships in the country, the topic is common in popular media, blogs, and online discussion forums. These, however, are largely anecdotal and do not allow for an objective survey of Kenyan attitudes on inter-racial marriage. They do, however, when combined suggest that inter-racial marriage is emerging as a topic of discussion in the country.

Kenya's native population is ethnically diverse, and because of this, inter-ethnic relationships are bound to be more common than those that are inter-racial. The academic literature on these relationships has tended to gravitate towards highly visible and emotional disputes. The widely noted legal battle over the burial of S.M. Otieno in 1986-

1987 pitted two different family groups and ethnic traditions against each other. The deceased man's Kikuyu wife launched a court challenge which sought to bury her husband near their home in Nairobi, while his family fought to follow Luo custom and bury him in his ancestral community. The dispute arose over burial rights and revolved around the place of traditional law in modern Kenyan society. The trial captivated the nation generating intense media coverage and hence attracted the attention of scholars interested in questions of identity, tradition, and modernity in Africa (Cohen & Atieno Odhiambo, 1992; Gordon, 1995; Stamp, 1991; van Doren, 1988). In the end his Luo family won the case and he was buried in his ancestral land.

Following the 2007 presidential elections, ethnic violence erupted and media reports suggest that inter-ethnic families may have been targeted in some regions (Kennedy & Associated Press, 2008). The violence targeted people along ethnic lines in contested regions, and therefore placed those who intermarried in a very difficult situation, as they could not seek safety within a single affiliated ethnic community. Again, this may not be representative of widespread disapproval given the exceptional nature of the events and the degree to which they were politically orchestrated. Both of these cases do suggest, however, that such marriages in Kenya have the potential to become politically charged and therefore controversial.

2.2: Searching for Meaning in Mixed-Marriages

The early literature on intermarriage was based primarily upon quantitative research examining trends at a societal level. Researchers were interested in examining rates of intermarriage in order to understand the dynamics of inter-racial and inter-ethnic

contact. Early theories reflect this, and use data on these marriages to discuss a variety of themes relating to social structures and the social distance between the groups in question. This research frequently relied on census data, and therefore was national in its orientation.

Examining inter-racial marriage in the United States, Merton (1941) and Davis (1941) developed the "Status Exchange Theory" which suggested that highly educated black men married white women in order to benefit from their racial privilege:

> ...in a racio-caste system where the dominant philosophy and structure is not that of caste but of equalitarian democracy, the class achievement of certain Negro males enables them to bargain for females of the white caste who stand low in the class hierarchy. Such females can gain more by marrying a well-off or superior Negro than by marrying a white man of their own class (Davis, 1941, p. 389).

Status exchange theory remains influential to this day, and continues to inform research on intermarriage, although debates as to its validity are on-going (Hou & Myles, 2013). Using 1990 United States census data, Fu (2001) argues that status-exchange theory best describes the marriage behaviour of African-Americans and Mexican-Americans, but not those of Japanese ancestry. Hou and Myles (2013) also suggest that the theory holds for African-Americans in the United States, but not for the resident Caribbean black population, nor for the black population in Canada. Notably, their research suggests that diversity within the entire black population of the United States may be significant.

Research supporting status exchange theory, however, has been aggressively criticized for lacking a rigorous empirical foundation. Rosenfeld (2001, 2010) argues that much of the analysis supporting the theory rests on statistical models that rely on dubious

assumptions, and that in fact the data used by researchers instead supports wide-ranging marital homogamy. In other words, people tend to marry others with similar educational and class backgrounds and this holds for inter-racial couples as well as intra-racial couples. Notably, Rosenfeld suggests that greater attention to qualitative research is needed to counter the shortcomings of statistical modelling. As he notes, "the ethnographic evidence indicates that interracial unions are formed along a basis of solidarity and affection and personal choice, not a basis of exchanges" (2001, pp. 1319-1320).

A second theory that has been widely proposed links intermarriage to assimilation. Cretser and Leon (1985) suggest that while status exchange theory may be appropriate to explain inter-racial marriage, it often fails to explain inter-ethnic marriage. They suggest the latter can be better understood as contributing to and being an indicator of assimilation. Qian and Lichter (2007) argue that the increase in intermarriage since the 1970s suggests that social distance between many ethnic and racial groups is declining, and that the growing number of biracial youth "blurs racial boundaries ... and raises new questions about simple binary conceptions of race" (p. 3). Dribe and Lundh (2008) argue that the length of time immigrants have spent in the host society plays an important role in determining the likelihood of intermarriage, and that in this context, such marriages are indicative of integration into the receiving society.

Variants of this theory have also been proposed in order to better understand how the process of assimilation interacts with intermarriage. Advocates of structural assimilation theory emphasize the important role of educational institutions in promoting "universalistic and democratic norms, which tend to break down group barriers"

(Gullickson, 2006, p. 675). In particular, higher levels of education have been found to correlate with "abstract principles of racial equality, including support for interracial marriage and opposition to anti-miscegenation laws" (Gullickson, 2006). Proponents of structural assimilation therefore suggest that educated individuals are more likely to intermarry. The second common variant is segmented assimilation theory. This approach allows for the examination of the diversity of experiences within immigrant populations. Dribe and Lundh (2008) note that some immigrant groups do assimilate into host societies, while others remain distinct. The latter is particularly true of those that are marginalized or subjected to discrimination. Segmented assimilation suggests that the experiences of earlier generations of immigrants of the same ethnicity will influence the perception of options available to new immigrants. In other words, if a new immigrant belongs to a marginalized group intermarriage may not be seen as an acceptable choice to one or both of the communities in question. At the same time, however, an immigrant who joins a community that has assimilated may find intermarriage is accepted to a greater degree, and therefore is more of a possibility.

The final theory frequently used to explain intermarriage emphasizes the importance of contact between groups. This theory does not necessarily contradict either of the previous two, but suggests that the mechanisms by which different groups encounter one another must be considered. Close, positive contact may lead to higher rates of intermarriage, while isolation or negative contact may not (Gullickson, 2006; Heaton & Albrecht, 1996; Johnson & Jacobson, 2005). Johnson and Jacobson (2005) note that "intergroup relations are enhanced most fully when the contact is intimate, personal, and friendly, and, ideally, involves several individuals of the other group " (p.

388). Further, recognizing the importance of contact emphasizes the need to consider different social environments. The nature and intensity of contact will vary depending on when, where and why people are associating with one another.

Debate is ongoing on the merits of the theories that have been generated through quantitative research. However, the value of the quantitative analyses will only be as good as the data available as differences between the various generations of national census data, and, in particular, the ways racial identities are categorized may be problematic. This is particularly true in cases where interracial or mixed race individuals and households are being considered (Qian & Lichter, 2007).

Qualitative research has moved beyond a focus on the mixed couples themselves, and broadened the inquiry to include parenting strategies. Working with bi-racial families in Britain, Twine developed the concept of "racial literacy," which she uses to "explore micro-cultural social processes in which racial hierarchies are negotiated within multiracial families" (2004, p. 881). Her research focused on white parents who sought to teach their mixed children to identify with their black ancestry and to learn to recognize and cope with racial discrimination. She names this awareness and attention to racial hierarchy "racial cognizance":

> I use the term 'racial cognizance' to refer to white parents who identified racism as a serious problem for their children and had concluded that it is either undesirable or impossible for their children to manage 'everyday racisms' if they are not taught how to identify and respond to racial hierarchies and resist racisms (Twine, 2004, pp. 882-883).

Twine's research is important because it expands consideration of how families deal with racism to include those parents who do not belong to a racial minority and did not

necessarily grow up being educated to deal with racial discrimination.

In line with this approach, Caballero, Edwards, and colleagues (Caballero, Edwards, & Puthussery, 2008; Caballero, Edwards, & Smith, 2008; Edwards, Ali, Caballero, & Song, 2012) have also examined the strategies of intermarried parents, focusing on the kinds of negotiations that take place when raising mixed children. They note three general strategies often adopted by the parents of mixed children: first, a "pro-race" strategy that encourages mixed children to identify with the race of the visible-minority parent (i.e. a "pro-black strategy"); second, a "pro-race" strategy that encourages the child to identify as "mixed-race;" and, third, a "post-race" strategy that encourages the child not to identify in terms of race, but to identify in terms of other criteria like class or gender (Edwards, Song, Caballero, & Ali, 2012, p. 2).

In his study of Spanish-Senegambian intermarriage in Spain, Rodriguez-Garcia has written about the "dynamics of conflict and accommodation" that take place inside of mixed-race families as each parent attempts to pass on those inter-generational values they feel are most important (2006, p. 421). His research suggests that such negotiations can often be very difficult, and may be further complicated by conflicting expectations with respect to gender roles: according to him, "many of the Senegambians interviewed argue that the main obstacle to the transmission of socio-cultural values in mixed couples is the fact that the children spend more time with the Spanish mother than the Senegambian father" (2006, p. 422).

This study will follow the recent qualitative research in privileging the voices of the participants themselves. While it will ask many of the same questions considered in the literature above, it will attempt to situate them in the context of the act of migration

and their experience of daily life in Montreal. The study will prioritize how parents and children frame their experiences and pay particular attention to racial literacy and parenting strategies. This of course will highlight negotiations that take place between parents in mixed families. Further, it will consider the experiences of a very small immigrant group, and challenges that may arise from the lack of an established ethnic community. Finally, the Kenyan participants are Anglo-Africans living in a province that is predominantly French, thus the study will consider the issues surrounding language and immigration in Quebec.

3. Research Design and Method

3.1: Methodology: Mixed Marriage and the Well-Being of Children

Researchers are taking findings formulated through quantitative research and engaging them through a qualitative approach. This enables an examination of the theories discussed above that better consider the understandings and attitudes of those living in ethnically- and racially-mixed families. Because of this, much of this work is characterized by the use of "thick description" and subjective voice (on thick description see Geertz, 1973). Edwards et al. (2010) describe the importance of this approach: "the main basis for the 'transferability' of the lessons of qualitative research is 'thick description', that is, giving the reader enough rich contextual information so that they can judge whether or not the arguments being put forward are applicable to, or 'fit' with other contexts" (p. 953). The goal of much of this work is to better appreciate and describe racial and ethnic mixing in the context of daily life (Caballero, Edwards, Goodyer, & Okitikpi, 2012; Edwards, Ali, et al., 2012; Rodriguez Garcia, 2006).

This study adopted a qualitative research design which is appropriate given the small sample size and its desire to engage Kenyan-Canadian understandings of their experiences in Montreal (Creswell, 2007). Because constructivism suggests that reality is always understood in a subjective way, a constructivist paradigm was also adopted. In other words, it is necessary to understand that people may experience and interpret reality differently, especially people from different cultural backgrounds (Creswell, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). As this study is concerned with the experiences of those living in "mixed families," a constructivist paradigm is ideal because it assumes their understanding is valid though it may differ significantly from that of academic researchers. Finally, the study used an ethnographic methodological approach as Ethnography is interested in describing the collective understanding of a cultural group, this fits well with the goals of this study (Creswell, 2007).

3.2: Participant recruitment

The study recruited Kenyan-Canadian parents and children living on the island of Montreal and its surrounding suburbs. Because the Kenyan-Canadian population in Montreal is very small, the snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants and the inclusion criteria for families were not overly restrictive (Abdul-Quader, Heckathorn, Sabin, & Saidel, 2006; Spring et al., 2003). Families were selected as long as one of the parents was born in Kenya, and subsequently immigrated to Canada. The study was described to potential participants who were later asked to recommend other Kenyan-Canadian families who fit the study's criteria. These participants would then be asked to recommend others, and so on. Because this sampling method relies on networks

of participants, it helped me understand the relationships among the Kenyan-Canadian families living in Montreal (Scott, 2008).

As a result, five families agreed to participate in the study and four declined. Such a small sample may be unavoidable given the size of the Kenyan-Canadian population in Montreal. The sample size, however, is appropriate given the nature of the qualitative, ethnographic fieldwork undertaken. Limitations arising from the recruitment process will be discussed later.

3.3: Data Collection

The interviews took place in the homes of the participants or at their work. It was important for parents and children to feel at ease as they were being interviewed and therefore participants were asked where they wanted to meet. All chose home or workplace. Interviews were conducted in English and Kiswahili, the two national languages of Kenya, and in *Sheng*, an urban "slang" engendered in Nairobi, favoured by Kenyan youth. Often a single interview involved all three.

Because the study included children it was very important to establish rapport and gain the trust of both parents and their children. For this reason it was essential that informed consent was not just an ethical issue but granted only when participants fully understood what the study entailed (American Anthropological Association, 1998; World Medical Association, 2008). According to Green and Thorogood (2009), participants should not be coerced, but must voluntarily agree to take part in a study. Participants were made aware that they were free to withdraw at any stage of the study. Further, language was used that was appropriate for the age of the subject, and "the objective of

the study, who is funding and conducting it, the risks involved, how the data will be handled, and who can be contacted for further information" (Green & Thorogood, 2009, p. 69) was discussed before signing consent and assent forms. Parents were asked to sign consent forms for themselves and their children. The children were also asked to sign assent forms. Explicit consent was also required for the audio recording of interviews. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and the procedures for storage and use of the recorded interviews were fully explained.

One open-ended in-depth and semi-structured interview was undertaken with each individual. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. Except for one family, parents and their children were interviewed separately.[7] In the semi-structured portion of the interviews, background information like age of children, place of origin in Kenya, languages spoken, and length of stay in Canada was gathered. Further questions for parents included: How would you describe your life in Kenya? Are you the first members of your family to leave Kenya? How does life in Canada compare to your life in Kenya? Does your family associate with other Kenyans in Montreal? How are your children doing in school? Questions for the children included: Have you been to Kenya? What language(s) do you speak in your home? How would you describe your relationship with peers in your neighbourhood? How are you doing in school? Do you identify with an ethnic or racial group in Montreal? If yes, which one? Why? Do others associate you with an ethnic or racial group? Does this pose problems for you?

[7] The children in the one family interviewed as a whole were young, shy, and did not have English as a first language. Because of this, the mother thought it would be easiest if she was present. Her presence helped as she was able to translate from English to the children's mother tongue.

Open-ended interviews are necessary so that participants are free to voice their concerns and express what they feel is most important (Hollan, 2005). Creswell (2007) notes that such unstructured interviews "may actually provide participants considerable control over the interview process" and of course put them at ease (p.123). Conducting open-ended interviews creates a need for collaboration between the researcher and participant in directing the study towards issues that informants feel are relevant to their lives. This form of interaction allows the researcher to pay close attention to the participants' understanding of what is important. In this way, the role of the participants in this study is complicated. As Levy (1989, as cited in Hollan, 2005) observes:

> Individuals being interviewed are used in part as *informants*, providing their own presumably objective reports, views, and interpretations of phenomena related to [psychological experience]. At the same time they serve as *respondents*, objects of systematic study in themselves, in which their discourse—and in particular the *forms* of that discourse and their behavior as they talk—indicates something about the organization of [psychological experience] in that particular individual (p. 463).

Subjectivity highlights the discrepancies that may exist between academic interpretations of issues versus the culturally informed viewpoint of individuals. In this way, this study aspires to the view that participants are considered to be informants with knowledge rather than simply subjects of study (cf. Weber on Verstehen, Weber, 1947).

3.4: Data Analysis and Representation

Creswell (2007) notes that it is rarely possible to separate the various research steps – it is almost always necessary to undertake them simultaneously. Because of this, he observes, "the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach" (p.150). In light of this, data analysis and

interpretation began while interviews were still being conducted. The first step in this process was to transcribe interviews from audio to text. Interviews were conducted in English, Kiswahili, and *Sheng* and were later translated verbatim. However, critical concepts or terms in *Sheng* and Kiswahili were not translated, so that their translation could become the subject of explicit discussion (Green & Thorogood, 2009).

The transcripts were coded manually as per the method outlined in Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). The interviews undertaken with the children and parents were then analysed separately. They allowed for the identification of shared understandings by members of each group. Once this was done, the two sets of interviews were then compared to establish common understandings and significant differences. As Suarez-Orosco et al. (2008) suggest, this sort of comparison can help to better understand the significance of what children and parents are saying. They note the necessity to "establish concurrence and disconnection in what youth say they do, what others say they do, and what we saw them do" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008, p. 16).

4. Findings

4.1: Migration and Transnationality

The academic literature on intermarriage appears to be oriented primarily towards discrete nations or regions (i.e. the United States and Canada, or Europe and North America) and mixed couples are frequently discussed in terms of their relationship with a single "host society." Further, the focus rests primarily on Western nations receiving immigrants from the developing world, and emphasizes relationships between native-born populations of European-descent and non-Europeans who are often visible

minorities. This may hinder studies of inter-ethnic and inter-racial marriages that involve migration between multiple countries. Immigrants may migrate indirectly, and to understand their experience it may be necessary to consider more than one receiving or host society (Greenwood & Young, 1997). This is particularly true should societal attitudes towards intermarriage in potential receiving countries become a driving force in family decisions concerning migration.

The interviews with the participants in this study suggest the need to consider a broader frame of reference. To understand the marriages of these particular Kenyans in Montreal, it is necessary to examine them in the context of their migration to Canada. How and why they came matters if we are to understand the nature of the community here and the nature of their integration into a host society. Finally, it is also necessary to consider the relationships they maintain with other people and places. Coming to Montreal meant building ties to a new place but did not necessarily entail ending the ties they already had with places in Kenya and around the world.

Of the five individuals, three came to pursue post-secondary education. The first came having already married in Kenya, and was coming to join her husband, then a graduate student at an English-language university. The second attended university, then left Montreal to continue studies abroad, and later returned having married a non-Kenyan. The third came as a student, stayed, and eventually married a non-Kenyan in Montreal. The final two participants came to the country because they had married Montrealers abroad. One of these had left Kenya for work, met and married a Canadian while working overseas, and subsequently came to Quebec. The other married in Kenya and then migrated to Canada. Of the participants, all except the first had all of their children in

Canada.

Further, the Kenyans in this study tended to marry Canadians who belonged to non-Kenyan immigrant communities: one from a diasporic population with its origins in the Middle East, another from Asia, and one from a Franco-African community. One of the participants first married a white Francophone from Quebec, and subsequently re-married an Anglo-African. This immediately points to the difficulty of defining a host society in the context of a large and diverse city like Montreal. The Kenyans married into a diversity of communities and had to establish ties not only with the broader host societies of Quebec and Canada, but with individual immigrant communities within the city.

The participants who came to Quebec to study did not necessarily intend to stay long term. As one of them recalled:

> MOTHER: Honestly, at that time we had not even thought of immigrating or staying here forever because of the language problem.... English-French.
>
> AUTHOR: So you thought you were going back after you finished your studies, *utarudi nyumbani* [you will return home]? That's what you thought initially?
>
> MOTHER: Yes, yes. Actually, I had those intentions to go back home.... Yes, and then actually I went back home to visit and then relatives are dying. Kenya itself had such problems – you know our Kenyan shilling, the rates falling.... So they said okay, if you want to stay you have to apply officially, and I did that and when we were still waiting I was in touch with my people back home and I went back a few times and saw the standard of living had deteriorated.
>
> AUTHOR: When you went back?
>
> MOTHER: Yes, and so I decided I can help my family better if I can be here even though the work that was available for immigrants, it's low class, because caregiving was nothing that we wanted to do back

home.

It is worth noting that the decision was taken as she travelled back and forth and that staying in Canada did not mean abandoning Kenya. Further, the decision was made with how best to support family in Kenya as one of the main considerations.

Another also recalled a long period of uncertainty as she agonized over whether to stay or return home:

> MOTHER: I was crying and when winter came I got so depressed. My husband was a student at [university]. He would come home ... and he would find me crying and I would tell him I want to go back to Kenya, I want to go back. And you know, that time when you came, because it was two-way so that you could get a visa, and then you could return the ticket and get some of the refund. So every day he would ask me are you staying or you are going back? So me, every day I was going back, every day I was going back to Kenya.
>
> AUTHOR: *Leo naenda, leo naenda* [I am going back today, I am going back today]...
>
> MOTHER: Until the ticket expired and we never got our little money back (she laughs). Because he was not sure to return the ticket and we get something little or he has to wait until I decide if I'm going to stay or going back.

For these Kenyans, the initial adjustment to their new country was very difficult and it was common to question whether or not to stay. This tendency may have been even greater given that many were international students whose studies only last for finite periods of time (on international students as migrants, see Collins, 2012). One of the participants did in fact leave Canada to further his studies and career overseas after finishing his degree. It was only because of a professional job in his field that he later decided to move back to Montreal.

Choosing to settle in Montreal did not mean cutting ties with family abroad,

however. All of these participants have family in Kenya, and in numerous other countries around the world. As one of the children noted, migration was common within her extended family:

> DAUGHTER: ...okay, on my father's side he has a brother who is a diplomat so he was always travelling. He also has another brother who just left, up and left, and his nephew, I mean his, well my Dad's, nephew, he also went to different parts of the country in the States.... And on my mother's side, her sister, she came, she followed us right after – maybe four years I think.
>
> AUTHOR: To Canada?
>
> DAUGHTER: Yeah – five years after we came here my aunt came here... but she also, my aunt as well, she also travelled to Italy, Dubai – she has always been a traveller. So after we moved here, she came right after and the rest of my cousins now are in different parts...
>
> AUTHOR: ...of the world, basically.
>
> DAUGHTER: Yeah.

Another also described a family member leaving Kenya for work:

> AUTHOR: ...are you the first member of your family to leave Kenya or do you have other people in your family [who have left]?
>
> MOTHER: I had a stepsister ... who was an engineer.... She left Kenya. She was supposed to be back, and by the time I was leaving Kenya she had not come back.... but I hear she's back home [now].

Here, the social class of the participants is evident as they discuss their families' histories of migration. Many migrants from Africa and elsewhere leave their homeland for new opportunities and adventure. But leaving Kenya is not easy. These families, however, were able to use professional and educational qualifications to migrate. In this respect, they may be typical of African immigrants who are frequently highly educated individuals (Batson et al., 2006).

The individuals in this study did not come to Montreal as part of a chain-

migration pattern (on chain migration see Lievens, 1998; MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). Most of the participants did not migrate to find a home, but rather came to find institutions or employment that would meet their educational and professional needs. Others came because they had married Montrealers overseas. In both cases, the nature of their migration helps to explain why they ended up staying in Montreal rather than seeking out cities with larger Kenyan communities. In other words, the participants in this study did not come to Montreal in order to definitively abandon their lives in Kenya.

In Spain, Rodriguez-Garcia (2006) has examined the relationships Senegambians in mixed marriages maintain with their country of origin and suggests it is necessary to understand these people as living in a "situation of transnationality," which involves "a constant flow of contacts, goods and information between the society of origin and the society of immigration" (p. 424). Notably, the ties to both old and new societies can be strong enough to call into question their attachment to either: "for some of the interviewees, the situation of transmigration means not belonging anywhere: they feel that they belong *neither* here *nor* there. In fact, transnationality involves dealing with multiple localisations and cultural backgrounds (here *and* there)"(p. 424). In an age of increasing globalization, the people interviewed for this study are part of a diaspora and come from a country where migration overseas is a common occurrence (and even more common desire). Rodriguez-Garcia's transnationality may not be an exact fit for these Kenyan-Canadians. Few of them would suggest they no longer belonged in Kenya and all expressed the desire that their children belong in Montreal. His suggestion that strong ties to multiple places exist, however, will be important in how we contextualize the issues of race and identity that confront the participants in this study.

4.2: Racial Literacy and Cognizance

Coming to Canada our Kenyan respondents were confronted with what it means to be black. They are coming from a country where they are part of the majority, and where there is no systemic racism against people with black skin (cf. Lashley, 2000). The situation becomes even more complicated once parenting becomes involved. These parents have to learn not only to deal with discrimination in their personal and professional lives, but also how to respond and advise their children when they too encounter racism. The challenge for these Kenyan-Canadians is to raise children who face social situations that were never a part of their own childhoods. Those in mixed marriages may face further challenges, as their experiences may differ significantly from those of their spouses.

The participants spoke about how difficult it was to come to terms with life in Montreal, and to the discrimination they encountered. As one remarked:

> MOTHER: ...I miss that comfort that I used to have back home. See here I am an immigrant, there is that thing behind my back. It's like I'm carrying a load of "I'm an immigrant" but back home in Kenya I'm not an immigrant. That is my country .... I'm me. I'm myself.
>
> AUTHOR: So here, home *ulikuwa unaona ni kama* you are yourself. *Wewe ni wewe.*[So here, at home you felt like you were yourself. You are you]
>
> MOTHER: *Nikiangalia* right left *ni mimi tu niko kwetu niko* home.... but here I am constantly reminded that I am an immigrant. [If I look right-left, I am at home… but here I am constantly reminded I am an immigrant].

For this woman, being an immigrant was closely tied to her being black:

> AUTHOR: So you feel like everywhere you go, that's an immigrant, that's

not a Canadian. You are different.

MOTHER: Yeah. We are labelled by the colour of our skin. And it's like everyday here I feel like I have to prove.... I have to work extra hard. There is nothing wrong in working extra hard, but this feeling of being reminded through body language, not just perception, is really annoying.

This sense of not belonging was echoed in another interview which emphasized the lack of understanding that accompanies the immigrant experience:

MOTHER: When you come here, it's like you keep explaining yourself to everyone.... And nobody understands you simply, and there is a lot of misunderstandings that goes on. That is why people miss back home.... Yes, you don't fit very well in a foreign land.

This same woman also spoke about the discrimination she feels comes with having black skin:

AUTHOR: *unaona tu* either *wewe hata bado unastruggle*, *unaona tu rangi inakuwa shida kwako?* [you feel that you still struggle, and that your colour is a problem for you?]

MOTHER: *inakuwa shida, imekuwa shida.* [it's a problem, it has been a problem]

AUTHOR: That's hurtful. It's hurtful *hata mimi* sometimes *pia na feel hivyo, ile hata kama unatry* sometimes *kitu kidogo inakukumbusha uko* different. *Na hautawai* no matter *hata ujaribu aje wewe ni mwafrika*. [That's hurtful. It's hurtful I feel that way sometimes, that when you try sometimes something small reminds you that you are different. And no matter how much you try you are black]

MOTHER: *hii unyeusi.... unatreatiwa* different *uko* educated, but your education is not recognized because of your colour. [this colour…you are treated different even though you are educated, but your education is not even recognized because of your colour]

AUTHOR: But *wewe umefind imekustop ku* achieve what you want? [But have you found that it has stopped you from achieving what you want?]

MOTHER: Yes it did, because you find that after you succeeded it was a long struggle. Or, it was bits and pieces. It's not a whole – I couldn't even do what I wanted to do, like go back to Kenya and do what I

want to do, *inakuwa ni inarudishi mtu nyuma* [it becomes something that holds you back].

AUTHOR: Oh yeah. *Unapata rangi inarudisha mtu nyuma? Sa unaona ungekuwa mzungu, unafikiri ungekuwa mzungu ungekuwa mtu tofauiti*? [Oh yeah. You find that your race can hold you back? You feel if you were white, you think if you were white you would have been someone different?]

MOTHER: *Ningekuwa nimesha* settle. *Hata pengine ningekuwa* na three houses at least. [I would have settled. Maybe even I would own three houses at least]

AUTHOR: *Wewe unafikiria hivyo*? [Do you think that way?]

MOTHER: Hmm, yes.

AUTHOR: So *unaona inakuwa kama* negative *kwako*. [So you feel it has been a negative for you]

Finally, she spoke about the kinds of employment available when she arrived in Montreal, and the difficulty she had finding good work:

MOTHER: ...you don't know back then, these white people would not give you the jobs that your people can do. Actually if you want to notice anything that is going on, any job that they are giving to immigrants, especially blacks, whether you have qualifications or not, are jobs that their own people are not doing .... Like that care giving ... they want to be polite, to call it nursing. They give [it] to black people because that is a job their own people don't want. They call it a dirty job like cleaning jobs.

Their initial encounters with racism in Montreal represent an important milestone in the lives of the participants. The memories remain vivid because they relate to moments when these people were confronted with the fact that their skin colour shaped the way they were perceived and influenced the kinds of opportunities and interactions that would be available.

For the Kenyans in mixed marriages, however, such discrimination could prove far more immediate. It was not simply a question of facing discrimination in one's

professional life. As the opening vignette demonstrates, those who married into other communities faced possible discrimination in community and family functions (cf. Caballero, Edwards, & Puthussery, 2008; Nadal, Sriken, Davidoff, Wong, & McLean, 2013). The incident in the church shows that rejection in such venues is particularly hurtful as it is not expected and because it directly contradicts the sorts of interactions people feel should take place in such important and intimate settings. One participant spoke of being confronted by her husband's brother while she was living with his family:

> MOTHER: ...my own brother-in-law did not accept me. I remember because before we got our place we lived in his house at [a neighbourhood in Montreal] along with my mother in law. Of course we shower every day back home. One day he told me on the hallway "you will never be white no matter how much showers."
>
> FRIEND OF PARTICIPANT PRESENT FOR THE INTERVIEW: Oh my god! No, I would have slapped his face.
>
> MOTHER: And now we are... enemies. And this hatred has gone on up until now and he is also the cause of my marriage [breaking up]...

Of course, for those participants who married non-Kenyan Africans, it is unlikely they would face the same sort of overt racism as that described above. However, we should not ignore the diversity within African and black populations and the tensions that can emerge (Batson et al., 2006; Rivers, 2012).

The children also faced racism. Some spoke at length about their experiences. One girl, who left Kenya at a young age, recalls the difficulty she faced fitting in at school:

> DAUGHTER: In the beginning, I didn't like my life in Montreal. When I started going to school I was ostracized.... I find kids were like uneducated back in the days. So when they found out I was from Africa, they automatically affiliated it to like Somali kids, kids who were hungry and starving with like big bellies. So I had very few

friends when I first got here.

Other children, whose intermarried parents spent significant amounts of time in their mother's country, felt they faced more racism there, and hence tended to see Montreal in a positive light as a more welcoming environment. The boy in question discusses an impending trip to his mother's country of origin:

AUTHOR: ...you are going to have fun there. You should be excited.

SON: (talks to mother in her language, mother laughs)

MOTHER: Because in [our country] all, everybody, is [from the country]. Everybody calls him foreigner (we laugh)

AUTHOR: They see you now as a foreigner, but you say I'm [from your country] too.

MOTHER: Yeah.

AUTHOR: But they are like no, no, no, you are a foreigner. But they are nice to you?

SON: No.

AUTHOR: A little bit?

SON: Yeah. A little bit.

AUTHOR: Why do you say a little bit (he hesitates to answer). It's okay. Why do you say a little bit?

SON: I don't like the way people (mother speaks to son in her language)... I don't like when they call me a foreigner.

AUTHOR: Okay. And do you tell them?

SON: (Lowers voice) They still call me.

The boy must confront racism in a community to which he belongs – he speaks the language, has lived much of his life in his mother's society, but is visibly different. This is similar to the scene in the church discussed above, and to the instance where the

Kenyan woman had to deal with her brother-in-law. Having to confront racism in one's own community may be particularly difficult, may challenge the allegiances of other family members, and is an experience that may be somewhat unique to those in mixed families (Caballero, Edwards, & Puthussery, 2008; Chito Childs, 2005). As will be discussed later, it may also present challenges particular to parents in mixed families.

Other children spoke about the tensions that could arise within Montreal's black communities – particularly at school. One girl recalled coming to Montreal and having great difficulty with other black students:

> DAUGHTER: ... I always found I had a knack to being made fun of. One thing for me, me being dark-skinned was a big problem to a lot of people. It made me really get down. I was down, down, down. I was trying to keep up but my emotional side of me was down. That whole thing, it was not worth to be there. They were like, "you're ugly. You're skinny. You don't eat....." I always had a friend, but it was never a black person. It was always a white person.
>
> AUTHOR: The black kids made fun of you and they just didn't want to hang out with you, because?
>
> DAUGHTER: Hmm. Ignorance. When I look at it now, it's ignorance.... At that time I thought it was something wrong with me.... Something was wrong with me and I needed to make a change. When I get older I was gonna change it. I don't know how, but I was gonna change it. So that was elementary (short laugh).

Today, this girl's closest friends are from the same Caribbean communities that she had so much trouble with when she was much younger:

> DAUGHTER: ...I definitely associate with the West Indians. My best friends, two of them are Jamaicans, one of them is from St. Vincent and Barbados Island. So I tend to hang out more with the West Indian culture.
>
> AUTHOR: So this is the group you made more friends with. Because when you were young you found that the black kids really did not associate with you more?

DAUGHTER: Hmm.

AUTHOR: And they were kids from where?

DAUGHTER: They were West Indians.

AUTHOR: So when you were young, but now when you are older it's the group you are more close to?

DAUGHTER: It's because of the fact that I grew up with them in the church. They were my friends in church, and not only church... we all went to camp together for like a week. So we got closer. There would be events. We always had to come together, we were at choir practice together. There was always something that kept us together so we were always the four of us that kept us together. Those are my only friends in the whole wide world.... We helped each other along the way to overcome a lot of things.

It is worth noting the important role played by institutions. Unlike the parents, who might have greater control over who they associate with, children were thrust into a variety of settings that could have a great deal of influence over their social relationships.

Parents also spoke about the difficulty of dealing with inter-ethnic prejudice directed towards their children. One mother noted that her daughter didn't open up about her experiences at school until she was older:

MOTHER: You know, our children are those children that don't complain. Right now when I speak to them they tell me about the experiences that I didn't know.... Yes they made friends, and him too (referring to her son). She was saying "I knew I was trying to fit in and I was even ashamed to let people know I was African." They had these children from the Caribbean. Especially the Caribbean people think they are more high class than us. You know these Caribbean people, they were looking down, like being African, they have this mentality that being an African, that we live in the trees.... And then she would tell them "I am from [a non-African country] because my dad comes from [there]." She used to feel good saying that she was from there.

The girl in question denied her Kenyan heritage to avoid the stigma she felt was attached to an African identity. As Khanna and Johnson (2010) observe, "passing" is one way for

individuals to disassociate themselves from a stigmatized identity and may be selectively applied in certain social settings. They write about mixed individuals choosing to pass as black, but here the strategy is used within the black community by a girl who is not mixed. Her effort to hide her African roots illustrates the tensions that can accompany the diversity within the black community in Montreal.

As the passage suggests, her daughter's problems were primarily with other students. The girl's relationships with teachers were generally good and she did well in school. Her son, however, did have problems in high school and she places great emphasis on the challenges that confront young black men:

> MOTHER: I find here, as a parent, as a mother, if you don't stand your ground you are going to lose your male child. The girls do very well. I never had any problems with the girls.... But if you are not firm with the male children... they will never finish school, they will never be anything. They end up being nothing.... Because in everything from the school, from the community, from the police, everything, they are bombarded with negatives everywhere. If not in school, [it] is when they are walking and the police officer decides to stop them and question them and harass them.

She proceeded to talk at length about times when the police harassed her son. The experiences of her children illustrate the paradox that her family faced in Montreal. She clearly feels many in the local black community were hesitant to accept them. At the same time, she is aware of the fact that the police treat her son in the same ways they treat other black youth (on black youth and police, see James, 1998; Lashley et al., 2005; Neugebauer-Visano, 1996). It is almost as if her family, in the first years following their immigration, lived with the disadvantages of being black while being denied those advantages that required ties to the local black community. This, however, was a passing phase and they eventually did form strong bonds with members of Montreal's Anglo-

Caribbean community. Notably, the youngest daughter who was born in Montreal has not experienced any of the problems her older sibling spoke about, and has friends from a variety of diverse backgrounds.

For the Kenyan parents, such racism was not a part of their own childhoods. Learning to recognize and protect their children from it was part of adapting to life in Montreal. One mother spoke about an incident at her child's school:

> MOTHER: ...there is this child.... I think she saw that [my daughter] is sort of different from them, how she looks, her hair... So they realized that she is different and she was sort of bullying her. So I told [my daughter] to try and handle the child [but] that did not stop. So I decided to speak to the parents.
>
> AUTHOR: Did she talk to teachers about the kid?
>
> MOTHER: Yes. They did speak and they resolved [the issue], so now they are good friends.
>
> AUTHOR: So the teachers were able to help with the situation, or after you talked to the parents?
>
> MOTHER: It was actually first I spoke with the parents and the parent told me she is going to speak with her daughter and [my daughter] also spoke to the teacher about it. I think first [my daughter] spoke with the teacher and she didn't see any changes until she told me and I spoke with the mother and the whole thing was stopped.

Subsequently, this mother says, her daughter has had no problems at school. The school in question is private and affiliated with the ethnic group to which the girl's father belongs. Because of this, it is not as diverse as a public school and the girl in question is one of very few children of colour. Interestingly, the mother believes her daughter's example and success as a student has served to improve attitudes towards her own participation in the school's community:

> MOTHER: ... at the school, I'll tell you one day for the first time I went to the school meeting, everybody looked at me and of course the body

> language said that you are not welcome here. What changed that is because my daughter is an A student. They had no choice but to accept me because all the time she got.... the prizes. She's an honour student so they had no choice but to embrace me. They know and I know from the bottom of my heart that [my daughter] will bring some changes.

AUTHOR: In that school?

MOTHER: In that school, yeah, because she is a very extraordinary child....

This last example provides a nice contrast with the previous. Here it is the daughter who through her ability and success at school is able to open doors to the community for the mother. As was the case with the incident in the church, this example suggests the need to see the potential mixed children have as brokers between the two parental communities. Jones and Trickett (2012) highlighted the role of immigrant children as cultural brokers to the broader receiving society:

> ...due to the specific needs of immigrant families, children may be expected to have expanded roles and duties. Child culture brokering refers to the unique role children in immigrant families assume to help their parents and others navigate the new culture and language. Children assume this role because they are more likely than their parents to become relatively competent more quickly in the new language and acquire knowledge of the culture through their school and social experiences (p. 182).

As with much of the literature on mixed families, the literature on cultural brokering tends to orient itself towards the relationships immigrant families maintain with a single host society. The experiences of these Kenyans in Montreal suggest, however, that cultural brokering may also happen between different immigrant communities as well.

Notably, this last mother feels her daughter has great opportunities in Canada. Despite complaining herself about how hard it can be to be an immigrant, she suggests it

will not be so hard for her daughter:

> AUTHOR: And how do you see your daughter's life in Canada? ...What are your expectations for her in the future?
>
> MOTHER: I think... [my daughter's] life in Canada will be much better than mine because remember when I came here there was a barrier of language that has already been lifted.... Two, she is not an immigrant whether people like it or not.... She is Canadian.
>
> AUTHOR: ... I remember you saying [to her, about the study], "well, she wants to talk to children of immigrants," and she said "I'm not an immigrant." Remember you were talking to her [and] I heard... "I'm not an immigrant, I'm Canadian" (I laugh).
>
> MOTHER: There you go, there you go (I continue laughing). She is not an immigrant. That's a fact. She is not an immigrant.... Three, [my daughter] can become now whatever she wants to become in this country. She can even run for a political office.

For this mother, the status of being an immigrant is closely related to questions of race and she places great emphasis on the fact that her daughter is Canadian. She clearly feels her daughter will have a range of opportunities that would have been difficult for her.

Another parent echoed this emphasis on the importance of her children not being immigrants:

> AUTHOR: That's nice. So *mko* [you are] very involved in their education?
>
> MOTHER: *Bwana yangu kitu moja hataki sasa, anaesema hawa watoto wamezaliwa hapa. Kwa nini watakuwa watumishi?* [The one thing that my husband does not want, he says "these children are born here then why should they be servants?"]
>
> AUTHOR: Yes. That's a very good thing.
>
> MOTHER: *Ni weusi lakini wamezaliwa hapa.... Yuko* strict*, na yuko* involved *haumchezei tena every* meeting *inaitwa ya watoto anaenda.* [They are black and they are born here… He is very strict but he is very involved, he attends every meeting that concerns the children]
>
> AUTHOR: *Ako* [He is] very involved in the education?

MOTHER: *Ako* [He is] very involved.

Another mother spoke with great pride about the fact that her children took it upon themselves to educate themselves about racism and about their rights. Her son had difficulties with police harassment, and she spoke about the effect it had upon all of her children:

> MOTHER: Yes, it [harassment] is a big problem with our male children. After that age [teenage years] they don't care, and you suppress them and when you suppress them it affects them.
>
> AUTHOR: .... How did it affect them *wakiona* brother *yao aki* go through this? […How did it affect them seeing their brother going through this?]
>
> MOTHER: What happened is, I can't really say how it affected them.... they stood their ground... [and] they started to educate themselves about their rights.... They decided now on being on a look-out. I remember ... my daughter, there was a time she had seen a boy being assaulted at [a metro station] and then the boy was being taken to court, and then she went and testified for the boy. And the mother of the boy was crying, crying, crying.... And the mother was crying because he was charged with assault and my daughter said "no, I tried to take a picture with my cell phone," (she laughs) but it didn't work. They are very good at watching out for others. Like when they see a black person and the police are trying to harass them, they stand around them.... For her, she has the type of air that when she stands her ground even the police they don't get her out. She is fluent in French and English, so when she asks them (she makes the sound of quick talking), in that case she is able to make them go away.

There is a cruel irony here, however. The daughter is able to confront police in situations she feels are unjust, and was inspired to do so by her brother's experiences. On the other hand, her brother has also spoken up in similar situations, but with very different results as some of his problems with police officers have come about because he has spoken up for others.

4.3: Cultural Brokerage and Mixed Families

The mixed families of our study described how they must grapple with issues of identity and cultural diversity within the family. The negotiations over these issues that take place between parents, and with their children, are frequently important and can be difficult. They involve questions relating to the transmission of parental cultures to children, and hence the kinds of values the children will be expected to learn (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006). In the case of inter-racial families, these negotiations can also involve addressing racial tolerance within the cultural communities of the parents, and will ultimately have an important impact on the question of how the child identifies racially (Caballero, Edwards, & Puthussery, 2008; Edwards et al., 2010; Twine, 2004).

The dynamics of cultural brokerage within mixed families can be complex. As in many immigrant families, youth may act as cultural brokers to the host-society (Cila, Lalonde, & Haqanee, 2011; Trickett, Sorani, & Birman, 2010). But in mixed families multiple communities are involved as there are two parental cultures and the host society. Each parent, therefore, may also act as a cultural broker for their own cultural community, and in the case of inter-racial families, to other cultural communities to which they are linked by race and ethnicity. Further, the child may operate as a cultural broker not only to the host society, but as will be discussed, they may also help their parents cross cultural boundaries because they are able to claim membership in each community.

4.3.1: Spouses and migration: introduction to life in Canada

Those parents who came because of marriage spoke of the ways their spouses

acted as cultural brokers upon their arrival in Canada. They suggested that their spouses helped them to overcome the simple, day-to-day differences that confront immigrants:

> MOTHER: ...the first time when I came of course I was excited. "Wow, I'm coming to north America." Then when I landed, it was very very cold (I laugh) *Sikupenda* the *baridi* [I did not like the cold]. I remember going with my husband to the stores. I bought two pairs of boots. One I bought, a very soft one, and he was asking why are you buying this very soft one. Little did he know that I would sleep with it. I went to bed with it, it was that cold (we both laugh uncontrollably, while trying to speak through the laughter).

> MOTHER: No*, hata itatokana haraka na mimi ni ka* insist *hizi ndio mimi nataka* (I laugh). Little did he know *hizi ndio za kulala kwa kitanda na kunahizi alininunulia ya pili niyakutembea nje*. *Sasa akaniambia ati* I have to learn how to walk. I remember him telling me, "... you have to learn how to walk baby step." *Nikashindwa sasa* baby step *na mimi ni mzee, nitaanza* baby step *namna gani*. [No, they would fall apart easily but I insisted that those are the ones that I wanted (I laugh). Little did he know these were the ones I would sleep in and the others I would walk in. Then he told me that I have to learn how to walk. I remember him telling me, "…you have to learn how to walk baby step." Then I wondered baby step, and I am old. How would I start this baby step?]

> MOTHER: *Si sikumoja akanionyesha vile mtu hutembea* baby step *mimi nikaona mimi* I cannot adjust (I continue to laugh in the background as she talks). *Hii kutembea nitatembea kama* normal until I fell down *mara kama saba* (I laugh). *Ndio nikaona* I have to learn. [So one day he showed me how to walk baby step, then I saw that me, I cannot adjust (I continue to laugh in the background as she talks). I will just walk normal, until I fell down about seven times (I laugh). Then I realised, I have to learn]

The same woman offered another very simple example, which she associated explicitly with culture shock:

> MOTHER: Another thing that shocked me is to see cars with the rust. I had never seen such a thing, never.... So I was wondering, this car, this car should not, this is a car that should be in a place like Kenya, in the village, but not in Canada. See, because of what was in my mind about Canada, so little did I know that this rust is brought by the salt that is put on the snow. So when my husband told me about the

snow I was wondering what kind of salt is this?

AUTHOR: *inaharibu.....* [it spoils it]

MOTHER: Which salt is this? *Nikashindwa* [I wondered], how could they put salt? Don't they have any other mechanism of melting this? So *akaniambia* [he told me], it is the salt that is eating the metal of the car. That to me was a culture shock to see a rusted car and people are still driving it (I laugh).

Another remembered that her spouse taught her to speak French:

MOTHER: *Lugha* coz *hii mambo ya* language. It's a lot of challenge. *Wanataka* everywhere *ati* you are able to say *bonjour, ça va, je voudrais ta ta ta*. [Language, because of the language. It's a lot of challenge. They want that everywhere you are able to say *bonjour, ça va, je voudrais ta ta ta]*

AUTHOR: *Na wewe ulilearn aje* French *yako*? [And how did you learn your French?]

MOTHER: *Nililearn* [I learnt] my French because he is French, yes (indicating husband - also an immigrant, but from a French speaking country)

AUTHOR: *Na yeye anaongea kiswahili pia*? [Does he also speak Kiswahili?]

MOTHER: No. *Haongei*. [No. He doesn't]

In another case it was the Kenyan, already familiar with Montreal, who acted as a broker by helping his spouse:

MOTHER: English when I go to hospital with my husband.

AUTHOR: Oh, he has to be there.

MOTHER: Yeah.

AUTHOR: Because you went to a French hospital?

MOTHER: No I went to [a Montreal hospital].

AUTHOR: is it English or French?

MOTHER: English, but...

AUTHOR: You are English. Okay, you had to have your husband there to speak, to help you speak. Even me, my husband speaks French. Sometimes I have to... (we laugh).

MOTHER: Sometimes I have a different response asking English or French.

AUTHOR: It's true

MOTHER: Asking people differently...

These simple examples point to the role those who were familiar with Canada played in introducing Canada and Canadian culture to their newly-arrived spouses.

While such simple examples may seem trivial, the underlying imbalance in knowledge about Canada can have more serious consequences. This may especially be the case when there is conflict:

MOTHER: I am going through divorce. The first hearing when I went, when the court sent me papers, I fell sick so I did not go for my first hearing because I became sick and at the time... I had not got a lawyer to represent me. So when my ex went to court, they just ruled on his favour by proxy because I did not come.... At that period of time the ruling was that he keeps the child until we come back six months after, for the second hearing. This completely devastated and destroyed me. Until now I got a lawyer and we went to fight for this case to get back my child. See now as an immigrant, imagine as an immigrant your child is taken away from you that is something that we cannot understand. For me it is the biggest culture shock of all. My child is being taken away from me and is being given to a man to take care. In African culture that can never happen.

Here, the same spouse who had helped her adjust now confronts her in court. Had she better understood the way Canadian courts operated, as well as the potential consequences, she almost certainly would have been present in court. Although this is much more serious situation than salt on streets, the sorts of shoes one wears, or learning to speak the host's language, it speaks to the same underlying dynamic – that one spouse better understands how to navigate the institutional systems of the society in which they

are living. In other words, there are advantages that accrue from being integrated into specific cultural systems. This lack of integration could create difficulties for new immigrants as they attempt to differentiate between what constitutes and what falls within the realm of the law.

4.3.2: Well-being of children and the transmission of culture

While parents helped one another adjust to life in Canada, they worked to help their children maintain the culture they brought with them from Kenya. Given that the Kenyan community in Montreal is so small, this was often difficult, as they could not count on assistance from a larger, established community. Many of the Kenyans spoke about the importance they placed on passing on their own culture:

> MOTHER: I chose to do this because I've realised if I don't talk with her, who else will instil these values on her, nobody. So I better do it rather than having other, rather than her get[ting] wrong information from outside. At least you know like we will never be able to avoid that, but at least she'll have something to compare. Mummy told me this and this is what I'm faced with.

This particular mother was very explicit in her desire to encourage her child to value cultural diversity:

> MOTHER: Yes imagine this is what I am talking about: cultural diversity. She was able to pick that because I made a decision that my child is going to learn both cultures, Daddy's culture and Mummy's culture.

This is perhaps the most explicit example of parenting that encourages the child to embrace their mixed status, at least on a cultural level. While she clearly hopes her child will connect with her parental cultures, she goes even further in suggesting that there is a value in embracing cultural diversity itself. It is interesting in this case that the marriage

in question ended in divorce, but that at the same time, the mother continues to encourage her child so strongly to learn her father's culture. Such an openness to other cultures may help explain the initial willingness among some of the participants to enter into a mixed marriage in the first place.

4.3.2a: Travel

Perhaps the most direct way parents can ensure a connection with parental cultures is to travel to their home countries with their children. As one mother noted:

> MOTHER: ...I think what has helped my daughter is that any time I travel to Kenya she has travelled just like me, to Kenya and other countries, so she is very open minded.

Another mother placed so much emphasis on going to Kenya with her daughter that she first took her when the baby was only four months old, this despite the fact that she was a student and therefore did not have a lot of money. All of the parents have taken their children to Kenya to spend time with their extended families. One of the children remembered the pride and excitement that resulted from her trip to Kenya:

> DAUGHTER: Well when I went there I was so happy coming back and my teacher was like oh... you seem so happy, and I was like I just came back from Kenya and I did this and I did that and [inaudible]. One of my teachers was like I really want to go to Kenya one year you know and this is there, there are a lot of good things there and I'm like that's good (we laugh).

Another child suggested that her trip to Kenya helped her to overcome the negative portrayals she was exposed to in the North American popular media:

> AUTHOR: Have you been to Kenya?
>
> DAUGHTER: Twice.... I really, really liked it. I enjoyed it. Because like sometimes when you see it in the news, but then when I went to Kenya, I was like oh my gosh we just got the iPad and they are just

getting the iPad 2 already.

AUTHOR: So you found they were way ahead of us and you thought, what did you think? You said you heard in the news, what did you hear in the news?

DAUGHTER: Like (begins to hesitate)... I don't know... I don't know, like sometimes there is war, yeah. But when I look at it there is nothing really wrong.

AUTHOR: Yeah. You don't understand why that happens, no, and how does it make you feel?

DAUGHTER: I don't know (lowers voice).

Such travel is expensive. Bringing family from Kenya to visit is difficult because it is not easy to get the visitor visas necessary for families to come to Canada. Despite this, one of the mixed families did succeed in bringing a parent from Kenya to visit.

The fact that travel is not easy suggests the need to revisit Rodriguez-Garcia's description of transnationality, whereby immigrants' lives are characterized by ongoing and intense contacts with their society of origin (2006). The situation of those who participated in this study suggests that transnationality always needs to be considered in terms of the constraints placed on migrants by their financial ability, as well as those that result from their migration status. Of the participants in this study, the family that travels the most frequently is able to do so because one of the parents has a professional career that pays well and encourages such travel. Financial constraints, however, are increasingly being overcome by the widespread availability of global technologies of communication. The internet and cheap international phone service has allowed those that cannot travel so often to keep in continuous contact with family all over the world. In this context, even those who cannot travel may think of themselves as being in a state of

transnationality because of the constant contact with others overseas. In this sense, transnationality could even be seen as a state of awareness or consciousness.

4.3.2b: Language

Immigrant communities frequently struggle to ensure that the generations born in Canada learn their languages. This is often difficult, and it is not uncommon for the younger generations in immigrant communities to lose the ability to speak the original language of their parents. These challenges may be even greater for small communities, like the Kenyan community in Montreal, because there is no concentration of speakers, and hence few environments where children will be immersed in the spoken language. Also, those in mixed marriages face challenges passing on their language as it is less likely that a Kenyan language will be the principal language used at home. Despite these challenges, however, the Kenyan parents often spoke of the importance they placed on language and of their efforts to pass on their languages to their children.

The one mother married to another Kenyan spoke of how her children did in fact lose their Kenyan languages:

> MOTHER: ...that is how our children lost the language. We did not have the time to speak Swahili. And then for me, I was not used to speaking Swahili or [my mother tongue] all the time. I was used to speaking English. So when I come here, the only person I would speak [my language] with was my husband. When it comes to the children, I would speak to them in English.... So that is what I did and that is how they lost it. I feel sad that they lost the language.
>
> AUTHOR: Yes, most parents feel that. Like even me, I am trying but there is no place for them to interact even if there are Kenyans. Like you see the Chinese community, they have a Chinese school. They can continue speaking Chinese. It's like 24/7 they are hearing their language. But when you are busy, every parent says that the language is usually lost.

MOTHER: Like now. Sometimes I feel good when I am speaking to [my daughter] and I speak [my language] and she understands, like when I try to say something and somebody is around me.

AUTHOR: *Unaong'ea* [your mother tongue]. [You speak you mother tongue]

MOTHER: But our son, he lost it at around four.

AUTHOR: So by the time [your daughter] came, she was around seven. Was she speaking [your language] by the time she came?

MOTHER: She was speaking everything. Actually our son, he had delayed speech so he was not really speaking. For her it was already there and when she went back to Kenya it was just coming back, it was okay. She was understanding a lot.

As in this example, many of the Kenyans speak three languages: English, Swahili and a second language associated with their ethnic community in Kenya. This further complicates efforts to pass on a language as the small Kenyan population is made of people from a number of different Kenyan ethnicities, and therefore the community of speakers for each of these languages is even smaller than it is for Swahili.

A number of parents spoke of the effort they made to pass on Kenyan languages to their children:

MOTHER: You will be surprised I speak to my daughter in a little bit of Swahili, [my ethnic language], and of course English coz I want her to learn my native tongue. As a matter of fact, my daughter she is going to [a private school] because the father is [from that community].... The whole thing is to make sure that my daughter is completely open-minded so she will be able to live in harmony, the harmony that I talked to you earlier with different sorts of... communities. Yes, she speaks and writes in [her father's language], she speaks French, she speaks English fluently. Those languages she can write and speak and of course a little bit of my language.

Here it is interesting to note that this woman sees great value in her daughter learning as many languages as possible, and situates her desire for the girl to learn her language in a

much broader context than that of connecting her daughter to her Kenyan heritage. In this case, her encouragement of her daughter's speaking many languages is a function of her openness to her daughter's mixed status. This approach is echoed by another family, who have made efforts to pass on both parental languages to their children:

> AUTHOR: That's what I should do (she laughs). That's what I should do with my daughter, coz my son does not speak any word in Swahili but my daughter now I'm starting, but because I speak English all the time with my husband I forget. But you know you, your husband, so your husband speaks to them in French. Oh, he speaks to them in French, he speaks French?
>
> MOTHER: No, no, no. The first time he speaks English, but they changed because of school
>
> AUTHOR: For school? Yeah, and [your father's language], how do you learn [your father's language]? Your father speaks to you in [his language]?
>
> Son: A little bit.
>
> AUTHOR: A little bit, and can you understand?
>
> Son: A little bit.
>
> MOTHER: Just for him (she indicates youngest child)
>
> AUTHOR: He speaks only [his language] to him?
>
> MOTHER: Not only.
>
> AUTHOR: Just more like often, so he understands.
>
> MOTHER: Yes.... Because third (she laughs) more challenge (we both laugh).

The children in question also speak the mother's language fluently, and it appears that this language is the default language of communication between mother and children as was made evident during the interview. Throughout the interview, the children would speak to their mother in her language as they answered the questions. Because the

children were not as fluent in English as they were in French, and as the interview was conducted in English, the children frequently turned to their mother for clarification or assistance. These conversations always took place in the mother's language. The children also spoke their mother's language with one another throughout the entire interview. When asked about the language they spoke with their mother, it was evident that the mother made a clear effort to use her language in the house, even if it meant she would have a harder time learning French:

> AUTHOR: Do you guys speak to your mum in French?
>
> Both sons: No.
>
> AUTHOR: You need to teach her French, speak to her in French (mother interjects).
>
> MOTHER: No, but I want to keep [my language].
>
> AUTHOR: Oh, so they speak to you in [your language] all the time?
>
> MOTHER: Yeah.

In this case, the ability of the children to speak their mother's language has been helped by repeated trips to her country. As noted previously, however, this travel is possible only because one parent has a profession that allows for such extended trips. Most of the families who participated in the study would have difficulty travelling to their home countries so often.

The children that live in mixed families live in homes where more than one language is spoken. They also live in a city, Montreal, dominated by two languages: French and English. Given that English is one of the national languages in Kenya, those who came to Montreal are often more at home speaking English. Because they are recent

immigrants, however, those who do not enrol their children in private schools must educate their children in French schools. One spoke about how her husband, a Franco-African immigrant, helped the children to learn to speak French:

> AUTHOR: ....*Wanaenda kwa* English *ama* French school *wanaenda* what school? […they are going to an English or French school, what school are they going?]
>
> MOTHER: It's French.
>
> AUTHOR: *Wanaenda* French school *na wana* fair on well. *Hawana* problem *na* language? [they are going to a French school, and they are fairing on well. Do they have a problem with the language?]
>
> MOTHER: No because.... *Baba yao* is francophone and he does homework with them. [No because…. Their father is francophone and he does homework with them]
>
> AUTHOR: *Hiyo inasaidia?* [that helps?]
>
> MOTHER: *Sana.* [a lot]

Here, her husband, even though he is an immigrant himself, can help her children integrate into Quebec's linguistic society because of his French background. In this case, the father's community is francophone allowing him to help his children. But in other cases the non-Kenyan parents have married into communities that are not francophone and these parents may not be able to help their children integrate so easily.

For many, the issues surrounding French language in Montreal are difficult and can be the cause of much distress. One girl, who has been in a private primary school affiliated with her father's community expresses a great deal of anxiety about the possibility of having to go to a French high school:

> DAUGHTER: But I don't want to study in French....
>
> AUTHOR: So what happens if you have to go? Are you prepared to do that?
>
> DAUGHTER: Yeah, but I want to have the choice.... I would go to an

English high school.... coz like English is very, very easy for me....

AUTHOR: What about university? You said you wanted to go to an English one?

DAUGHTER: Yeah.... Coz you know what you learn in high school is the preparation for CEGEP, then what you learn in CEGEP is preparation for university.... So like, if I go to CEGEP in French then university in English, then it's going to be hard for me.

AUTHOR: Yes. So you are really concerned about that. So you would rather have an option. And how does that make you feel?

DAUGHTER: Sad.

AUTHOR: Really sad?

DAUGHTER: Mmmh (voice becomes subdued).

Many among the Kenyan community had similar concerns going to French schools. Another of the children was able to attend English school for a while, but later had to switch into the French system and spoke about the difficulties she had because of having to switch back and forth:

DAUGHTER: So in grade five when they told me I had to go to French school already, after being initialized and everything, and people starting to like me. Now I have to go to a French school. That was a different ball game on its own.... that was hell because I was already just adapting to that school.... And I go to French school and different ball game. Everything is backwards, math is backwards, I don't know it was stupid and I had to, also coz I was in the welcome class.... And my teacher and I did not get along and he realized the reason why we did not get along was because I was too smart for the class.... I was not well enough for French to go to a regular class, but I was too smart for the welcome class....

DAUGHTER: The next year I switched schools again. Coz we moved, so when you move on you got to go to a different school. So now I'm put in regular class: new school, new teacher. That was another hell. Coz I started doing bad in school because of the French. See I was too good for the welcome class but I'm in the middle, so when they put me in regular class I was struggling, struggling, struggling. I would cry all the time, like this is hell, my goodness! Why did I come to this country if I knew I would be going through this hell?

That was what was going through my mind at twelve years old.

AUTHOR: And the teachers? Were they helpful in the new class?

DAUGHTER: She was helpful. She saw the potential in me. She always said like "I know you are smart... but it is just the French." I was not allowed to speak English in school, no one was ever allowed to speak English in school. But my teacher was like, she pushed me, she never gave up on me. That's one thing I liked about her. She never gave up on me, but it was just hard, hard, hard, and I had to just snap out of it and just keep on moving and then again the kids made fun of me in this school.

AUTHOR: And how was your performance at the end of the year?

DAUGHTER: I passed grade six with a sixty-something. No matter how hard I worked, it was the French. I knew the stuff, but it was formulating the words in French and putting it on a piece of paper. I was doing the orals in front of class. It was, math was backwards. Man (she laughs), math is backwards in French. I don't understand it....

AUTHOR: And your parents? Did they speak French?

DAUGHTER: Nope.

AUTHOR: So how was the homework?

DAUGHTER: I did it myself. I had to do it myself with my parents not knowing one word in French.... I did it on my own just because I had to do it on my own. I had a white friend and we would go to her house and sometimes she would help me but I still felt, oh thank you for being my friend, I don't want to be a bother and ask you for homework help all the time and you are my only friend...

In this last excerpt we can see how intertwined questions of schooling, academics, and social life could become. Further, we see what would become a fairly common complaint among many with children in the French system: that as anglophones who did not know French they were unable to help their children with their school work.

One Kenyan, however, had been in Montreal long enough and had learned French well to help his children. The elder child in this family still struggled, however, and the

mother's lack of French meant that the onus for helping the children fell upon one parent only:

> AUTHOR: When I actually started, you had asked whether I was going to ask about the language. How is it with them, the language? The language is more a struggle for you? ...is it hard for you here and is it easy for them?
>
> MOTHER: ....With French is still difficult. [My older son], the first time so difficult.... The school recommended a teacher for the *devoirs*, helping with the homework. At grade one he went to where they help homework.... but it did not progress.... But just helping, not to teach, and it's not difficult. After my husband changed to French because there is not enough vocabulary.
>
> AUTHOR: ....So your husband taught them French?
>
> MOTHER: Yeah.
>
> AUTHOR: Wow. The husband who grew up in Kenya taught them French (we laugh). That's amazing. So it's their father who basically kept speaking French to them and that's how, on top of the school. So the school was only homework, and that was not enough. But did he get extra help?
>
> MOTHER: He had extra help.... [But] not now, last year, and he repeated grade three.

The father here makes a conscious decision to help his children learn French, but it is one that comes with a cost. Speaking French at home means less chance for him to speak Kenyan languages, something he has made an effort to do also. The mother, however, does not speak French and speaks to the boys in her language, which they speak fluently. This example highlights how the parents in this marriage take on distinct roles based upon their ability to act as a cultural broker to the dominant francophone host society. However, because the ability to teach the children French is not shared equally by the two parents, the balance of parental language transmission to the children is affected.

For some, the desire to educate their children in English comes from a desire to give their children the broadest options possible. Although they live in Montreal, they do not necessarily consider themselves or their children as having immigrated to Quebec. As one mother put it, "let's be honest here, the world is English." Both she and her daughter see her opportunities as depended upon an English education at English-language universities.

DAUGHTER: Because if you look at the world atlas, you look at Canada on it, it says main languages is French and English. So I think we should be given a right to go to an English school also.... Coz like English schools do exist and you know we don't get the chance to go to them even though we really, really want to go to them. We have no choice.

AUTHOR: So what would you like to have to happen?

DAUGHTER: I think they should realize that on the world atlas, which was made also by the government, by someone who works in that department, okay, that they said we put English in there for a reason and that like they follow that reason.... But also for Mummy, because I'm here, she did not know French at all but she did her citizenship in English. So why should I get stuck with the problem?

AUTHOR: *Eh huyu mtoto wako ni mwerevu*.[Eh, your child is very smart]

MOTHER: How come? That is a very solid point. When I came to this country, how come I did my citizenship to be a Canadian in English. Because they made it clear that, welcome to Canada, you have the choice to either do your paper in English or in French because we have two official languages in Canada, which is English and French. And I did my citizenship to be a Canadian in English. So if I had that option, why is it then afterwards that now my child and other children do not have the same options as Canadians to choose the language that they feel most comfortable. If I could do my citizenship to become a Canadian with the language of my choice, the language that I am comfortable with, why not them?

ANOTHER FRIEND PRESENT: Because you are in Quebec!

MOTHER: But Quebec is not a country.

This example is best understood in the context of the two diasporas the girl belongs to, and the state of transnationality many of the immigrants find themselves in. The daughter does not see her future as being necessarily in Quebec – she speaks openly about a desire to go to school in Canada and possibly in the United States. She has family in Europe and Africa. Both she and her mother believe that English offers better opportunities. In this case, the potential for conflict between the understandings of the family and the legislation aimed at preserving French in Quebec come to the fore. The Quebec legislation aimed at promoting the use of French is based upon the idea that immigrants coming to build lives in Quebec need to learn and use French, but the mother and daughter in this case do not conceive of themselves as having migrated to Quebec. Rather, they emphasize the fact that they have migrated to Canada (cf. McAndrew, 2011). The ability of the mother and daughter to define their own identities, and to frame their own relationships to the places they interact with runs counter to Quebec's efforts to integrate immigrants like them into a French-speaking society.

Finally, some complained about the dynamics of language outside of the schools. One mother that had separated from her husband had gone through court proceedings that required her daughter to have her own lawyer. The daughter's lawyer, however, did not speak English which was a cause of much frustration:

> MOTHER: Okay, but I give you another example. [My daughter] has her own lawyer because we are going through this divorce thing and her lawyer does not speak or understand not even one word of English. So I think when [my daughter] was referring that she wants this option, it's because she is scared. She asked me even one day when I was driving: "Mummy, she is a lawyer who cannot even speak English so it means that she cannot even become a lawyer anywhere else, she is stuck here."
>
> AUTHOR: I have to ask, but just tell me if you feel uncomfortable. So now

> like your lawyer speaks French, how do you feel about it that you ... have a lawyer that does not speak English?
>
> MOTHER: And now tell her, she wrote, [my daughter] wrote me a letter because we are going back to court. She said she would like to express how she feels... directly to the judge.
>
> DAUGHTER: And I'm not allowed.
>
> MOTHER: Yeah, because she feels that this, the lawyer that is assigned to her, does not deliver what she wants effectively because they only communicate in French. Where else she wants to express herself in English and she is not able to do that because she does not even speak one word of English. So [my daughter] decided, "Mummy, I think what I will do, I will handwrite this thing in my own language and I sign it and you pass it to the court. So that's what I'm gonna do."

For this mother and daughter, language became a significant stressor that emerged in their interactions with those institutions that held the most power over their lives, the schools and the courts. Studies of the success of Caribbean and African students in Quebec's schools suggest this stress may be warranted - black anglophone students frequently struggle when they are expected to attend French schools giving rise to a "prevalent feeling of alienation" (Balde & McAndrew, 2013; McAndrew, 2011, p. 298).

4.3.2c: Institutions

Efforts have been made in Montreal to build a Kenyan association, but they have been difficult. The small size of the population has challenged these efforts. Some of the participants spoke about gathering with other Kenyans, but rarely in as much detail or to the extent to which they spoke about their involvement with non-Kenyan institutions. Through participation in churches, schools, and other community organizations, the Kenyan-Canadians were able to create bonds with larger ethnic and religious

communities, to make friends, and to get help with employment and their children's education.

While many of the Kenyan-Canadians established ties to other communities through marriage, it is important to note that even the family that is not mixed formed important bonds with institutions established by another community in Montreal:

> MOTHER: When my husband came here, he could not get a job. He came and finished his Bachelor's and his Master's and then now he is doing his second Master's and when he would apply they say he is over-qualified....

> MOTHER: Until we started going to a certain church another Kenyan family introduced us to, (she names the religious denomination), and then we started going there to church. He was seeing the way people talk. It was mainly a [particular ethnic community] church and then they said, "we have a school that is [affiliated with their church] and because we are independent we can hire people who are in our sect because we are not obligated. Because you need a licence to teach, we are not obligated.... That is how he got a job as a teacher in high school.... Now that's when things started getting better. At least he was getting some money, but after struggling.

In this case, attending the church helped secure employment.

Although this last example was perhaps the most dramatic example of assistance coming from a religious institution, many others spoke about the importance of church attendance for them and their children. Another woman noted the importance of the church and school established by her husband's community. She regularly attends the church with her daughter, and as the opening story suggests, feels confident in asserting her right to participate alongside her daughter. Even though the church and school in question is affiliated with an ethnic group that has little to do with Kenya, she feels their values are a good fit for those she brought with her from Kenya:

> MOTHER: Where she goes is a private school, and they have sort of certain percentage whereby they have to be under the school board.... but it

> is still the sense that they are instilling the cultural values of [my husband's culture], which is sort of similar to the one back home.
>
> AUTHOR: Really? ....How?
>
> MOTHER: For example, everyday when she goes to school, the first thing, they have a parade and they do prayers.
>
> AUTHOR: *Kama nyumbani.* [Like at home]
>
> MOTHER: They do prayers just like home. And they walk in lines to go to class.... Whereas I believe I think what I have heard is that public school, it's nothing like that. There is no debate in the [community's] school that you cannot pray. Those are first, those are some of the rules that you have to sign.... they are very religious. They must pray morning prayer before they go to class.

Her daughter also regularly attends a Sunday school at the church, which has exams and is affiliated with the school. As she notes, the school "is actually intertwined with the church, the school is part of the church and the church is part of the school. They work together." Notably, she felt comfortable enough with the church and school that she decided to get involved herself. This comfort and involvement, however, was not without its challenges:

> MOTHER: Because of the school I get involved with the school curriculum, and most of it is taking place in the church, and I'm the only, let me put it straight, I'm the only black person in the church. In the beginning I used to see some resistance but now they have gotten used to it. And how did that happen? One day my daughter made a poem. A mother's day poem in [her father's language] and she got a standing ovation and I was told to stand as the mother of [my child], and when they saw me, believe me, that was the climax..., they accepted me. So they never look at me the way they used to look at me. In fact, when I don't come, they notice...

This emphasis on the importance of religion and churches was common, and may suggest that having a religious community filled much of the void left by the lack of a large Kenyan population:

AUTHOR: So you have found that the church has helped? Like how has it helped with the kids?

MOTHER: Oh my goodness, like when you bring up children, you have to have a background. And the church makes you feel as a family, so you come here and you have no family. Your family is in Kenya. The people in the church make you feel as a family. If anything happens to you, they will come and they will be with you. They make you feel as a family. Other things, there are other little differences, but even in families you fight. Like for me I can say the church has done so much for me.

AUTHOR: Like when you were having problems *na watoto* [with the children] that is where you would go to?

MOTHER: Yeah. I would have people I could talk to, people that are close to me and we would pray for each other. Like when I had [my daughter] I almost died and they were cooking, they were bringing food. My family never had to starve they were there. When I would come home, they would arrange for cleaning, and most of them are in the health centre so they introduced us to CLSC. "You know maybe your wife could get someone to just be coming and doing some housework, so that she doesn't have to do everything...." And then they used to go for camp with the church

Further, she suggests the church has been important because it has helped ground her children and provide them with a sense of community:

AUTHOR: so your church had helped you a lot. Your church is like your community.

MOTHER: My church is my community, plus my Kenyan community.... For the older [children], they have their friends in the church... they used to do homework. Oh they are very active and that one, it grounded them.

AUTHOR: *Ulisema* when he was [older] *shida ilianza kushuka kidogo*. *Ilikuwa sababu ya* church *na* Kenyan community *ilisaidia sana*? *Watu wa church wanatoka wapi? Kuna* Kenyans *kwa hiyo church ama?* [You said that when he got older the problems lessened. Was this because of the church and the Kenyan community, did that help a lot? Where are the people from your church from? Are there any Kenyans?]

MOTHER: Actually, the Kenyans who were there, they moved out. They went to Toronto. I think in that church we are the only family from

> Kenya. The others are Caribbean, and from Zimbabwe when there was an influx of Zimbabweans coming. The thing is when we are in church you are all equal. People don't show that we are black or from where, we are all the same thing we are all God's children, period. And then from there, even if there is that thing, you have your own people that you get along with. If you get something they will come and if you hear something, you will go.

As her description of the church suggests, it is a church that has a concentration of Anglo-Caribbean and African members. The daughter echoed her mother's assessment of the importance of the church, noting that it played an especially important role in her social life:

> DAUGHTER: Yes, she is like a big sister coz she was also from the church.... I was also very innocent in a sense, like I always kept to myself and I listened to my gospel music. That was also something that kids used to make fun of me at school, like you don't know this singer, you don't know that singer, coz I was really like, I kept myself in a bubble.
>
> AUTHOR: So religion was what you cared about? And did you find it helped?
>
> DAUGHTER: Yes. That was what I really cared about. It helped coz I used to sing. I always had my four friends that we grew up in church I always had them. So at church we would like have these singing groups, and all these things, we were always like very close. I also had friends at church, those four friends that I told you about but I would only see them on Saturday and then during the week I would be with the ones in my own group.
>
> AUTHOR: So apart from the church you never had any friends from the neighbourhood?
>
> DAUGHTER: No

Here, it is worth noting the younger generation's commitment to the church. The church in question does not simply provide a community to the family, working as a sort of extended family, but provides a venue where the families come together themselves. As

this discussion, and the opening story, illustrate, church is a place where parents and children socialize.

Notably, Breton (1964) uses churches as an example of an institution that can easily accommodate ethnic difference:

> The weight of religious institutions can be attributed to the dominant role they hold in the community. Churches are very frequently the center of a number of activities; associations are formed and collective activities are organized under their influence and support. Also, the national sentiments of the immigrant find support in having experiences in church very similar to those in the country of origin – the language is the same; the images used in preaching are the same; the saints worshipped are also those the immigrant has known from early childhood (pp. 200-201).

There is a long history of black church members in Montreal reaching across ethnic lines to help newly arrived immigrants. Dating back to the early 1900s, the Union United Church has played a key role in helping black immigrants to adjust to life in Montreal. In addition to providing religious guidance the church has also acted as a welfare institution. They have helped newly arrived black immigrants to find work upon their arrival and have helped those in need with material support. Further, the church placed particular emphasis on working with black youth to develop future leadership within the community (Este, 2004). The black population in Montreal has grown, and so have the number of churches serving the community. It is important to note, however, that the experiences of the Kenyans interviewed for this study suggest newer black churches have adopted many of the core principles established by Union United Church such as continuing to help new immigrants to settle. Through their affiliation with the Anglo-Caribbean community this family was able to take advantage of the services offered to the congregants.

Not all of the institutions important to the Kenyans in Montreal are religious, however. One mixed family spoke of a language school established by the non-Kenyan mother's community:

AUTHOR: So do you associate with [your] community more now than the Kenyan community? Do you have more [members of your ethnic community as] friends now?

MOTHER: Yeah, yeah for me.

AUTHOR: For you now, and the kids? They also come along (mother speaks to older son in her language).

MOTHER: Because they are going to [my community] school every Saturday.

AUTHOR: Oh really? To learn [your language]?

MOTHER: Yeah.

AUTHOR: Oh wow, so that's how, to improve their [language].

MOTHER: For two hours.

AUTHOR: That's nice. See I was thinking of starting something like that.

MOTHER: Yeah my husband also.

AUTHOR: He was thinking that? (she laughs) I have to talk to him, coz I was saying you have all these, like the Kenyan community is not that big it's small. Well, I think it's small coz I don't know so many Kenyans, and we want our kids to speak our language, Swahili you know. And I noticed when I was going to [university in Montreal], the Chinese community in the summer they had, where all these Chinese kids, and they would come and learn Chinese and I said we should start something like that where someone teaches them Swahili. And if they are around other kids then they can learn to speak it.

MOTHER: Yeah, yeah. My husband says it too.

AUTHOR: You should tell him I was thinking of that (she laughs). And I was thinking I'm not a teacher, but he is a teacher so he would know how to go about it coz I don't know how, because my Swahili is not that good. So the other thing you need is someone who can teach,

> and someone who speaks good Swahili to be able to teach. I was thinking a lot about that. It would be a nice thing. Would you guys want to learn Swahili? You want to speak Swahili?

YOUNGEST SON (not interviewed): No (mother laughs).

OLDER SONS: Yes

Here a discussion of the language school maintained by the mother's community leads to a brief discussion of how the Kenyan community could benefit from such a language school. The mother's community school not only teaches the language, but also brings people together.

The Kenyans all formed important bonds with other more-established immigrant communities in Montreal. Many of these have much higher levels of institutional completeness than does the Kenyan community, and the participants spoke of the importance these institutions had for them and their children.[8] It is important to note, however, that in many cases the mixed marriages took place overseas and therefore before the Kenyans had knowledge of the community in Montreal or its degree of institutional completeness. These are not cases of Kenyans seeking out larger communities in order to access the institutions in question. Rather, once married, the Kenyans took advantage of the opportunities afforded by their spouses' communities. Further, even the family that was not mixed turned to institutions established by other communities, suggesting that marriage is not a necessary pre-requisite for seeking to join or benefit from organizations founded by larger and more established communities.

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[8] Institutional completeness refers to the degree to which a community has established institutions to meet the needs of its members (on institutional completeness see Breton, 1964; Rosenberg & Jedwab, 1992).

5. Study Limitations

This study has two principal limitations. First, all of the participants were women. In these families, the mothers are the primary caregivers. The focus of the study was on children, and therefore, it was natural for the mothers to accept to be interviewed. However, given the focus on mixed families, the father's perspectives would have provided a more complete picture of the cultural diversity within the household. Second, because the sample size is small it resists generalization, both in terms of drawing conclusions about the Kenyan-Canadian population at large, and about mixed families in Canada. Because this is an exploratory study, however, the results need only be used to suggest future avenues for research.

6: Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Study

This study was motivated by the desire to examine the well-being of Kenyan-Canadian parents and children in Montreal. Despite some hardship, the participants all acknowledged that the decision to migrate to Canada was a good one. Generally, all of the families who participated in this study conveyed that parents and children were both doing well. The interviews suggest that the positive well-being generally experienced by the participants is in part due to their openness and acceptance of cultural diversity and their willingness to accommodate others. Such openness allowed the families in question to build important bridges with other ethnic communities and to take advantage of institutions that could help them adapt to life in Montreal. The participants did identify challenges, however, including having to confront racism and the difficulties that sometimes emerged from Quebec's language policies.

Rodriguez-Garcia (2006) writes about the potential for conflict in the mixed marriages he observed in Spain. However, for these Kenyans, relations between parents seem to have been marked by a pronounced willingness to accommodate their spouses' culture, at least insofar as child-rearing was concerned. Parents generally made efforts to support their children's identification with both parental cultures and the children seem to embrace both their Kenyan and non-Kenyan heritage. This was reinforced in all cases by the fact that parents saw cultural diversity as positive for their children. Liu, Benna, Lau, and Kim (2009) note that bilingualism and biculturalism often correlates to lower acculturative stress, better academic achievement, and lower levels of depression. If this is the case, then the openness and active accommodation of cultural difference by the Kenyan parents may be a factor promoting well-being among their children.

The children from racially-mixed families all strongly embraced a mixed identity. Wakefield and Hudley (2007) have suggested that "for adolescents of color, ethnic identity plays an important role in healthy adjustment" (p. 147). Further, they suggest that "supporting the development of a strong, positive ethnic identity is also likely to support the mental health and behavioral adjustment of adolescents of color" (p. 152). It was clear from the interviews with parents that they devoted a great deal of thought to how best to navigate questions of race and ethnicity in Montreal. By adopting a "pro-mixed strategy," the parents in this study encouraged their children to embrace both their parental cultures and laid the foundation for a strong and positive identity (Edwards, Song, et al., 2012). Thus, the children all spoke confidently of whom they are and what they hope to achieve.

The families with two black parents adopted a "pro-black strategy" in order to promote a positive identity (Edwards, Song, et al., 2012). The one family with two

Kenyan parents did struggle more than the other families, perhaps because they did not have ties to a receiving community when they first came and because their children were born in Kenya and had to adjust to life in Canada. However, risk factors can often become protective factors for immigrant youth because they may motivate youth to succeed and in this way, negative risk factors can have positive results (García Coll & Marks, 2009; Lashley et al., 2005). Even discrimination may cause youth to take pride in their cultural heritage and to maintain close relations with others in their community. Although they initially had difficulty being proud of their Kenyan identity, the children in this family learned to embrace it and today are doing well.

The lack of a Kenyan community led these families to form close bonds with other ethnic communities and both parents and children spoke of the help they received. In particular, they suggested the support from religious institutions and schools associated with non-Kenyan communities were of great importance in terms of their being able to deal with the difficulties associated with life in Montreal. In the case of the mixed families, these were generally the communities of the non-Kenyan parent. As for the family with two Kenyan parents, the community in question was the local Anglo-Caribbean community. In all of these cases, however, integration tended to be with other immigrant communities, rather than with the Francophone "host society." This suggests that integration can be a complex process in a multi-cultural setting like Montreal, and that it is overly simplistic to speak of a single host society. It is not surprising, therefore, that the families consistently spoke of the stress that resulted from the expectation that they integrate into the francophone society, since, as has been suggested, identifying the "host" society is more complex than would at first glance seem to be the case.

This study should be read as exploratory and the conclusions offered are primarily meant to guide further research. Future research should include a longer term longitudinal study of families like these, so as to examine the evolution over time of their attitudes and perceptions and how such an evolution affects well-being. Further, more research is needed on Anglo-African communities in Montreal.

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Conclusion

One of the principal aims of this study was to better understand the challenges facing families of very small immigrant communities. To do so, the well being of Kenyan-Canadian parents and youth living in racially- and ethnically-mixed families in Montreal was examined.

The family members interviewed consisted mainly of mothers and daughters, the sole exception being two young brothers in one of the families. Participants generally suggested they were doing well in Montreal, and although some did speak of difficulties adjusting to life shortly after migration, these were described as existing principally in the past. On-going sources of stress include exposure to racism and issues relating to Quebec's language policies with respect to schooling. Future research, however, needs to address the well-being of both fathers and sons. One mother did suggest that boys faced greater difficulties than girls, and it is possible that extending the focus to fathers and sons would uncover threats to well-being not covered here.

This thesis first includes a reflexive paper devoted to the relationships that emerged during the interviews themselves. It took incidents of laughter as a point of entry to highlight what it means that the interviewer was also a Kenyan-Canadian immigrant. The bulk of the research on immigrant communities continues to be undertaken by outsiders, even if the number of "native" scholars is increasing. This study suggests there is great value in encouraging scholars to study communities with which they can identify. The interviews were conducted by a researcher fluent in the national language and way of speaking, at ease with cultural and historical references, and who, like the participants

themselves, could identify as Kenyan, Canadian, black, an immigrant, and frequently, as a mother. All of these factors helped to create ease and quickly establish a rapport with the participants that encouraged them to open up to someone they had only just met, and further, allowed the researcher and interviewees to come together over the recognition of common experience. The thesis makes use of extensive excerpts from the interview transcripts so as to highlight the voices of the participants themselves, and includes the contextual exchanges between interviewer and interviewee so as to illustrate the value that emerged from having a "native" researcher.

One of the main finding of this research was that the path to integration for the Kenyan-Canadian participants was established primarily through the ties they formed with the communities they married into. The fact that these people adapted to life in Montreal while mingling with other immigrant communities complicates the very idea of integration into a broader host society because it insists upon the need to recognize that the host society is a composite made up of a large number of intertwined smaller communities. Future research needs to better address how immigrants balance the fact that they must live their daily lives in a broader composite society that is Quebec and Canada, and at the same time also find their way in smaller sub-communities that they marry into. This group of participants have highlighted how connections to these smaller communities can provide immigrants with a great deal of support, in particular in dealing with racism, arranging for schooling for children, and in finding employment. This study shows that building ties to multiple individual ethnic communities can come with distinct challenges, and future research is needed to address this.

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