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**TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS OF FIRST GENERATION IMMIGRANTS
FROM KENYA IN THE UNITED STATES**

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This study analyzed why and how first generation immigrants from Kenya maintain transnational ties. It explored the characteristics of these ties, how they are sustained, whether they vary by gender, age, education or length of stay, and how ties affect immigrants' experiences. Ethnographic interviews with 38 participants living in Paterson, NJ showed no overarching immigrant experience. All participants regardless of age, gender, length of stay and education maintained transnational ties with family and friends. Ties took the form of phone calls, internet communication, mail, material exchanges, home visits and cultural activities and occurred mostly with people from their local ethnic villages. Frequency of ties by length of stay assumed a U-shaped curve with more ties initially, followed by a decline after some years in the U.S. and an increase thereafter.

Participants mentioned three factors necessary for successful immigration experience: legal status in the U.S., a good education and a strong support network. None of them believed aspiring to a middle class American life or assimilation indicated success. Rather success meant assisting people in Kenya and co-ethnics validated the importance of transnational practices. Despite the absence of a visible Kenyan ethnic

enclave in Paterson, there was a close-knit community connected through social networks.

Women received assistance from kin and non-kin to migrate, while men were assisted mostly by family. Women's friendship ties transcended family ties but were not in competition with them; they used their friendship ties to advance family livelihoods. Men's immigration experiences were confounded by gender expectations based on their responsibilities as breadwinners and heads of households. Women's immigration decisions were interwoven in their daily struggles to support their families. Immigration was a never-ending process, as women and men perpetuated the experience through assisting the immigration of their children and friends and helping newly arrived immigrants.

Future research using a longitudinal approach would enable an understanding of successive immigrant generations and if they reproduced the patterns of their elders' transnational ties. Longitudinal study would also allow us to discern if the U-shaped pattern of ties found here represented a cross-sectional perspective or instead overtime ties ebbed and flowed.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children Sheila and Paul Kioko who have taught me how to
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Recent immigrants to United States

The United States has a long history of receiving immigrants. Unlike earlier immigrants who came from Europe and were mainly white, an overwhelming number of contemporary immigrants come from many different world regions, leading to increased racial, religious and ethnic diversity. The new wave of immigration has implications for a society that has historically been confronted by complex and deeply ingrained ethnic and racial divisions. Such demographic shifts have provoked questions regarding the processes of incorporation of contemporary immigrants. There is a general consensus that immigrants are influenced by their societies of origins and, as such, their immigration experience is a product of their old societies as well as the new. The ways in which these strands interact is complex and a result of various influences that at times compete and at other times complement each other.

Studies have shown that different immigrant groups have been treated differently by the host country. Different minority groups have had varying experiences with dominant groups and other minority groups due to diverse historical, economic and other contextual factors. While this is not any different for African immigrants, it is important to note that although immigrants from Africa share a common experience, there is a large degree of heterogeneity within and among African communities. African immigrants represent many nationalities, linguistic groupings, ethnic groups, class and social statuses and religious backgrounds. African immigrants also arrive in the United States via

multiple trajectories, including as Diversity Visa (DV)¹ lottery recipients, student visa applicants, business/economic migrants, family reunification and political refugees.

These factors influence the settlement patterns of the immigrants and subsequently play a role in their adaptation and incorporation into the host country. Different groups of immigrants tend to settle in specific areas based on their nationality, ethnicity or religion. For example, the majority of the African immigrants living in Paterson, New Jersey come from East Africa and the Horn of Africa.

Unlike the profile of earlier immigrants to the United States who were mostly from Europe, the recent waves of immigration have large numbers of people from Asia, Caribbean, and Latin America. These trends have provoked questions such as how these recent immigrants adapt and integrate into host country and whether their immigration experiences are different from those of the earlier immigrants. The demographic shift has also renewed the focus on relations and attitudes between immigrants and residents of the host country. Nearly all immigrants must overcome some level of linguistic and cultural challenges as newcomers. The influx of the recent diverse group of immigrants has also prompted researchers to investigate whether their incorporation into the United States mainstream is different from that of earlier immigrants.

Other questions have focused on how recent globalization trends, facilitating ease of travel and communication, have affected immigrants' settlement in host countries and their experiences in general. These aspects of analyzing the nature and extent of immigrants' adaptation and incorporation and networks or relations that the immigrants

¹The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program is administered on an annual basis by the Department of State and conducted under the terms of Section 203(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The Act makes available 50,000 permanent resident visas annually to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

maintain with both host and home countries have formed major foci of recent immigration studies.

Interest in immigrants' adaptation and incorporation into the host society is an important topic for immigrants from Africa, mainly, Black Africans. These terms refer to mainly how immigrants blend into the host society, in the economic, social and political spheres. It is safe to state that the majority of African immigrants arrive with a set of perceptions and expectations about United States, most of which are positive. In addition, many of them arrive in the United States from countries where blacks are the majority at every level of society. Hence, they are confronted with unfamiliar race relations upon arrival in the United States, becoming members of a minority group. Researchers including Foner (2000; 2005), Kasinitz (1992) and Vickerman (1994) have discussed this issue whereby for some of the black immigrants, the ascription to a minority group status is perceived as downward mobility. Waters (1999) points out that even when family and friends had informed immigrants about race relations in the United States, it was still difficult for them to imagine the actual race relations experiences in United States. Given such insights, there is a need to collect data on different groups of Black immigrants as part of the process of understanding how they handle their immigration experiences.

Earlier immigration studies such as Gordon (1964), Park and Burgess (1921) and Warner and Srole (1945) analyzed immigration as a one-way process premised on the supposition that most immigrants severed ties with their countries of origin as they assimilated into the receiving country. Assimilation was necessary if the immigrants were to succeed in the host country; they needed to subscribe to a core set of shared values. The assimilation perspective viewed migration as a process whereby "uprooted" migrants

travel to a new country and begin a process of severing ties with the old country while developing closer ties with the new homeland. Studies critical of the classical assimilation perspective on migration as unidirectional have moved more towards analyzing the contemporary contexts within which immigration takes place. Their findings suggest that a significant number of immigrants remain linked to their communities of origin and there is widespread back and forth movement between the country of origin and the receiving country (Alba and Nee, 1997; Foner, 2000; Levitt 2001, 2002; Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004; Mahler, 1998; Morawska, 2001; Pessar, 1999; Portes, Luis and Landolt, 1999, 2002; Rouse, 1991). The studies reveal that immigrants tend to live simultaneously across different nations, being both “here” and “there,” crossing geographic and political boundaries. The term “transnationalism” is commonly used to contextualize and define such immigrants' cultural, economic, political and social experiences. Various scholars have provided definitions for the term but in general “transnationalism” refers to “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1994: 7).

Drawing on insights from these works addressing transnational practices, the current study focused on understanding immigration experiences of first generation immigrants from Kenya and the ties they maintain with people back in Kenya. The challenge was to document and understand the characteristics of these ties, how and why they are maintained, and how the ties influence immigrants' experiences in the U.S. The expectation was that the findings would provide a more comprehensive understanding of not only the magnitude and patterns of ties but also how the ties are expressed and

embedded within the everyday lives of the immigrants. In this way, the study attempted to advance the analysis of transnational practices and how deeply they are embedded in social and economic relations.

1.2 Overview of African immigration to the United States

The number of African immigrants to the United States more than quadrupled between 1961 and 2000, growing from 109,733 to 531,832 (Takougang, 2003). Even though the numbers of documented immigrants arriving annually in the United States from the African continent rose from under 15,000 in 1980 to over 40,000 by the close of the 1990s, Africans still made up a relatively small proportion, slightly more than 5%, of the documented immigrants to the United States in 2000, up from less than 2% in 1991 (Arthur, 2000: 154). In 1990, the Census Bureau estimated that 2.2% of the foreign-born population in the United States was born in African countries, more than twice the estimate of a decade earlier. That proportion has continued to increase over the past years. Nigeria was the largest source country of sub-Saharan African migrants and refugees from 1980-2001, but four of the eight largest African source countries are in the Greater Horn of Africa region: Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya. More than 20% of African immigrants in 2000 came from these four countries alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). Table 1.1 shows the total numbers of immigrants arriving from Africa and Kenya between the years 1995-2003.

Table 1.1: Number of legal immigrants to U.S. from Africa and Kenya ²

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total	720,461	915,900	798,378	660,477	646,568	849,807	1,064,318	1,063,732	705,827	946,142
Africa	39,818	49,605	44,668	37,494	36,700	40,790	50,209	56,135	45,640	62,510
% of total	(6%)	(5%)	(6%)	(6%)	(6%)	(5%)	(5%)	(6%)	(6%)	(7%)
Kenya	1,419	1,666	1,387	1,696	1,412	2,210	2,514	3,207	3,216	5,323
% Africa	(4%)	(3%)	(3%)	(5%)	(4%)	(5%)	(5%)	(5%)	(7%)	(9%)

** Africa refers to the continent and not sections of it.

While the percentage of immigrants from Kenya (expressed as percent of African immigrants) has remained fairly constant, the total numbers have shown a steady increase from 1995.

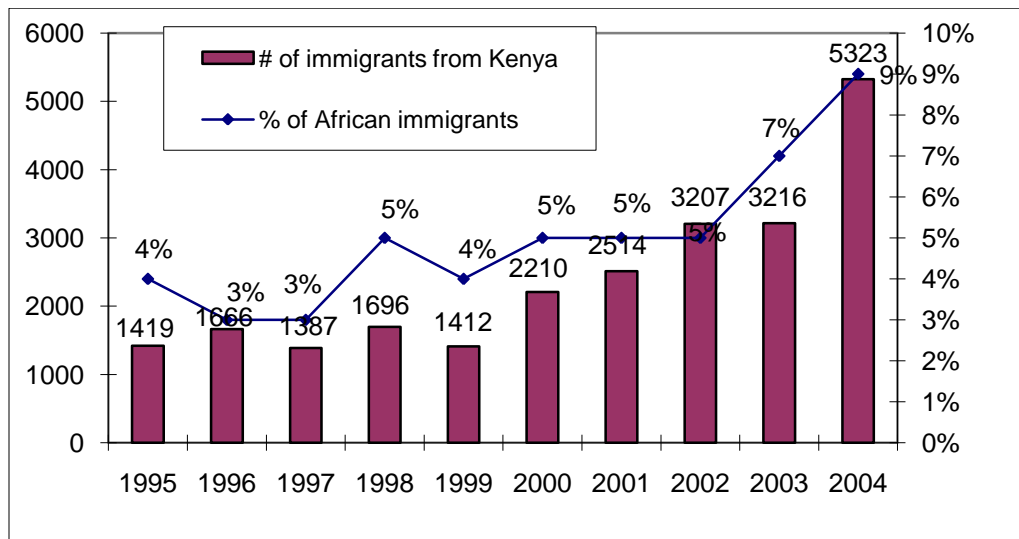
Graph 1.2: Africa and Kenya immigration trends 1995-2004

Table 1.1 shows that African immigrants have formed a small percent of the total immigrants to the United States. While African immigrants have been smaller in numbers, they have some of the highest education levels when compared to other groups of immigrants (Takyi, 2002). The 2000 U.S. Census showed that forty-nine percent of adult African immigrants hold a bachelor's degree. The census data showed that one in

² The data for Table 1.1 and Graph 1.1 was compiled using statistics from 2004 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Bureau.

four African-born immigrants had an advanced college degree, making them one of the most highly educated immigrant groups. Takyi also reports that African immigrants tend to live in or around large cities, and nearly half live in Texas, California, Maryland, or New York. The Census does not provide a breakdown of the characteristics of foreign-born population from Africa by their specific countries; hence there are no exact numbers for Kenya. This adds to the paucity of data related specifically to immigrants from Kenya.

Studies have shown that motivating factors for migration for African immigrants are social, economic, and political. African migration has largely been fueled by globalization trends, the economic and political failures in Africa, immigration policies of receiving countries, historic ties of sending and receiving countries, and the availability of existing contacts within the receiving country (Arthur, 2000; Gordon, 1998; Okome, 2002; Takougang, 1995). The last three decades of the twentieth century witnessed significant immigration of Africans to North America, often due to political crises, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and economic deterioration.

In exploring the contexts of African immigration, Arthur (2000) outlined three important developments that have influenced African immigration trends. The earliest development was an increase in the number of African students and professionals who stayed in the U.S. as a result of political and economic difficulties at home, beginning in the 1970s. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 made it easier for this highly educated group to obtain permanent residency status and remain in the United States. The second development began in the mid-1980s with the arrival of large numbers of political refugees fleeing repressive regimes and violent conflict, particularly from the

Horn of Africa. The third development resulted from the Immigration Acts of the 1990s, which made it possible for immigrants to be admitted on the basis of their skills, as well as the introduction of the DV program.

Okoth (2004) provides an outline showing that the first and perhaps only real “wave” of Kenyan immigrants came during the 1950s and 1960s when Kenya was still a British colony. At that time, immigration was linked to the pursuit of higher education abroad and the return of such skills and experience to Kenya was part of “nation-building” efforts. The cause of this major wave of immigration was that, during World War II, Kenyans had been obliged to fight for the British Crown. After the war, soldiers returned home, only to be treated, once again, as second-class citizens. This spurred the country into a civil war, a war for independence. The Soviet Union got involved and began encouraging Kenyans to relocate to Russia for their education in order to support the Soviet cause.

The United States followed suit, and airlifted many Kenyans to the United States and helped settle them mainly in small college towns. The objective was that these Kenyans would receive their education in the United States and then return to Kenya to implement a structure of democracy. Many did return to Kenya, but some stayed and made the U.S. their home. As Okoth (2004) states, during the period of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Kenyans were engaged in a circular migration in search of higher education and advanced training abroad, often returning to apply their skills in Kenya in nation-building efforts. Many of those who returned held high posts in the government. Examples include the first president of Kenya, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the current president Mwai Kibaki, and strong opposition leaders such as the late Oginga Odinga.

Similar to other African countries, the immigration trend shifted to a one-way mass exodus in the 1980s and 1990s, largely due to political and economic woes that were rampant on the African continent (Gordon, 1998; Macharia, 2003). In the early years after Kenya gained independence from the British in 1963, there was a fairly steady level of economic growth. In the late 1980s, during the reign of the second president Daniel Arap Moi, the situation changed and the country was plunged into economic deterioration, with educational and other resources becoming inadequate to meet the demands of the growing population. Due to widespread mismanagement in the government and inefficient policies bogged down by widespread corruption, tribalism and nepotism economic growth came to a standstill and then started to decline (Throup and Hornby, 1998). Furthermore, relations with major world donors including the World Bank deteriorated. Since independence, Kenya had always maintained decent relations with the major donors and as a developing country had relied heavily on foreign aid to finance their activities. At the 1991 meeting of the major donors called the Paris Group, the donors decided to suspend foreign aid to Kenya, citing corruption, mismanagement of funds and poor governance (Throup and Hornby, 1998). This worsened an already bad situation.

Ten or fifteen years ago, when Kenya's economy was more stable, more students were coming, but fewer stayed. When the economy deteriorated and many of the students were faced with great uncertainty and very poor economic opportunities upon returning to Kenya, many remained and settled in the U.S. (Okoth, 2004). For many, the decision to stay in the U.S., where there were more opportunities, was easy to make, compared to the failures of development back in their country, along with the economic despair and

political instability. Many Kenyan families that were able to afford the initial financial costs of sending one or more of their members abroad on a long-term or permanent basis considered it an investment and/or a form of economic insurance. Of these immigrants who came as students, some of them found employment and settled in the U.S. and served as contacts for other immigrants (Takyi, 2002). Even today, most Kenyan immigrants come to the United States in pursuit of education. This trend has not changed since the early 1960s, as shown in a report by the Institute for International Education (2003), which indicated that among African countries sending students to the United States in the 2001-2002 school year, Kenya led, followed by Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt and South Africa.

1.3 Immigrants' ties with the home country

Transnational studies have focused on insights regarding the nature of immigrants and the immigration process. These studies incorporate the understanding that as immigrants move they do not cut-off links with their communities of origin. As such immigrants do not necessarily have a point of departure with a static point of arrival. Rather a significant number of them maintain ties with their home countries and there is widespread back-and-forth movement between the two or more points of origin and destination. Such studies as Alba and Nee (1997); Foner (2000); Levitt (2001, 2002); Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004); Mahler (1998); Morawska (2001); Pessar (1999); Portes et al. (1999); Portes, Haller and Guarnizo (2002); and Rouse (1991) analyze how immigrants tend to live simultaneously across different nations, being both "here" and "there," crossing geographic and political boundaries.

The intensity of contemporary trans-border ties is largely facilitated by three factors: advances in transportation and communication technology; the globalization of capital; and a greater tolerance in the United States for ethnic pluralism. Transnational studies have pointed out that as migration continues to grow, there is a corresponding increase in the flow of information and goods between host countries and home countries. These transnational engagements take various forms including social remittances and the transformation of the social and political lives of migrant and non-migrant populations (Levitt, 1998), remittances and the development of financial institutions and direct international investors (Kyle, 2000; Orzoco, 2003a), support and promotion of local development initiatives (Goldring, 2002; Rouse, 1991; Smith, 1997) and political participation (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2003). Furthermore, the studies indicated that it is more likely that migrants will engage in selective transnational practices on a periodic basis. Rouse (1991) summarized the situation by stating that the story of immigrants leaving one country for good and settling in another is not a simple one. As increasing numbers of migrants live parts of their social and economic lives across national boundaries, the question is no longer whether this is good or bad, but rather, how the immigrants participate in these transnational engagements.

While there are no definitive numbers to show the volume or magnitude of ties that immigrants from Africa maintain, it is evident that although thousands of miles away, they continue to stay in contact with families and friends through phone calls, letters, video and audio-tape messages, and money transfers. Africa, and in particular Sub-Saharan Africa, has received little attention in studies or discussion of transnational

connections of migrants to their home countries (Kamya, 1997). The majority of studies on non-European immigrants have focused on Latin America and the Caribbean; therefore, much of what we know is influenced by the experiences of immigrants from those regions. It is not clear whether findings discovered by observing other groups of immigrants are comparable to the situation of African immigrants.

One possible reason that Africa has received less attention may be related to the relatively small number of migrants from Africa to the U.S. when compared to the other regions. The situation brings up the issue of the experiences of “subordinate” immigrant groups and how their experiences differ or correspond to the dominant groups’ experiences. To address this gap, we need studies of African immigrants’ experiences that allow for the analysis of within and across group variations to provide us with a better understanding of the complexities of immigration. Part of the impetus for this study was to contribute by providing data on Kenyan immigrants for comparison with other immigrant groups in the United States. This study will also contribute to knowledge about Kenyan immigrants and how their social and cultural values are reflected in the types of social and economic ties they create and sustain.

In addition, the few studies that have included Africa, have largely been descriptive, focused on establishing the existence of the flow of goods and activities (e.g., Apraku, 1991; Arthur, 2000; Djamba, 1999; Obiakor and Grant, 2002; Okome, 2002; Takougang, 1995; 2003). No doubt, these studies have formed a critical basis for African immigrant studies; however, to better understand immigrant experiences, the flows of goods and activities must be analyzed within the context of the social relations within which they are embedded (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992). Drawing on insights from recent

work on transnationalism, this study focused on understanding immigration experiences of first-generation immigrants from Kenya and the ties that they maintain with friends and family back in their home country. The challenge was to document and understand the nature of these ties and how and why these ties were expressed and embedded within daily lives. The expectation was that the findings would provide a more comprehensive understanding of not only the magnitude and patterns of such ties, but also how these connections related to immigrants and their daily immigration experiences in the United States. As such, the study attempted to advance an analysis of transnational practices and their embeddedness in social and economic relations, specifically, the practices of maintaining ties with Kenya.

1.4 Study objectives

The analytical task of the study was to explain why and how first-generation immigrants from Kenya engage in ties with their home country and whether these ties influence their immigration experiences in the U.S. The study explored the following questions: 1) Do first generation immigrants from Kenya engage in ties/connections to Kenya on regular basis? 2) If so, how can we best characterize the ties? What are the characteristics of immigrants who engage in the ties on regular basis? 3) What determines and maintains the ties? Do ties differ by gender, age, education levels or length of stay in U.S.? 4) How do such ties affect the immigrants' experiences in U.S.?

In addressing these questions, the study sought to establish the specific forms that the ties take, their frequency, and regularity. The study also examined the most common motivations for maintaining ties with Kenya. Additionally, it analyzed whether

immigrants' engagement in ties are differentiated by gender, age, income levels, education levels, or length of stay in the United States.

1.5 Study area

The study focused on Paterson, New Jersey. Urban Paterson provides a suitable arena to analyze the dynamics given its growing and diverse immigration population. It provides an important changing ethnic map, with dramatically increasing numbers of these non-traditional migrant groups now living in communities that are occupied by immigrants from other racial groups. Murphy and Murphy (1987:151) points out that Paterson has a rich history and “it presents a valuable microcosm of industrial America and the immigrant experience in the industrial cities.” Because of its industrial basis and its proximity to New York, which provided access as a port of entry, Paterson was a major attraction for many earlier waves of immigrants. Many of the early immigrants to Paterson were from Ireland and Italy, later followed by waves of immigrants mostly from Eastern European. Following World War II, the largest wave of migration consisted of domestic movement of Blacks from the rural American South (Murphy and Murphy, 1987).

As these groups of immigrants prospered, they moved from their working class residences in Paterson to the more middle class residences mostly in the suburban areas. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Paterson had a higher percentage of Hispanics³ and

³ In most parts of this work I use the word “Latino” to refer to the Hispanic group of people, however it should be noted that there exist inter-group differences. During informal conversations it was evident that these differences serve as a significant point of reference; people self-identified as Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican, or other South American origins. They were very protective of these identities and went to great lengths reminding me constantly “I am not Hispanic or Latino, I am Puerto Rican.” In instances where findings on Latino population are cited and the original wording in the reports was Hispanic the original

African-Americans in comparison to both the county and the state. The data showed that Paterson had more than twice the proportion of African American residents than the county and state. The foreign-born population in Paterson made up 33.2% of the population, a proportion one-and-half times more than that reported for the state of New Jersey. Of the total 33.2% foreign-born residents in Paterson, 27.3% indicated that they were from Latin America. The identified areas of origin were Puerto Rico (16.1%), the Dominican Republic (10.3%), South America (9.3%), Peru (4.7%), Colombia (3.4%), Mexico (3.3%) with 9% reported as 'Other'. Paterson has also become home to one of the largest populations of Arab immigrants from Palestine, Syria and Jordan in the United States. In the 2000 census Paterson was listed as one of the cities with a presence of over 100,000 people who indicated their ancestry as Arab (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b).

In their extensive research, Alba and Nee (1997) analyzed the settlement patterns of new immigrants and found that they settle mainly in their own communities within major urban areas. These communities tended to reflect distinct cultural backgrounds, social norms, and family structures, including recreational and sport participation patterns. Studies have shown that there are various reasons why immigrants establish these kinds of ethnic clusters and segregated neighborhoods. An underlying factor is that these ethnic enclaves assist newly arrived immigrants in meeting the challenges of their initial settlement in an unfamiliar environment (Meyer, 2001; Portes 1995, 1997). These may include specific needs that the immigrants may not share with the native population such as what phone cards to use when calling home or where to get certain types of food.

wording is maintained. The same applies to African immigrants where it should be noted that inter-group differences exist among African immigrants from different parts of Africa and the Caribbean.

Within these ethnic settlements, personal social networks are established, whereby important information flows regarding how to address daily needs and learn of the availability of jobs. Similarly, immigrants acquire and reinforce their familiarity with the social and cultural customs of the host country. Thus, this pattern of settlement plays an important role and is a crucial stage in the process of adaptation. On the other hand, an over-reliance on personal social networks may hinder an individual's economic advancement. Restricting one's contacts to those of one's ethnic group may limit the scope of information that an immigrant will receive and lead to confinement within certain, possibly low-paying, economic sectors.

The level of an immigrant group's concentration in an area depends on various factors mainly those that provide the advantages of feelings of unity and identity within the group. The group's concentration also affects its capacity to adapt and assimilate. The work done by Portes and Zhou (1993) demonstrated that assimilation and adaptation of immigrants is a segmented process whereby different immigrant groups may follow different paths and participate in different segments of society, rather than inevitably move toward the same kind of participation. Urban Paterson provided the opportunity to explore some of these notions and establish whether the experiences of first-generation immigrants from Kenya are comparable to prior research findings.

1.6 Why study Kenyan immigrants?

The choice to study Kenyan immigrants stemmed from my own interest in the history of the Kenyan-U.S. migration. While reviewing immigration literature, I realized that there was a paucity of data on immigrants from Kenya, their experiences, and their

relations within the immigrant community. The starting point for this study was based on informal interactions and personal observations of first generation Kenyan immigrants at various social functions in different towns in New Jersey. Through conversations with some of the first generation immigrants indicated that they had ties to Kenya, and the influence of those ties was reflected in the content of their conversations. Other observations suggested that some immigrants seemed integrated in various activities in the host country while continuing to maintain networks within Kenya, especially in the form of economic activities. While little doubt was left regarding the existence of ties that the immigrants maintained with Kenya, little was known about the actual nature and characteristics of the ties and whether these ties influenced individual immigration experiences.

These observations prompted me to explore the question of why, and in what manner, first generation immigrants from Kenya engaged in and maintained ties with their homeland. Were Kenyan immigrants' experiences similar to other dominant immigrant groups or even other minority immigrant groups? This study intended to provide answers to some of these questions regarding how ties are maintained, given the immigrants' unique personal histories, goals, social endowments, and the social, economic and cultural forces they encountered both here and at home.

Furthermore, the numbers of immigrants from Kenya have been increasing. Unlike the 1950s and 1960s, when Kenyan immigrants traveled overseas for their education and then returned to Kenya, most students who now come to the United States stay. During that earlier period, Kenya's economy was considerably more stable. Presently, economic opportunities in Kenya are still at a low point, and many people

make efforts to leave the country in search of better opportunities. Given these changes in the economic situation, there was and still is a need for scholarly attention to analyze how the current immigration trends affect the people left behind.

From the beginning of the research I was aware of my “insider” status and prior knowledge of the community so conducting the study was a very personal experience. My “insider” status offered me relatively easier access to the participants; I was able to make contacts and establish rapport with the participants more readily because they were comfortable with me. The participants also gave me a lot of support when I explained the purpose of my research and therefore they were willing to participate in the interviews. Some of the information that the participants provided may not have been given to an “outsider” for various reasons. Immigrants tend to make up very tightly knit communities and censor much of the information that they share with outsiders. This was expressed to me during the research and cited especially in the post-9/11 period.

Even though I was aware of my “insider” status and was cautious to ensure the balance between personal and professional was maintained, conducting research within one’s community has its own challenges. In some instances my prior knowledge ran the risk of creating certain expectations that the participants discussed and at such interviews I simply let the participants present their ideas in the way they preferred; exaggerated or otherwise. While I was considered an “insider” I faced challenges in that the participants viewed me as an avenue to amplify their views and wanted to direct me on what I should say or not say about their community. Some of them openly expressed to me what I should make public and what should not be revealed.

Men tried to direct and control the topics during the interviews. They were more focused on discussing specific topics, mostly how Kenyan women change upon arrival in the United States and its effect on marital relations. My opinion is that if this study was conducted by a man insider or outsider they may not have experienced this challenge, and so this was largely based on the fact I was a woman. As a woman, I also had to follow correct cultural code and had to approach the wives or partners of the men who had agreed to participate in the study and ensure that they too have details of the study and my intentions. In other words, even though I was not going to interview the wives they too had to be included. Overall, I shared some cultural understanding with the group and had to take some steps to maintain credibility among within such an environment.

1.7 Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows: The first chapter is a brief introduction with a short overview of the objectives and study area. The second chapter gives an overview of the relevant literature and conceptual framework of the study. The literature ranges from earlier immigration studies to the recent transnational literature. The hypotheses are also provided in this chapter. The third chapter deals with the research design outlining the study methodology, sampling procedures, data collection methods and analysis. The fourth chapter discusses the study area of Paterson with the objective of highlighting its diverse population. It explains the settlement patterns of the various groups of people residing in Paterson. Chapter Five begins to discuss the research findings and describes the responses from the respondents in terms of their reasons for coming to United States, their initial settlement patterns and their initial experiences in

terms of social support and factors that influenced their success or otherwise. Chapter Six focuses specifically on the nature and characteristics of ties as discussed by the participants. It also deals with the analysis of how the ties influence participants' immigration experiences. Chapter Seven reviews the findings in terms of gender relations. This is followed by the final chapter on the discussion of the findings, conclusions and areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter discusses a number of theoretical models that have been advanced to explain the settlement process and experiences of immigration. It discusses concepts central to the literature on immigration, including assimilation and transnationalism. The first part of the chapter discusses the concept of linear assimilation that postulates that newcomers will abandon their old cultures and take up the mainstream culture of the host society. This section concludes with some of the criticisms levied against linear assimilation perspectives. The second part of the chapter outlines the recent studies that have focused on understanding how immigrants exercise their agency as they settle in the host society. It also reviews the studies that have paid attention to transnational practices within the context of increased global interconnectedness. The last section of the chapter focuses on available literature on African immigration in the United States. The chapter concludes with the hypotheses for the study derived from the literature review.

2.1 Immigration and Assimilation model

There have been many studies that have focused on the processes of initial settlement and the resulting changes that occur over time following immigration. These studies have postulated various views on immigration processes and experiences but they have one point in common: they have sought to explain the ways in which immigrants have interacted with host society. While the emphasis may have varied at different periods in history, the studies have sought to understand how and why newcomers either

adapt and/or eventually conform to the ways of the host country, resist change, or a combination of both, engaging in selective change.

Several concepts have emerged describing and explaining the processes of settlement and interaction of immigrants with the host country. Some of the earlier concepts that have been applied to explain these processes include *assimilation*. The Chicago School of sociology was very much involved in popularizing the concept of assimilation in the twentieth century. This period was also associated with the influx of Polish and Italian immigrants to the urban areas of Chicago. The scholars at the Chicago including Robert Park (1864-1944), Ernest W. Burgess (1886-1966) and W. I. Thomas (1863-1947) became concerned with ethnic and race relations among these groups of immigrants. In their studies on the theory of urban ecology, Park and Burgess extended the concepts applied to natural environments to urban environments. The most important of these were *competition and survival*. They argued that competition for scarce resources, especially land, would be extended to competition among groups in the urban areas (Park and Burgess, 1921). Such processes would lead to the establishment of niches whereby people with shared, similar social characteristics would come together because they were subject to the same ecological pressures. Therefore, the competition for land and resources would lead to spatial differentiation of urban spaces into zones, with more desirable areas commanding higher rents.

Park and Burgess then mapped immigrant settlement patterns to show urban dispersion and settlement in accordance with both immigrants' cultural adjustment and economic achievement. They suggested that urban dynamics and processes would lead to immigrants abandoning their old cultures, regardless of their origin, and assimilating into

mainstream American culture. Since immigrants wanted to participate in and enjoy the opportunities offered by the new society, they would assimilate. With their studies, they were among the earliest scholars to articulate the process of assimilation, suggesting that it entailed the “fusion” of individuals or groups such that each acquired the “memories, sentiments, and attitudes” of other individuals or groups, culminating in a “common cultural life for all” (Park and Burgess, 1921:735).

Park and Burgess proposed the concept of a “race relations cycle” comprising four stages of integration or assimilation. The stages were *contact*, *conflict*, *accommodation* and *assimilation*. They proposed that these stages occur except in cases where intervening factors such as racism hinder the process. The race relations model suggested that there were two possible paths to assimilation: one that would take the path of least resistance — *contact*, *accommodation*, and *fusion*, and a second that would entail resistance — *conflict*, *competition*, *accommodation*, and *fusion*. “Whereas the latter route could take longer and could entail considerable resistance on the part of the immigrant, the end result would be the same—loss of a distinctive ethnic identity. The new culture and values would emerge” (ibid, p.38). This approach to assimilation was dynamic; it suggested that when the stage of assimilation had been achieved, differences between groups would be erased. While the approach described the experiences of many immigrants, not all took this route.

Other Chicago School scholars, W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, focused their studies on Polish peasant immigrants and analyzed the issues and problems they faced in the assimilation process after migrating to America. In their famous book, *The Polish Peasant*, they documented the adjustments the Polish immigrants endured and the

changes that occurred in their lives. They found that language, religion and networks of solidarity were very important to the immigrants in their economic struggles in America. Thomas and Znaniecki compared the conditions of immigrants who came from Poland with those who had been born in Chicago. They found that older immigrants were not very much affected by the move because they were able to continue living as peasants, even in the urban slums. The younger generation did not grow up on Polish farms and thus, as city dwellers had a much more difficult time. The second generation retained few of the old world traditions. Having not yet assimilated into the new world, they had higher crime and delinquency rates. Thomas and Znaniecki attributed this to *social disorganization*, which they defined as the breakdown of effective social bonds, family and neighborhood associations, and social controls in the community.

Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* (1964) refined the work of the Chicago School and included multi-dimensional and temporal aspects in the stages of assimilation. He distinguished between the possible cultural outcomes of assimilation, "*melting pot*", "*Anglo-conformity*" and "*cultural pluralism*." He proposed a series of stages of assimilation to analyze its various components. The first stage is *cultural or acculturation assimilation*, which occurs when immigrants absorb the values and practices of the host country, including the adoption of English, as well as changes in consumption and lifestyle patterns. The second one is *structural assimilation*, referring to the extent and manner in which immigrants integrate into the formal political, economic, social, and cultural institutions of the host society. The third stage is *marital assimilation* and pertains to large-scale interethnic and interracial marriage. The fourth stage is *identificational assimilation*, which refers to the erasure of ethnic identities when

subsumed by the national identity. This commonly occurs when succeeding generations of immigrants increasingly consider themselves to be Americans. The fifth stage was that of *attitude receptional assimilation* (the absence of prejudice) and sixth one was *behavioral receptional assimilation* (the absence of discrimination). Attitude and behavioral receptional assimilation reflect attitudes of both discrimination and tolerance that are a part of American history. The last stage was *civic assimilation* (absence of value or power conflict). Civic assimilation refers to adaptation achieved by assuming a place in society through the performance of functions within its institutions.

Gordon, like the scholars at the Chicago School, believed that immigrants would abandon their old cultural ways and identities and acquire a new American identity. There are some studies that have indicated that such changes happen to a certain degree. For instance, Stevens (2001) and Veltman (1983) show that there is an observable shift to English monolingualism after three generations among almost all immigrants, regardless of cultural background. Femminella and Quandagno (1976) and Morgan and Ewbank (1994) studied the fertility rates of immigrants and found that Italians and Eastern European Jews, who had previously exhibited high fertility rates, adopted the low-fertility patterns they observed in other white, urban Americans. The assimilation perspective overlooked certain issues such as the changing demographic face of immigration.

2.2 Criticisms of the assimilation model

The assimilation model has had a significant influence on the study of immigration and the way scholars think about the various aspects of immigrant

adaptation, including residential location, institutional life, social and economic mobility among ethnic group members, immigration experiences, etc. Yet, over the years, the assimilationist perspective has endured longstanding criticism. Rumbaut (1997a, 1997b) and Zhou (1997) have challenged the assimilation model's assumption that the host society had a unified core culture to which all immigrants would gravitate. The assumption being that the core culture to which immigrants would be attracted to was that of white American Protestants (Alba and Nee, 1997; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). Similar arguments have been posed by other scholars (Gans, 1999; 1994; Portes, 1984; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1994). They argue that the traditional, straight-line theory of assimilation does not satisfactorily account for the experiences of the many different ethnic groups in the United States. As Waters (1994) puts it, immigrants settling in the United States in the 1990s enter a pluralistic society in which different subcultures and ethnic identities coexist.

Furthermore, the model was criticized for its inability to isolate the causal mechanisms that give rise to assimilation, it also failed to acknowledge the existence of different forms of ethnic cultures and tended to exaggerate the extent of assimilation and acculturation (Alba and Nee, 1997; Gans, 1999; Nagel, 2002; Portes and Rumbaut, 1996). In their study, Portes and Rumbaut showed that European immigrants speak in different dialects than the language spoken by the majority in their country of origin, implying that even before leaving their country of origin; these immigrants had not adopted the language of the majority. Findings such as the study by Stevens (2001) showed that for many immigrants from Latin America, Spanish remains their first language and they adopt English as a second language. Such findings raise questions

regarding the assimilation aspects of adoption of English as the sole language. At the same time the demographic of the immigrants to the United States was changing and as such their experiences demanded more robust immigration models.

The assimilation model assumed that assimilation would have desirable results for the immigrants. There have been studies that have shown that assimilation may not necessarily have desirable outcomes for all groups. For instance, Foner's (1999; 2000) and Waters' (1994) studies showed that Black immigrants would rather retain their distinctive identities because assimilation into American society means that they become part of a group with lower status - African American.

Whereas the earlier assimilation perspectives assumed that the end product of the assimilation process would be integration into the society, recent studies show that immigrants and host society relations are more complex. In their quest to understand the interconnectedness of the various factors influencing immigrants' lives, Portes and Zhou (1993) proposed the notion of segmented assimilation to help contextualize the interplay of structural and cultural factors leading to divergent outcomes. They argue that immigrants can assimilate into the different strata or "segments" of society. They discuss various possibilities that the process may take a) assimilation into the American middle class just as discussed by classical assimilation theory, b) downward mobility whereby one assimilates into the urban underclass and c) engage in economic integration while maintaining one's culture and values. Their study paved the way to understanding the different ways of assimilating into America; both positive and negative. Alba and Nee (2003) undertook a systematic examination of assimilation to reevaluate the potential for and obstacles to assimilation in the context of immigration today and compare it to other

theoretical models of incorporation. Their analysis provides a detailed examination of the diverging immigration and integration patterns of various ethnic groups and interaction by socioeconomic status and race.

Alba and Nee (2003) discuss their findings and point out that the causal mechanisms of assimilation consist of two sets of factors: proximate and distal. The proximate factors refer to individual and network forces facilitating or hampering the integration of minority groups—such as personal motivations and life choices, the forms of human skills and abilities that migrants bring with them and solidarity among close-knit immigrant groups. The distal or structural factors are linked to the broader institutional and cultural environment within which the proximate factors come into play, and can either encourage immigrants to take steps to integrate into the mainstream or prevent them from doing so. Such factors may include legislation governing issues such as citizenship, education or welfare but also more informal contextual forces such as customs, collective racial or religious prejudices, and the overall evolution of cultural values. Additionally, Alba and Nee (2003) contend that while it is true that the current waves of immigrants possess very specific characteristics and that their specificity is real, it should not be overstated. They emphasize the continuity between past and present patterns of incorporation.

2.3 Immigration within a globalizing world

Other recent studies have focused on analyzing the contexts within which contemporary immigration takes place and have initiated a shift in the analysis of immigration. The term “transnationalism” is commonly used to contextualize and define

such immigrants' cultural, economic, political and social experiences. As Glick et al. put it:

Our earlier conceptions of immigrants no longer suffice ... now; a new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field ... new conceptualisation is needed in order to come to terms with the experience and consciousness of this new migrant population. We call this new conceptualisation 'transnationalism' (Glick et al., 1992:1).

Other scholars have variously referred to these sustained and continued connections between sending and receiving countries as “transnational migration circuits” (Rouse, 1991, 1992) and “transnational communities” (Levitt, 1996; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Portes, 1996). These kinds of transnational relationships are not entirely new, since immigration did not commence with globalization. Prior research by Morawska (1987) and others showed that earlier groups, such as East European immigrants to the United States, also remained involved in activities in their countries of origin. Globalization trends have increased and strengthened connections between host countries and receiving countries in a variety of ways. There is increased connectedness through increased ease of travel, new information and communication technologies as well as new standards of consumption and lifestyle choices (Sassen, 1992; Smith, 1997).

Aided by technological developments in travel and communication and pushed by the economic dislocations and opportunities of global capitalism, many immigrants maintain important links with families and community members living thousands of miles away. Many circulate regularly between their home countries and the United States, using their earnings to support families, construct new houses, and finance community projects at home. Current studies have explored transnational identity formation

(Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Mahler, 1998) i.e., the practices that transnationals engage in both in their home and receiving countries (Riccio, 2001). Other studies have explored the scope of transnational practices among the immigrant population as a whole (Guarnizo et al., 2003; Mahler, 1998; Portes et al., 2002).

Studies on transnational engagements indicate that transnationalism is not a long-term threat to assimilation nor does it detract from migrants' abilities to contribute to their host country. Rouse (1991) in his study on how rural Mexican migrants in the U.S. continue to maintain active involvements with the people and places they left behind provides an illuminating perspective. The study shows how immigrants are members of two worlds and provides an objective analysis that does not idealize the immigration process. The study suggests that migration has produced "neither homogenization nor synthesis and instead, immigrants become involved in the chronic maintenance of two quite distinct ways of life" (Rouse, 1991:14). This analysis depicts the complex cross-cultural experience of immigration without either romanticizing it, or subsuming and homogenizing it.

Scholars have also explored the impact of globalization on how immigrants adapt to different contexts. Ong (1999) explores the ways that globalization has induced individuals to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions, allowing for more ease of migration. While globalization provides an arena for flexibility, individual characteristics and contexts are also critical in affecting immigration experiences. In Stoller's 2001 study of West African traders in New York, he found that cultural and historical context were essential to understanding West African trading practices. He found that the immigrants incorporated Islamic traditions to help

face the challenges of the New York City environment. Therefore, analyzing the social, political, and economic adaptations of immigrant communities through their daily lives provides us with a clearer picture of immigrants' experiences.

Other scholars have explored the specific contexts within which immigrants operate, sometimes revealing negative experiences of immigration. Peter Kwong's 1996 study of sweatshop workers in New York's Chinatown documents the trafficking of illegal immigrants. The study exposes clandestine or falsely documented border crossers, showing the reality of the interrelationship of the processes involved in the trafficking of illegal immigrants. Trade is not strictly a concern for its legal and technical implications rather there are social processes at work, such as the need for trust between migrants and smugglers within these smuggling schemes. Thus, the general commodification of migration is driven both by social and economic forces as well as ethnic and gender stratifications.

2.4 Immigrants' Connections to Home Country and Sojourner Narratives

Most immigrant communities abroad try to improve the living standards of members of the family who stay behind. Family networks across political and economic lines provide the opportunity for individual survival and, at times, social mobility, in contexts of vulnerability and subordination in the sending nations (Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton, 1995). The remittances that transnational migrants send to their relatives may be crucial to their livelihoods. Additionally, such remittances have become a major factor in transnational dynamics with significant implications for both migrants and non-migrants. In countries such as the Dominican Republic, migrants' financial

contributions are estimated to make up as much as 15% of major Dominican political parties' annual fundraising revenues (Graham, 1997: 101). Immigrants' social, economic and political remittances have brought changes at the household level.

Remittances are significant to many developing countries' economies and are considered a stable source of assistance. The remittances also reflect the notion of "family values" in fulfilling the centuries-old tradition of assisting one's family. Modern technology has provided the opportunity for this help to take the form of electronic money transfers. Moreover, the desire to help one's family, spurred by limited economic opportunities in an individual's native country, may be the key reason a person seeks employment abroad. Remittances represent money individuals have earned and are choosing to dispose of as they see fit.

According to a World Bank report, remittances returned to developing countries reached \$72.3 billion in 2001. This figure generally exceeds the amount of official developmental aid provided to low-income countries either directly or through multilateral institutions (World Bank, 2003a). The report showed that an estimated \$18 billion in remittances to individuals in developing countries came from the United States. The report also indicated that remittances were a main source of specific countries' Gross Domestic Products (GDPs). At the same time, officially recorded flows to Africa have not kept pace with those to other developing regions, despite increases in the number of migrants both at the intraregional and international levels. The report also showed that while developing countries received \$80 billion in migrants' remittances in 2002, Africa received only about 15% of the global remittances, with sub-Saharan Africa receiving five percent.

Takougang (2003) maintains that remittances to Africa from immigrants are on the increase, as are the number of economic and social institutions established by African immigrants providing various forms of assistance to those at home. The 2003 World Bank Report on Migrant Labor Remittances also argues that remittances to Africa have increased (World Bank, 2003b). Other scholars have analyzed the characteristics of immigrants who send remittances. Taylor (1999) and de la Garza and Lowell (2002) showed that generally, ties to the home country are likely to be higher when: a) a migrant leaves his or her home mainly for economic rather than political or social reasons; b) the individual has temporary rather than permanent resident status; c) the migrant is young, but married with family left behind at home; or d) his or her wages increase, allowing him or her to send remittances. Orozco (2003a) notes that the typical immigrant to the United States may have a family relationship in the home country that triggers the remittance of funds, social or community-based affiliations that raise funds for home country community development purposes, a relationship with the home country at the consumption level, that is, for goods or services produced in the home country, or capital investments in a small business, either in the United States, the home country, or both.

Other studies have analyzed the impact these ties may have on those in the home country. Some findings indicate positive outcomes, while others show possible risks and negative effects. Russell and Teitelbaum (1992) argue that higher household incomes resulting from remittances can help to remove pressure on governments to implement economic and social reforms, while developing a culture of dependence that discourages initiative on the part of the individual. Other studies have argued that remittances tend to

be spent on consumer goods and ultimately fuel inflation. Levitt (1998) suggests that social remittances can be both positive and negative.

In his 2003 study focusing on El Salvador, Damon reported that remittances created an atmosphere of dependency. That year there were more than one million immigrants from El Salvador in the U.S. Those immigrants maintained close ties with their families; their remittances constituted approximately 12.6 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of El Salvador. Reliance upon remittances led to a perceptible change in the structure of the family, with younger members migrating to U.S., leaving older family members behind to tend for the family. This situation is not unique to El Salvador.

Okome (2002) mentioned the disadvantages of maintaining ties with family, friends and relatives, who while providing network support, can also be a source of never ending obligations and much stress. Such demands can work against migrants' social mobility in the host country and also make accumulating capital for return or investing back home very difficult. Another perceived disadvantage of immigrants maintaining ties with their home countries is their continued involvement in the political affairs of the homeland at the expense of their civic responsibilities in the host country. Immigrants who send money home hear news about domestic political, social, and economic conditions and may be encouraged to continue participating in the affairs of their home countries, leading to political apathy regarding the host country. This is reflected to the greatest extent in first generation immigrants (Jones-Correa, 2004).

2.5 African Immigration to the United States

Many of the African immigrants in the United States arrived in the 1980s and 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000, African immigration increased 170 percent, with immigrants from Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Ghana making up the largest African communities in the U.S. (Grieco, 2004). These figures are corroborated by the data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005) showed that there were one million immigrants from Africa, with the largest number from Western Africa (35%), followed by Eastern Africa (26%), Northern Africa (20%), Southern Africa (7%), and lastly Central Africa (3%).

While the numbers of Africans to the United States have shown steady increases, the statistics show that they are still relatively fewer compared to immigrants from Latin America or Asia. Ungar (1995) offers two possible reasons why the number of African immigrants in the U.S. remains relatively small. First, it is difficult for many Africans to obtain immigrant visas. The few visas awarded are granted either to a small number of students who have gained acceptance to educational institutions or to political exiles. Second, the distance from Africa makes the journey an expensive venture and, as such, is beyond the reach of most African families.

Trends of African immigration to the U.S. also show that as the numbers have been increasing, the nature of immigration has also changed over time (Takougang, 1995). It can be argued that Africans move from their countries for much the same reasons that scholars have observed elsewhere, i.e., “push” and “pull” factors. Common wisdom suggests that most immigrants will move to regions where they anticipate finding

far better lives. They move in search of better economic opportunities, or to escape social or political problems.

There is a sparse, albeit growing literature that has attempted to outline the specific economic, political, and social push and pull factors that have led to contemporary African immigrants' decisions to settle permanently in other countries. Gordon (1998) traces the processes to the post-independence period which became a great disappointment to many Africans. For most African countries, their post-independence dreams and hopes were short-lived. By the late 1980s and 1990s many African countries were plagued by economic and political woes. Corruption, poor governance, and lack of accountability were cited as the main reasons for much economic decline in Africa. Economic collapse often led to civil wars fueled by ethnic and religious intolerance. Many Africans sought liberation from their countries and fled to other lands that provided some hope for better lives.

Exploring the contexts of African immigration Arthur (2000) outlines the “push” and “pull” factors for the earliest increase in the number of African students and professionals who stayed in the U.S. He cites political and economic difficulties at home beginning in the 1970s as part of the “push” factors. The appeal of better life styles in the United States also attracted more immigrants. The “pull” factors included changes to the U.S. immigration laws in 1965 that allowed more Africans to immigrate. The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 eliminated the old quota system, which gave preference to Western Europeans, and extended the criteria for immigration to include criteria based on skills, profession or family reunification.

Okome (2002) underscores the aspects of globalization while offering a detailed discussion of African immigration. She explains how globalization's rapid technological advances have generated both positive and negative outcomes that intensify the desire for cultural exchange as well as the desire to emigrate. She notes that the innovations and advancements in international communication, for instance, increase the awareness of national economic differences and opportunities, and give potential immigrants information on how to achieve their goal. Through movies, television, radio, print media, facsimile machines, and currently, the information super-highway, potential migrants gather information on what to do, what opportunities exist, and where to move.

Takougang (1995) also points to the factors of severe economic difficulties, political instability, and increased poverty as major reasons for the large numbers of African immigrants and their desire to settle permanently in the United States. Furthermore, he notes that recent immigration policies have greatly facilitated an increase in the numbers of African immigrants. Arthur (2000) and Takougang (1995) have mentioned specifically the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, the Diversity Visa (DV) Program introduced as part of the 1990 Immigration Act and the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 all have played a role in the increasing numbers of African immigrants. The current DV immigration system follows a quota system that imposes limits on a per-country basis. There is a preference system that gives priority to families and those with special skills. These laws have helped United States businesses attract more foreign workers and expanded the business class categories to favor those who can offer educational, professional or financial contributions.

In general these studies point out that the recent waves of immigrants to the United States have largely been fueled by improved communication and transportation trends, economic and political failures in Africa, immigration policies, historic ties of sending countries to the United States and existing contacts within the United States. These factors have led to increased numbers especially of highly skilled professionals to seek for better opportunities elsewhere. They leave because of poor salaries, lack of teaching and/or research facilities, lack of opportunities for progress including publishing, attractive packages and quality of life in the developed countries and political reasons. This has led to a steady flow of mostly doctors, nurses, teachers, academics, engineers and accountants from Africa (Kaba, 2006). Data shows that in the education sector Africa lost a third of its highly skilled people; 40,000 African Ph.D. holders live outside Africa, which has been a brain drain on the African continent (International Migration Organization, 2003).

Literature on brain drain has pointed out the harmful effects of brain drain especially for countries with scarce training resources, while in recent times others have also pointed to the brain gains that can be achieved (Kaba, 2004; Kubler, 2005; Nesbitt, 2002). Kubler points out that one of the major reasons why Africa has experienced high levels of brain drain is because of the failure of its tertiary or university education institutions. Firstly, the institutions have not grown to meet the increased population and demand for opportunities at tertiary level of education. Secondly, tertiary education in Africa suffers from an image problem brought about by the continuous decline and lack of investment within the institutions. As a result many of the bright and talented students,

researchers and faculty leave Africa and migrate to countries, mainly in the developed countries.

Scholars on diaspora studies have also included another component to the brain drain literature, referred to as “brain bonus” by Mazrui (2002). Accordingly, brain bonus is the unintended positive consequence of the brain drain such as remittances, which augment the foreign aid to many African countries. Besides including brain gain, brain bonus, scholars are also engaged in establishing vocabulary to distinguish between horizontal and vertical brain drain (Mazrui, 2002). In instances where Africa loses its skilled workers to other developing countries, horizontal brain drain is said to have occurred. Vertical brain drain occurs when Africa loses skilled workers to the developed countries.

2.6 African Immigrants’ Experiences in Relation to Other Groups in the U.S.

There is a general consensus that immigrants are influenced by their societies of origins and, as such, their immigration experience is a product of their old culture as well as the new. The ways in which the strands of the old and new cultures interact are complex because of competing or inconsistent influences. Different immigrant groups are treated differently by the host country and studies have shown that minority groups have had varying experiences with dominant groups. Nearly all immigrants must overcome the linguistic and cultural challenges of being newcomers in a new land. But the majority of contemporary immigrants to the United States face an added challenge: they become members of U.S. “minority” groups and therefore confront the same educational and employment hurdles as “native” minorities. This is a crucial consideration when

comparing immigrants and natives, in light of the fact that over three-quarters of the native born are non-Hispanic “whites,” while over three-quarters of the foreign born are members of ethnic minorities.

A study by Waters and Eschbach (1995) on ethnic inequality experienced by immigrants in the United States showed that there are considerable inequalities in economic/income, labor force participation and poverty rates among minority groups in the United States. The study showed that, in terms of income, Asians had the highest income when compared to whites, while American Indians had the lowest. Asians also tend to have an unemployment rate similar to whites. The poverty rate for blacks is three times that of whites.

The U.S. Census Bureau also provides data on how different ethnic groups perform in various areas; however it does not breakdown by specific African countries. The Census data showed that African immigrants have fared well in terms of educational attainment, with around 49% of adult immigrants from Africa holding a bachelor’s degree. The census also recorded around 250,000 physicians and scientists of African descent and about 30,000 African students in the United States. Furthermore, the census data showed that the proportion of the 700,000 Africans in the United States aged 25 and over with at least a bachelor’s degree was 49.3%, substantially higher than the average for the general population of 25.6%, and other foreign born populations in the country such as Asians with 44.9%. Takougang indicated that African immigrants were reported to have a median income of over \$40,000 in 2003 (The Boston Globe as cited in Takougang, 2003).

These findings suggest that immigrants are no less susceptible than natives to the socioeconomic effects of ethnic inequality in American society. As a result, comparisons of the mostly “minority” foreign-born and mostly “white” native-born populations that fail to take into account the socioeconomic impact of ethnicity incorrectly suggest that place of birth, rather than minority status, is the primary factor explaining disparities between immigrants and natives. Empirical evidence suggests otherwise, when immigrants and natives within the same ethnic group are compared, the disparities between native born and foreign born are relatively small. Far from constituting evidence that immigrants are unable to advance or “assimilate,” these results illustrate the resourcefulness of immigrants in the face of enduring ethnic inequalities.

2.7 Hypothesis

The studies discussed in this review suggest that there are various factors that influence immigration within social, economic, political, and historical contexts. There exists a need for analyses of specific immigrant groups’ experiences that a) takes into account individual groups’ unique circumstances and histories and b) one that will not downplay the importance of examining different groups’ experiences in relation to one another. As Levitt (2004) puts it, these kinds of analyses will provide insights regarding the variations in transnational practices across and within groups. It is to this larger effort that this study intends to contribute, by providing data demonstrating the nature and characteristics of the ties that first-generation immigrants from Kenya maintain, whether patterns vary within groups, and whether these experiences replicate or diverge from the dominant patterns of transnational ties found among other immigrant groups.

The reviewed studies reveal an emphasis on how remittances affect outcomes in the home country. It is also important, however, to understand how these ties affect immigrants' experiences while in the host country. How does the continuation of ties with the home country affect immigrants' experiences in the United States? This study sought answers to these questions. The number of studies on African immigrants has been growing steadily over the recent years. However, they pale in comparison to studies on South American, Asia and Caribbean immigrant groups. This study was part of on-going efforts to contribute to literature on African immigrants.

From the studies reviewed, it was hypothesized that the ties first generation immigrants from Kenya maintained with people in Kenya a) will take on various forms, b) will be maintained for different reasons at different points of the immigrant cycle, c) will show varying frequency depending on their length of stay in the U.S. and d) will have an influence on everyday immigrant lives.

Assimilation theories postulated that longer periods of stay in the host country led to a progressive disengagement with home country and more engagement with host country. Therefore, the study hypothesized the first generation immigrants from Kenya who have been in the United States for longer period of time will have fewer and irregular ties with Kenya. At the same time assimilation theories argued that the longer immigrants stayed in a country the better their chances for upward mobility in terms of education, income and other socio-economic factors. As such, the study hypothesized that first generation immigrants with fewer ties with Kenya are more assimilated and will report more positive immigrant experiences.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology used for this study to establish the nature of ties that first generation immigrants from Kenya engage in and maintain. The first part of the chapter highlights the study questions adopted and describes in detail the sampling procedures undertaken in selecting the participants. There is also a description of the sample in terms of age, gender, length of stay, marital status, education and income levels. This section is followed by a section on data collection methods and study approach. The chapter concludes with a section on how the data was analyzed.

3.1 Study Objectives and Questions

The objective of the study was to examine first generation immigrants' ties with Kenya, the patterns that the ties take, the characteristics of the ties and the factors that contribute to these patterns. The study examined the characteristics of those who engage in ties, their motivations for engaging in ties and the ways in which they maintain the ties. The study addressed in detail the following questions:

- Do first generation immigrants from Kenya maintain ties with Kenya?
- What forms do the ties to Kenya take?
- What are the immigrants' motivations for engaging in ties with Kenya?
- Do immigrants maintain ties with other members of the community, other than their immediate family?
- What is the frequency and regularity of ties with Kenya?

- What are the characteristics of immigrants who engage in ties with Kenya on regular basis?
- Are there differences across gender, age, length of stay in the United States, income level and education levels? If so what are the possible explanations?
- What is the influence of the ties on first generation immigrants' immigration experiences in the United States?

3.2 Sampling procedures

To answer these questions the study utilized two sources of data: primary and secondary. The secondary sources data included a review of Kenya economic reviews and surveys, United States Census data and Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The secondary data was used to trace the patterns of significant macro-structural transformations at the source of migration, Kenya that may influence the lives and experiences of immigrants in the destination, United States. Other secondary data was obtained from similar studies on other immigrant groups from other regions including Latin America. The secondary data on structural factors, socio-economic, political and historical factors in Kenya was complimented by the primary data collected.

Primary data was collected through ethnographic interviews with thirty-eight first generation immigrants from Kenya who resided in Paterson at the time of the study between the summer 2005 and spring of 2006. In line with Gold (1997) the number of participants was determined through interviewing until I felt that a point of empirical saturation had been achieved, i.e., a point at which subsequent participants offer corroborating information.

Sample participants were drawn using purposive snowball sampling method with multiple entry points. I used multiple entry points to ensure as much diversity as possible especially in terms of age, gender and local ethnic group. To expand the participant pool of initial contacts my sampling frame included contacts provided by Kenya Community Abroad (an international/ regional organization that coordinates Kenyan activities), Association for Kenyan Professionals, a local women's group, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and Catholic church groups, e-mail list-serves and other local Kenyan associations/groups such as funeral associations.

Since I am from Kenya, I already had contacts with many of these groups who then introduced me to other groups for a more inclusive sample. The response from the Kenyan community was very positive especially after I explained the type of study that I was undertaking I received a lot of support and encouragement from the leaders of these groups. They felt that it would provide much-needed information about Kenyan immigrants. My position as an "insider" also permitted me to conduct the interviews in Kenya's native language, Swahili, whenever necessary hence facilitating communications and enabling me to conduct the interviews with a more interactive approach that allowed participants to offer information in a spontaneous manner.

Some of the groups were willing to share entire lists of the contacts for their members while others provided me with names and phone numbers of members who gave consent for their contacts to be disclosed. While most of the contacts included home addresses, there were a substantial number of email addresses mainly obtained through the Kenya Community Abroad (KCA) group. For these cases the secretary of KCA sent out a general email informing members of my intent, requesting those who are

interested, and resided in the Paterson area, to contact me. I received a couple of phone calls but the majority did not respond to the email. A sampling frame with 50 names was drawn using the contacts provided by the groups and the responses from individual people I had contacted at social meetings. Thereafter, I randomly selected ten men and ten women and started to contact them. The first five men and women to meet the criteria for sample selection and agreed to participate in the study formed the core initial study participants.

The sample selection criteria included a) Kenya born and first generation immigrant, b) self-supporting or non-dependent c) lived continually in the U.S. for the last five years at the time of the study and d) considered Paterson as their current residence. Even though ten initial participants were identified and agreed to participate only nine followed through; one participant was eventually dropped after various attempts to schedule an interview failed. Therefore the nine initial participants were composed of five men and four women. The initial participants subsequently referred me to other potential subjects who met the criteria for sample selection. While all the participants who were referred agreed to be interviewed, some of them were not interviewed because of scheduling conflicts. Eventually, a total of twenty men and eighteen women were interviewed for the study.

3.3 Sample description

3.3.1 Gender and Age

Gender distribution showed that the participants were almost equally divided with 20 (53%) men and 18 (47%) women. Based on the referrals from the initial contacts, there were no distinctly men-only or women-only networks even though men tended to

refer me mostly to other men. Women referred me to both men and women potential participants. While the sampled group of participants exhibited gender parity, during the interviews there were four instances in which men expressed that they had noted an increase in the number of women coming to the U.S. from Kenya over the past few years.

Age distribution showed that 29% of the participants were between ages 36-40.

Table 3.1 shows the age and gender distribution of participants.

Table 3.1 Distribution of participants by age and gender (N=38)

Age	Women	Men	Total (%) **
26-30 yrs	3	4	7 (18%)
31-35 yrs	4	0	4 (10%)
36-40 yrs	6	5	11 (29%)
41-45 yrs	1	7	8 (21%)
46-50 yrs	2	2	4 (10%)
51 yrs and above	2	2	4 (10%)
TOTAL	18	20	38

** Percent figures may not add to 100 due to rounding off.

From Table 3.1 we see that more than half (57%) of the participants were 40 years or younger and 68% were less than 45 years. Among this sample of first generation immigrants, there were no significant age differences between men and women, even though the average age of women was slightly lower than that of men. This finding could be explained by the fact that snowballing method of sampling was used and as such many of the participants referred people in their networks who were probably of similar age.

3.3.2 Marital status

Marital status was an interesting finding because various participants described their marriage in many ways. The participants felt that there was some overlap between customary marriage and legal marriage and ten participants claimed their marriages were both. I asked them whether they had a government issued marriage certificate and if they did then their marriage was defined as a legal marriage; if not, then it fell under the customary marriage. Participants explained that they had conducted customary marriage rites and had also done a church ceremony or appeared before the court and were issued a marriage certificate.⁴

Those with a government issued marriage certificate made up 40%, while those who stated that they were married under customary laws comprised ten percent. Customary marriage referred to those unions whereby traditional marriages rites had been conducted but the couple did not have a government issued marriage certificate. There were 13 (34%) single men and women. There were more married men than women; 60% compared to 39%. More women reported being single -- 39% compared to 30% of the men. None of the participants reported being divorced, even though three reported that they were separated. Two of those who reported they were separated, also indicated that their partners were back in Kenya, although the separation occurred in the course of their stay in the United States. Table 3.2 shows the responses of participants regarding their marital status.

⁴ In Kenya, only church and marriages conducted by the court or another appointed government official are issued a government recognized marriage certificate. Customary marriages are mostly agreements made between groups of people and in many cases do not have standard documentation.

Table 3.2: Distribution of participants by marital status (N=38)

<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total N (%)</i>
Single	7	6	13 (34%)
Married – customary	2	2	4 (10%)
Married – legal	5	10	15 (40%)
Separated	1	2	3 (8%)
Living with someone	2	0	2 (5%)
Widowed	1	0	1 (3%)
TOTAL	18	20	38

3.3.3 Length of stay in United States

Five years of residence in the United States was the minimum required for participation in the study and length of stay for this group ranged from five to 25 years? The average length of stay for the group was 11.6 years. Thirteen (34%) of the participants were in the United States for 6-9 years, six (16%) for seven years, two (5%) for eight years and five (13%) for nine years. Forty-five percent had been in the United States for over ten years while five (13%) had been in United States for over twenty years. Table 3.3 shows the breakdown.

Table 3.3: Length of stay in the United States of the participants (N=38)

<i>Length of stay (in years)</i>	<i>N (%)</i>
5- 6 yrs	5 (13%)
7-9 yrs	13 (34%)
10-12 yrs	7 (18%)
13-15 yrs	5 (13%)
16-19 yrs	3 (8%)
20-23 yrs	5 (13%)
TOTAL	38

3.3.4 Ethnicity

A total of seven different ethnic groups were represented in study participants. Ethnicity data showed that most of the participants were Kamba (37%) and Kikuyu (32%). In comparison, the estimated proportions of the major groups are in Kenya are Kikuyu 22%, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, other African 15%, non-African (Asian, European, and Arab) 1% (C.I.A. World Fact Book, 2008). The sample distribution showed that most of the larger ethnic groups were included except for the Meru although the proportions did not match the Kenyan population in general. Table 3.4 shows the distribution by ethnicity.

Table 3.4: Ethnicity of participants (N=38)

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Total N (%)</i>
<i>Kamba</i>	9	5	14 (37%)
<i>Kikuyu</i>	3	9	12 (32%)
<i>Luo</i>	3	3	6 (16%)
<i>Luhya</i>	1	1	2 (5%)
<i>Kisii</i>	1	1	2 (5%)
<i>Kalenjin</i>	1	0	1 (3%)
<i>Taita</i>	0	1	1 (3%)
<i>TOTAL</i>	18	20	38

3.3.5 Education and income

The data on education showed that 29% of the participants had graduate level education, while another 29% had Bachelors degree and 5% had some college education. Thirty-four percent of the participants had some secondary (high school) education. Participants were asked what types of jobs they had held in last six months and the findings are shown in the Table 3.5. Their responses showed that the majority worked in

the human services sector as direct care workers; they worked in group homes as home health aides and social workers or counselors. Six participants held management positions and only one participant reported working in the information technology sector.

Table 3.5: Distribution of primary jobs held over the last 6 months

Type of job	(%)	Type of job	(%)
Social workers/counselors	7 (18.4%)	Nurses	2 (5.2%)
Directors, managers and accountants	6 (15.7%)	Public health workers	1 (2.6%)
Group home residential aides	6 (15.7%)	Security	1 (2.6%)
Home health/nurse aides	4 (10.5%)	Driver	1 (2.6%)
Small business owner	3 (7.9%)	Baby sitter	1 (2.6%)
Radiologist, pharmacy tech.	2 (5.2%)	Systems engineer	1 (2.6%)
Teacher or professor	2 (5.2%)	Electrician	1 (2.6%)

The median income for the participants was \$49,999 per annum. Men reported higher incomes than the women and they were eight (21%) men with reported incomes of more than \$60,000 p.a. Only one man reported an income of below \$30,000 p.a. Table 3.6 shows the income distribution income for men and women included in the study.

Table 3.6: Distribution of participants by income and gender (N=38)

<i>Income range</i>	<i>Women N (%)</i>	<i>Men N (%)</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>N=18</i>	<i>N=20</i>	<i>N=38</i>
Below \$ 30,000	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	5 (13%)
\$ 30,000 - \$ 39,999	6 (46%)	7 (54%)	13 (34%)
\$ 40,000 – \$ 59,999	6 (50%)	6 (50%)	12 (32%)
Above \$ 60,000	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	8 (21%)

These findings demonstrate that the group of participants reported relatively high incomes compared to the jobs they reported. What this suggests is that most of them work more than one job.

3.4 Definition of concepts

The sample comprised first generation immigrants from Kenya to the United States who lived in Paterson, New Jersey at the time of the study. First generation immigrants referred to participants who were born in Kenya or who acknowledge Kenya as their country of birth. While the term “Kenya” was used to describe the country, it is important to mention that Kenyans are not a monolithic category and there are within group differences based on class, religion, gender, and local ethnic groups or tribes.⁵ To this end, the study was cognizant of the fact that immigrants from Kenya are a heterogeneous group of people, possessing distinct personal, social and economic characteristics and abilities. At the same time, there at different stages of the life cycle, have different immigration trajectories, come from different sending contexts and backgrounds of class, religion and gender. As in many other countries, the people from Kenya speak different languages; belong to different religions, cultures and traditions.

Therefore the study attempted to account for the various differences by collecting all pertinent demographic information and including it in the findings. Since ethnicity is considered as an important aspect of social capital (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1998), it was included in the data collection. To get data on their local ethnic group, the participants were asked a direct and open-ended question about the local ethnic group with which they self-identified. The responses were not limited to ethnic groups from Kenya and whatever response given was documented. Interestingly, all the participants self-identified with a local ethnic group from Kenya. Ethnic group was considered an

⁵ For many Kenyans the use of the word ‘tribe’ to refer to ethnic group is common, however, there is debate about the term tribe which is seen as having colonial connotations. Throughout the study I use the phrase “local ethnic groups” instead of tribe in order to distinguish references to other ethnic groups within the United States.

important factor because ethnic divisions have been identified as a cause of tension, conflict and even outright civil wars in many parts of the world and Kenya has not been spared. Kenya has experienced sporadic ethnic clashes since 1992 but has managed to remain relatively stable.⁶

Data on religious affiliation was also collected. While the majority of the population in Kenya is Christian, there are pockets of Muslim population along the coast and in the region referred to as North-Eastern. There is also presence of Hindu Indians found mainly in the major urban centers and along the main Mombasa-Kisumu Highway. The constitution allows for the application of Islamic laws and acknowledges other religious communities such as the Hindu. In general, until recently Kenyans have enjoyed a sense of unity and there has not been outright religious conflict. The study was sensitive to these general variations and made attempts to account for and represent them to the extent possible in the selected sample.

Ties were operationalized as social, cultural or material. Ties included forms of communication such as letters and emails, remittances, visits/travel, raising children in traditional ways, networks, membership in immigrant/transnational groups, reading Kenyan newspapers, political activism and any other activities that reflect a connection with Kenya.

The frequency of the ties was based on the answers to a specific question on how frequent the participant maintained ties with Kenya. It ranged from “*daily*” to “*never*”; and in-between ranged “*weekly*”, “*monthly*”, “*every other month*”, “*twice a year*”, and

⁶ This situation changed drastically after the disputed general elections held in December 2007. The country was plunged into full scale ethnic/tribal violence especially in the region referred to as Rift Valley leading to the displacement of many people. A political deal among the rival political parties was brokered and a coalition government was established and a new position of Prime Minister was created.

“*once a year*.” Greater or stronger ties referred to more frequent or regular ties. The participants who reported “daily”, “weekly” and “monthly” ties were considered as “*always*” having ties with Kenya, while those reporting “every other month” were considered as having ties with Kenya “*sometimes*.” Those participants who reported “twice a year” and “once a year” were considered as having “*occasional*” ties. Those with “never” ties were considered as “*never*” having ties with Kenya.

The length of stay in United States referred to the number of years that a participant had lived continuously in the United States and if s/he considered United States as their main residence for the past five years. Immigrant experiences broadly referred to the everyday understanding and practices that participants engaged in; including coping and adaptive strategies that they engage in and maintenance of family structure and discipline. Included in the definition of their experiences were their discussions of the activities that they engage in to maintain the ties that they create.

3.5 Data collection methods

A majority of the interviews were conducted between the months of September – December 2005, and the final three rescheduled interviews were conducted in January and February 2006. Data was collected through interviews and participant observation. An ethnographic interview approach was adopted in this study for a variety of reasons. Firstly, due to the paucity of data on the research topic, the study was exploratory in nature. Secondly, qualitative approach was applied since elements such as behavior, attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, which do not have standard measures, were included in this study. A qualitative approach was suitable for “the case of life-worlds,” which

includes emotions, motivations, symbols and their meanings, empathy and other subjective aspects involved with naturally evolving lives of individuals and groups, (Berg, 1995:10). Thirdly, using a qualitative research approach allowed for a more interpretative and naturalistic approach to the study. Participants were allowed the flexibility to discuss issues as they saw them and were not limited as would be the case in pre-determined question and response approach. At the same time I was able to pursue themes as they emerged during the course of the interviews. The approach provided an openness to document unexpected participant experiences. As Kandiyoti (1988) points out, this type of a qualitative approach offers the advantage of allowing access to some of the reflections and reactions of the participants as they seek to make sense of their surroundings and their lives. In this case, this approach allowed the participants to tell their own stories and hence provide insights into the contradictory, dynamic and ambiguous aspects of their everyday immigrant relations.

The study used semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 1995) and participant observation. All the interviewing was based on the use of an interview schedule with a written list of questions and topics to be covered. The interview guide is included as Appendix A. The interview guide was pre-tested using a sample of three participants and changes were made accordingly to improve and validate the questions. The three participants included in the pre-test were excluded from the final sample of participants. The interview guide collected demographic information including age, marital status, educational attainment, income levels, religion, ethnicity and length of stay in the United States. Some of the demographic information was validated at later points during the interviews; in the event that contradictory information was noted it was discussed with

the participant for clarification. The interviews focused on first generation immigrants' ties to Kenya, what forms of ties they have, how they maintain the ties, who they maintain the ties with, reasons for maintaining the ties and their experiences with maintaining these ties. The interviews also collected information on personal experiences regarding their pre-migration history, initial period in the United States, their relations within other immigrant communities they relate with, their understanding of the different facets of their immigrant experiences in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, marital status, employment, relations with other minority groups and the larger American society.

When the participants were approached for the interviews they were reminded and assured of confidentiality. This means that I as the researcher will have access to individually identifying information e.g. the names of the participants name but these names will not be revealed instead I will use pseudonyms. The confidentiality statement used in the study is included with the interview guide as Appendix A. Participants' consent to be interviewed and audio taped was sought before the interviews. None of the participants declined to give consent for the interviews to be taped. The interview schedule started with the same basic questions and thereafter took on the format of back and forth discussions allowing for clarification questions to be included. I tried as much as possible to conduct the interviews in a conversational manner rather than structured question-and-answer format. The interviews were carried out in the language most comfortable for the participants; however, most of the interviews ended up being conducted in a mixture of Swahili and English.

The interviews were scheduled and held at mutually convenient times and locations to afford participants the ease and time to participate. The majority of the

interviews were conducted at the participants' residences except for two interviews; one that was conducted at the participant's place of work after hours and the other one conducted at a restaurant. The interviews were expected to last an hour; however, in most instances they lasted at least two hours. There were three interviews that lasted over four hours mainly because the participants invited me to join them for meals or interviews were interrupted by events in their everyday lives. In one instance, there were friends who dropped by and the participant had to attend to them.

Data was also drawn from participant observation, including informal interactions at various social events organized by the Kenyan immigrant community in Paterson. Such events included immigrant activities such as fund raising events, funeral meetings, regular immigrant group meetings, prayer services, baby showers, weddings, social parties and other events organized in the community. Access to the participants was facilitated by my own status as a Kenyan immigrant but at the same time I was aware of my position as a researcher. I am not suggesting in any way that I established the "truth" through casual participant observation nor do I hold myself to a position of absolute objectivity. But as part of the Kenyan immigrant community, I was already engaged in the social and cultural activities sponsored by various groups and individuals. At the time of the study I was looking for patterns on how the first generation immigrants from Kenya invoke their home country at these functions through their conversations. I also observed interaction patterns at gatherings, listened to discussions of transnational practices, conversations about their immigration experiences and patterns of language usage and switching. I recorded these observations in a journal.

3.6 Data Analysis

The information collected using interviews, emails, photographs, field journal and observations was analyzed differently. All thirty-eight interviews were transcribed in their entirety, which in itself was very arduous task given that some of the participants engaged in other activities during interviews such as entertaining guests, babysitting, preparing and having meals. At the end of the interviewing there were a total of forty-two 90-minute audiotapes that translated into about 900 single spaced pages of transcription. The demographic data such as age, gender, income, education level, marital status, length of stay in U.S. and initial residence was extracted and data entered into SPSS. Descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a general picture of the sample.

The transcribed interviews were subject to data analysis guided by Riessman's (1993) narrative analysis -- an approach that emphasizes the ways in which data is generated. Following this approach, the content of the interviews became the focus of attention; both the spoken and unspoken. During the transcription process, I tried to preserve both verbal and non-verbal messages including body language, emotional expression, features of talk as pauses, repetitions, false starts, asides, manner of speech, use of Swahili words or local language, emphasis, struggles to explain and order of speaking.

Sections of the transcribed interviews were selected based on relevance, sequence, structure and thematic coherence. This process focused mainly on reviewing the interviews and categorizing the interviews under general themes or phenomena. Word patterns used to describe nature of ties, responsibilities and immigrant experiences were

identified within and across interviews. Another technique used for the analysis included the search function to find key words in the transcribed interviews. While this was a very onerous task that seemed impossible at times, it was made much easier because I conducted all the interviews and was responsible for all the transcription, and therefore I was familiar with the words and patterns. Some of the passages selected were analyzed under multiple themes or headings. The interviews were also compared across age, marital status, immigration history, ethnicity, gender and other differentiating factors.

The field journal notes were stored in their original format. While the idea had been to transfer the notes onto a computer, due to a lack of time, this did not happen. About seventy handwritten pages were analyzed. These notes also included observations of various social functions and my reflexive notes after interviews. These notes were used to compare and contrast transcribed interviews. The notes were also used to drive some of the questions to interpret the data e.g. where did certain discussions occur? Was this deliberate timing or there were other driving forces discussed? What were the recurring themes about immigrants' experiences at social events? Did participants discuss similar experiences in the interviews? In this way the notes assisted in the interpretation of the data collected. Photographs were taken to emphasize certain aspects of immigrants' experiences including ethnic writings on stores or churches, types of dressing at social events and other images. Various email invitations were also analyzed to establish who got invited to which events to elaborate or corroborate information collected through interviews regarding social ties. All these data assisted in providing a more holistic interpretation of the data.

3.7 Study approach

This study adopted an approach that recognized the lives of first generation immigrants from Kenya could not be understood by looking only at what goes on within national boundaries. The study firstly acknowledged it was likely that there was continued interaction between the people who immigrated and those who were left behind. These ties would take various forms such as ideas, objects or social/economic remittances and could be conveyed directly or indirectly, with the potential to be strong or weak ties. At the same time the study acknowledges that these ties are subject to various influences at individual, group and national levels. Furthermore, since the relationship between individuals and social institutions is dialectical in nature, certain social and economic institutional features that the immigrants are embedded in also account for their experiences.

Therefore, the study paid attention to how individual and institutional factors intersect to influence immigrants' experiences. The study attempted to link the two levels of investigation, so as to allow for a better picture of the dynamic relationships between the lives of individuals and the societal institutions and organizations that they constitute and are embedded in. In this way, the study appreciated that the experiences of first generation immigrants from Kenya were multi-layered and multi-faceted. The study focused on the social context variables that affected first generation immigrants' participation in various sectors of their immigrant lives. The study emphasized the social context variables to examine the diverse processes of adapting to immigrant life and the importance of social context.

The study starting point of inquiry was that the participants were the ‘knowers’ and therefore allowed the participants to tell their stories as they saw fit. The study expected to reveal the complexities of immigrants’ social situations resulting from simultaneous competing and affirming practices mediated by circumstances in Kenya and the United States.

3.8 Study area

For this particular study, the focus was New Jersey, specifically Paterson Township. Paterson was selected because it was a principal area of concentration of sub-Saharan African immigrants and offered a more ethnically diverse Kenyan immigrant population. Through informal conversations and personal observations most immigrants from the “Kisii” community tended to settle mainly in Hudson County and specifically around Jersey City and its environs. Middlesex County has a high population of immigrants from the “Luo” community mainly around New Brunswick and surrounding areas. Unlike Hudson and Middlesex, Paterson, in Passaic County presented a more diverse community in terms of ethnic composition; including the “Kamba” and “Kikuyu”, “Luo”, “Kalenjin” and other communities

According to data from the American Community Survey, New Jersey had 19% foreign-born population, ranking third among states with highest proportion of foreign-born populations behind New York with 21% and California with 27% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Slightly more than half (52%) of the foreign-born population in New Jersey was from Latin America and only 3% was from Africa, of which 1.9% stated their ancestry as sub-Saharan. Paterson also has a growing population of residents who self

identify as Arabs. According to Profiles of New Jersey (2006) report, 2.5% of the residents in Paterson identified as Arab. Therefore, it had been expected that since Paterson has a significant Muslim population, there would have been a chance to obtain a diverse sample in terms of religion. As stated earlier none of the Kenyans interviewed identified as Muslim. Due to paucity of data broken down by country, I was unable to estimate of the number of first generation immigrants from Kenya residing in Paterson or New Jersey.

While the Kenyan community in Paterson does not have traditional centrally located business community to rely upon, the community is organized through both informal/personal and formal/institutional social ties. There was no specific data on how immigrants from Kenya have settled in New Jersey based on ethnicity. Therefore Paterson was selected for its vibrant immigrant community with immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and a more diverse Kenyan immigrant population. These aspects of Paterson are discussed further in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

PATERSON

This chapter presents part of the initial findings based on the researcher's observations in the city of Paterson. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first one provides a brief background of the city of Paterson. This is followed by a detailed description of the various neighborhoods in present day Paterson. It highlights the settlement patterns and discusses the various groups living within specific settlements. The third section focuses on the issue of immigrants both early and more recent immigrants to Paterson. The last part of the chapter discusses racial and ethnic relations in Paterson. Similar to other parts of the United States where different groups have come into contact, Paterson has experienced ethnic tensions and this section highlights some of those conflicts.

4.1 Historical background of Paterson

Present day Paterson is located in northern New Jersey approximately 30 miles west of New York City. It is in Passaic County and is the third largest city in New Jersey. The city covers a land area of 8,442 square miles and in 2005 was reported as having a population of 151,822 with a 2010 projected population of 154,698 by 2010 (Profiles of New Jersey, 2006). According to the *Encyclopedia of New Jersey* (2004: 618-619), Paterson is one of oldest industrial cities in New Jersey. Named after the New Jersey governor William Paterson (1745-1806) it was incorporated as a city in 1831. By 1678, the residents of Paterson were mainly Dutch settlers. In 1791, the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures (S.U.M.), a group championed by statesman Alexander Hamilton,

chose Paterson as the site to develop a model United States manufacturing center. The S.U.M group focused on developing a water raceway system that would be used as the source of power for industrial growth. The system of waterway powered by the 77-foot high Great Falls of the Passaic River provided cheap power and gave Paterson a competitive advantage. Paterson also has a rich immigrant history of later groups that settled in the city including the Germans, Italians, Jewish and more recently the Latino immigrants.

According to Norwood (1974), in the latter half of the 1800s, Paterson was known for its textile industry and it prospered largely based on its silk production, earning the nickname “Silk City.” By 1870, nearly fifty percent of the silk made in the United States was produced in Paterson. Paterson was also known for its role in shaping labor activism. The silk mills were characterized by labor unrest through various strikes. According to Murphy and Murphy (1987: 137-139), by 1900 137 strikes had taken place in the city. The first group to strike numbered 8,000 and others joined them until February 1913 a total of 24,000 silk and dye workers stopped work. According to the *Encyclopedia of New Jersey* (2004:618) these strikes made Paterson the “most strike-ridden city” in the country. The largest and longest of these strikes at the silk mills happened in 1913 and with that strike began the decline of the silk industry in Paterson.

Besides the textile industry, Paterson also has a rich industrial history. During World War II it prospered through a different activity; jet engine building. Years earlier, Orville and Wilbur Wright’s company moved from New Brunswick to Paterson in 1919 as the Wright Aeronautical Corporation. In 1929 it merged with Curtiss Company to form the Curtiss-Wright Company. Curtiss had been involved in building of bicycle engines

and later built planes (Murphy and Murphy, 1987). The jet engine company played a major role during the world war and built some of the most famous planes used in the war.

Paterson flourished industrially and was largely known for its textile and heavy manufacturing (*Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, 2004). Paterson has a rich history and “offers a microcosm of industrial America and the immigrant experience in the industrial cities” (Murphy and Murphy, 1987:151). The website for Paterson city commends the city for various acclamations including several firsts; such as the first water-powered cotton spinning mill in N.J. in 1793, the first continuous roll paper in 1812, the country’s first steam locomotive manufactured by Thomas Roger in 1837, the first revolver by Sam Colt in 1837 also and the first Holland Submarine in 1878. The remnants of the abandoned mill buildings and railroad locomotive manufacturing sites can still be seen in present day Paterson.

The economic decline of Paterson was fueled by the labor unrest in the textile industry that led to many of the textile industries to move to other areas where labor was cheaper, mainly to the South. The engine building company moved from Paterson to Woodbridge, N.J. Furthermore, Paterson suffered from a series of disasters including floods and several fires that destroyed major sections of the city. In the 1970s many industries had moved out of the city and many people had moved to more suburban areas, thus eroding the city’s tax base (Murphy and Murphy, 1987). In the twentieth century, Paterson was in a state of economic decline and by the 1980s it was named as one of the most distressed cities in the United States (*Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, 2004:619). It did

not have any movie theatre and many department stores had either closed or moved to other areas. The social indices declined and business moved to neighboring towns.

After the strikes and World War II, the city of Paterson saw major declines in its prosperity. Scranton (1994) mentions that after World War II, Paterson's economic prosperity faded and with the departure of the city's population of European descent, the city experienced decline. Latin American immigrants and African Americans replaced the residents who left. The decline of the city resulted not only from labor unrest but also middle class flight to the suburban areas. There have been recent initiatives to revive the city to its old glory. By 1983 efforts to restore and preserve the historical buildings and revive the Great Falls/S.U.M district were on going. At the same time, the Private Council Industry was also established in 1983 to provide training and employment opportunities for the large labor force in Paterson. Other revitalization efforts are being spearheaded by the Greater Passaic Chamber of Commerce to address not only business and industrial issues, but also social and environmental concerns affecting the people of Paterson (Murphy and Murphy, 1987).

Presently, if you visit downtown Paterson you will see many of the earlier buildings restored. The Paterson Museum displays various engines and other artifacts from the earlier manufacturers. Today, Paterson may not boast of its silk and engineering industries, but there are many small machine shops as well as cloth and garment businesses that continue the tradition of textile and industry.

4.2 Settlement patterns in present-day Paterson

Besides the important role that Paterson played in the industrial development of U.S. cities, it was and still retains some of the natural and human resources that made it so vibrant. Research has shown that immigrants to the U.S. tend to settle in specific geographic areas and are mostly concentrated in large metropolitan areas. Studies have also shown that there are various reasons for the choices that immigrants make related to where they settle. Some of the reasons are related to the availability of networks and support systems from earlier immigrants from the same parts of the world (Allen, 2006; Bartel, 1989; Borjas, 1995b; Chiswick, 1978; Chiswick and Miller, 2004). In some instances this leads to the establishment of ethnic enclaves or settlements and research has shown that such clustering has the potential to have some benefits and disadvantages for the immigrants.

There are favorable aspects of the ethnic settlement especially in terms of creating the demand for “ethnic goods” (for the development and application of this concept see Chiswick and Miller, 2002). In ethnic enclaves there is the growth of business for food, clothing, churches etc. for the group from same region. The ethnic enclaves also allow for people to pass on their culture. Ethnic enclaves provide immigrants with a sense of familiarity especially since when immigrants arrive from different parts of the world, upon arrival in the United States, they are part of a minority. There have also been some disadvantages reported that ethnic enclaves limit immigrants’ abilities to acquire new language skills and thus hinder their economic progress. For example, Mar’s (1991) study of the Chinese ethnic enclave in San Francisco showed that the wages within the ethnic

enclaves tended to be lower, there was higher turnover and had fewer promotional opportunities.

The population of Paterson is very diverse and includes Italian Americans, Latinos, African Americans, Middle Easterners, Caribbean Islanders, Africans, Eastern Europeans and other groups. It is possible to discern their ethnic enclaves, even though this does not imply that different groups do not reside in the same place. See Appendix F for the layout of Paterson City outlining its six administrative wards and some of the more visible ethnic enclaves or neighborhoods. By and large the Latino population is the predominant group and can be found scattered all over Paterson, with higher concentrations mostly to the south of the Broadway/Martin Luther King Way and 21st Avenue.

4.2.1 The Eastside and Hillcrest neighborhood

As you approach present day Paterson from the neighboring towns of Elmwood Park and Fairlawn in Bergen County on Route 4/Broadway/Dr. Martin Luther King Way and cross the Passaic River into Paterson, you encounter the famous East Side Park. This section is commonly referred to as the East section and is arguably among the better parts of the city. It seems less densely populated and most of the buildings are large Victorian style houses built with stone and with huge pillars surrounded by large compounds. In general, there are small pockets of Caucasian population largely around the East side of Paterson along of First and Fourth Avenues, the areas around Hillcrest. The area towards Eastside Park and closer to the city of Fairlawn is relatively quiet and predominantly middle-class residents. As you move on towards the 10th Avenue, sections of Park and

17th Avenue, it becomes more crowded and the population composition also changes to mostly African Americans and Jamaicans.

In this neighborhood there is the beautiful Eastside Park, a favorite spot for many of the residents where I attended a couple of barbecue events at this site organized by Kenyan immigrants. There are also smaller homes with colonial type buildings and multi-family dwellings in this area. At the corner of Broadway and 33rd Street stands a huge concrete building, Temple Emanuel, a synagogue established in 1906, which has since moved to the city of Franklin Lakes. This indicates that in the past there were Jewish residents in this area. The section of Eastside closer to Fairlawn is rather quiet. The Eastside section has a few Caucasian people, mainly Italians, especially along the First and Fourth Avenues. Since there are isolated pockets of Caucasian residing in this area, some of the non-Caucasian residents postulate as to why the Caucasian people continue to reside here. According to them, the Caucasian people live here because of one of two reasons, either they are very poor and can't afford to move to the suburbs or they have a special attachment to Paterson. There is a noticeable increasing presence of a Latino community in this area especially as you move towards the People's Park.

As stated earlier, there are also Caribbean Islanders in this area especially, Jamaicans. The many restaurants specializing in Jamaican cuisine are evidence of the presence of a Jamaican population in Paterson. Most of them are take-out spots serving goat curry, rice with beans, chicken and beef patties and are located primarily on East 30th and 31st Streets. There are also several stores selling Caribbean merchandise in the downtown shopping area. For example on Washington Street off Main Street there is a

store that sells Caribbean products including imported Jamaican food and drinks; their products include Jamaican fruitcake and the popular Jamaican ginger beer.

On Main Street there is a *Botanica*, specializing in Caribbean religious products to assist with social daily life e.g. a troubled love life, financial issues. The products include herbs, oils and soaps that when applied, wipe away these types of problems. There are very few of such stores in the Eastside residential areas.

4.2.2 Fourth Ward district

As you move along Broadway/Dr. Martin Luther King Way heading towards downtown Paterson, small stores with signs that are written in Spanish line each side of the highway. There was an office of a politician running for office at the time of the study with bold Spanish writings. Between 31st and 28th Streets stands one of the main hospitals in Paterson, Barnert Hospital.⁷ The hospital was established by Nathan Barnert, the Mayor of Paterson from 1883 to 1886 and 1889-90, and opened its doors in 1908. When one moves past the hospital site the amount of activity increases and there is a more vibrant atmosphere. On both sides of the Broadway/Dr. Martin Luther King Way there are various stores: a KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken), Polanco Brothers Supermarket, Angels Cleaners, *Moca Liquors*, *Esperanza Pueblo groceries*, *Los Hidalagos* store and a big modern and spacious laundromat. At the corner there are two Chinese restaurants.

As you approach Madison and Rosa Parks Avenues, the number of people increases and the composition of the population also changes. It is predominately African American and this area is commonly referred to as Wrigley Park and administratively it is

⁷ On February 1, 2008, Barnert Hospital was officially closed after almost a century of service to the greater Paterson community.

in the Fourth Ward. In comparison to Eastside, this area is crowded with people walking along the streets and vehicles parked on the side streets. Interestingly, there are also several churches in this section of the city. There is the Reformed Church on 28th Street and right across the street from this church stands another church building, St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Another noticeable church in this same area is the *Love of Jesus* Family World Outreach church, which is an enormous white building with huge column pillars. Further down the street, the spikes of the United Presbyterian Church rise above the other buildings and at the junction of Broadway/Dr. Martin Luther King Way and Memorial Drive stands a Roman Catholic church; The Lady of Victories.

The residential houses in this part of Paterson show signs of being unkempt and run down with many broken windows. Drug activity and violence are common in this area and as you walk along, you can see groups of men standing on the side streets. The population here is mostly African American with some Latinos. This area has also been known to be the site of fights between African Americans, Latinos and other groups. This will also be discussed later in the section on group relations. Off the main highway along Madison Avenue and between 18th and 23rd Avenues there are various car repair shops some trading in used tires and other auto accessories. These auto repair and auto accessories sites are mainly run by African American and Latino mechanics.

In this area there are several black-owned barber shops, hair salons and soul food restaurants. The oldest and best-known restaurant is the E & A Soul Food Restaurant at the corner of Governor and Straight Streets. The restaurant specializes in cornbread, macaroni and cheese, sweet potato pie, fresh vegetables (pinto and lima beans, field peas, cabbage, collard greens, string beans, candied yams), barbecued spare ribs, pork chops,

sausage and peppers, stewed chicken, fried chicken, barbecued chicken, baked chicken, oxtail, hog's-head cheese, and much more.

Approaching downtown Paterson along Broadway/Martin Luther King Hwy just before the Passaic Community College stands a large majestic building- the Paterson Free Public Library established in 1885. It is New Jersey's oldest public library. Initially the Paterson Free Public library was located on Church Street but it was destroyed during the fire of 1902; the library was rebuilt at the present site on Broadway/Martin Luther King Way. The new site was opened in 1905 and the library had branches in each of Paterson's wards. However, in 1995 most of the branches were consolidated and currently there are three branches in operation, in First Ward, Totowa and Southside.

4.2.3 Downtown Paterson

As you approach downtown Paterson on the Broadway/Dr. Martin Luther King Way you begin to see the historical section of the city. Downtown Paterson comprises the historical section and many of the old building have been preserved as historical sites. There are huge and old stone buildings with high church spikes towering above. Most of the buildings are no more than two floor buildings. Passaic Community College is located in downtown Paterson and so is the Police department. Downtown Paterson also houses the municipal administrative buildings including the City Hall and the Passaic County Courthouse Annex. The two are part of the city's architectural landmarks. Besides these buildings the other buildings around this area are old and run down. Downtown Paterson is largely inhabited by Latino population.

One of the busiest streets in downtown Paterson is Main Street which starts in the West side of Paterson, crosses the Broadway/Dr. Martin Luther King Way and runs towards Clifton. The streets are busy with shoppers and since this is also the administrative part of the town, there are people coming to the courts, police stations and other administrative business. The population here includes both Blacks and Latinos and very few, if any, White people. The young people, mostly men, in this area are mainly wearing white tees in the summer and in the winter they have big oversized jackets and caps. There are larger stores dealing in clothes and shoes while the smaller stores sell small groceries, gifts, jewelry and phone cards. There are beauty shops specializing in selections of black hair and black skin products at discounted prices. There is also a hair salon that is managed by a Jamaican entrepreneur specializing in African hair. The services include braiding and putting hair extensions. During the day this part of the city is busy with shoppers but there is no commercial activity at night. Driving through this part of the city at night one sees empty streets and very quiet neighborhood.

4.2.4 Sandy Hill and the environs

At the junction of Main Street, and Ward Street there is a large First Presbyterian church, the '*Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispania*'. This point marks a visible shift in the population and stores found in downtown and Wrigley Park. The number of Black people declines and the number of Latino speaking people increases significantly. This is the section of the city commonly referred to as Sandy Hill. The area presents as overcrowded and even though the houses look old they are not as run down as those in Wrigley Park. The stores on this part of Main Street have names and descriptions of their services in

Spanish. There is a Peruvian ice cream store, a large Latino grocery store, a hair and nail salon and a string of restaurants (Cuban, Colombian, and Dominican). Most of these stores bear Spanish names such as '*Calzado Andrea & Accessories de futbol*', '*De Dos restaurant*', '*Nuga Best Termo Acupuncture Masaje*', '*Se Hacen ruedos/alterations*' and '*Latin Bar and Restaurant*'.

In between these stores is a mix of other businesses including service establishments such as insurance and real estate agencies, law offices, travel agencies, money-sending stores, beauty salons, music stores; other buildings house laundromats, restaurants, coffee shops, a hardware store, a pharmacy, and other retail businesses. St. John Cathedral is also on Main Street and is one of those building with the tall spikes towering above the other buildings. There are also offices for not-for-profit agencies providing social services for domestic violence and substance abuse. At the junction of Main Street and Washington Street, there stands the '*Templo Shalom Congregacion de Yahweh, Inc.*', a messianic congregation synagogue. In 2001, this temple and the Temple Emanuel on the Eastside were the sites of religious bias attacks as reported by a Northern New Jersey newspaper (*The Record*, December 01 2001).

There is a visible presence of Latino businesses through the signs on business such as, '*Bienvenido*', '*Se Habla Español*' and '*Fiesta Goya*'. The heavy presence of these businesses provided the people from Spanish-speaking countries an opportunity to mingle with others of similar heritage, listen to popular music, speak similar language, eat the food, and reproduce the social relationships that perpetuate their national cultures in the new foreign setting. It also gives them a sense of belonging and they expressed that they felt more comfortable in this environment. There are also Spanish newspapers that

publish information on available resources within the community and related information. Some of the magazines are distributed for free, e.g. '*Campana*', placed in various stores and reports on community information and also reports on international news and what is going on in South American countries.

4.2.5 South side Paterson and Middle Easterners neighborhood

Continuing on Main Street the area are mostly residential houses just before St. Joseph's Hospital, one of the main hospitals in Paterson. Past St. Joseph's Hospital is the South side of Paterson. The population composition shifts now to an increasingly Middle Eastern people. Along Main Street after you cross Bloomfield Street is the epicenter of Middle Eastern culture in the city. Here you will find restaurants, shops, markets serving Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine with descriptions such as, '*Halal Paradise*', '*Kafe Teria*' serving home-style Turkish foods. The stores have the Arabic inscriptions and writings on them providing descriptions of what they serve. One of the food establishments advertised its specialties as '*kebab*', '*gesitleri*', '*donen*' and '*lahmacun*'. There is also a supermarket, '*Superior Halal Supermarket*' and a bakery. There are also laundromats, hair salons, deli stores and travel agencies. Here you will find anything Middle Eastern including video stores specializing in Middle East music and films, including an Arab-Turkish Video store called '*Turkutz*'.

As the presence of a large Middle Eastern population, mostly Lebanese and Turkish who is largely Muslim would suggest there are various mosques in Paterson. It must be noted that the Muslim in Paterson are not only immigrants but there are Muslims from other groups including people from America. According to one worker at the

Islamic Center of Passaic County there were several mosques and teaching centers in Paterson. The mosques and Muslim teaching centers included the Islamic Center of Passaic County on Derrom Avenue in the Eastside of Paterson, Omar Mosque on Getty Avenue, Jalalabad Jam E Mosque on Van Houten Street, Moslem Mosque on Chestnut Street, Masjid Al-Ferdous on Union Avenue, and United Islamic Center of Paterson on Knickerbocker Avenue. The presence of a large Muslim population in Paterson is confirmed by other sources. In 2000 the N.Y. Times reported that the Paterson school system in this area had agreed to close on two Muslim holidays (NY Times, March 18 2000). Such report point to the influence that the population exerts in Paterson. Along Main Street there is also the office of the Arabic weekly newspaper ‘Arab Voice’. Similar to the Latino newspapers it too reports on matters of interest to their community.

4.2.6 Paterson Farmers’ Market and environs

At the end of Main Street towards Clifton is Crooks Avenue. This part of the city has neat bungalow homes and is a quiet neighborhood. It is not very clear which group is a majority because there are pockets of Latino, Blacks and Middle Easterners. On Crooks Avenue as you approach Highway 46 you can turn onto East Railroad. Here is the large Farmers Market- Paterson Farmers Market, founded in 1932 and selling fresh fruits and vegetables daily. This section of Paterson is very busy and there are vegetable stalls lining the road with numerous crates packed with vegetables and fruits. During the summer, there is an open-air market with farmers selling their produce from the back of their vans. On their part, the stall owners put out their wares for display in front of their stalls.

There are a large variety of vegetables and fruits sold either by weight or by containers. The products sold in the various stores also reflect the diverse backgrounds of the population in this area. The stores stock some ethnic foods such as ‘yucca’ (cassava), plantain, pigeon peas, cracked corn, tamarind, cowpeas, frozen soft maize and dried cereals. The stores also stock products mostly by ‘Goya’ and ‘Vittaroz’ and also drinks made abroad. The stores also sell products found in regular supermarkets including string beans, corn on the cob, carrots, green peppers, dried cereals such as maize, beans, onions and many other vegetables and fruits. There is a clothes store stocked with brightly colored fabrics and another store that specializes in ‘*hijab*’ clothing.

The population of people here is mixed and the market serves people of diverse backgrounds and color as suggested by the different languages and accents of the customers and retailers. There are many shops selling meat with signs of ‘*Halal* meat sold here’ indicating a presence of Muslim clientele. There is one particular big meat store that supplies ‘*Halal*’ meat. Most of the people who sell the meat at this store are of Middle Eastern origin and while the customers are from different backgrounds, there are a visibly larger number of women wearing head covers shopping at this store. The store also carries ethnic foods such as fresh and dried dates, ‘*sesa*’ seeds and candy and other foods packaged with Arabic inscriptions. The retailers chat loudly in foreign languages with some of their customers who place their orders in the foreign languages. At this store people can purchase a whole goat or huge pieces of beef prepared to their special requirements. Most of the interactions in this area are very informal and there is a feeling of community as people unknown to each other strike up discussions about the size, type of fruits and vegetables or the bargains they feel they have made.

At the point where Crooks Avenue meets Highway 46 there is a big Jewish Cemetery, Cedar Lawn Cemetery. Beyond the Jewish cemetery is the Calvary Roman Catholic Cemetery. The rest of this part of Paterson is mainly residential area.

4.2.7 21st Avenue and Peoples Park

As one drives along Railroad Avenue moving further away from Crooks Avenue leaving behind the farmers' market, the surroundings change. The area behind the market seems deserted and there are huge empty and abandoned red brick buildings with many narrow windows. These buildings housed the textile mills during Paterson's industrial past. The glass on the windows has been shattered and some of the windows are covered with plywood. Some of the old mills have been converted into auto repair shops and warehouses. There are signs that some of these old buildings are being renovated and converted to active business premises. Still, all in all, the area seems abandoned and deserted.

Further along Railroad Avenue you hit 21st Avenue and all of a sudden again you are met with another lively scene. The area has mainly Italian and Spanish restaurants and travel agencies. The majority of Italians are found in this area along 21st Avenue and predominately in the area around People's Park. In the summer, men sit on chairs talking loudly with Italian accents outside the Italian 2006 Social Club Inc, and the Italian Café. During the many times I strolled past these cafés, I did not see women sitting with the men. Other stores along this avenue include *La Parra* Restaurant, *Caffe Italia*, Martha's Place, Italian Breakfast, a supermarket *La Navidad* Foods. In between these stores are

laundromats, check cashing stores, gifts shops and a bank. There are also travel agencies such as *Agencia de Trabajos*.

The 21st Avenue that was originally considered the domain of Italian businesses now has several Latino businesses in between the Italian businesses. As you move from 21st Street towards Market Street you pass the Peoples Park along 23rd Avenue, with a vibrant Latino community. This area is considered a mix of the lower and lower-middle class. As mentioned earlier the Latino population can be found in various parts of Paterson but here they have a marked presence.

4.2.8 Westside Paterson

The Westside of Paterson is connected to downtown Paterson by a number of bridge crossings over the Passaic River. The Westside is definitely the more affluent part of the city and is very much a middle-class area. It is also among the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods with Italians, Middle Easterners, Latinos, East Europeans and Blacks among its residents. African immigrants can be found intermittently in Paterson and do not have a focused settlement pattern, however larger numbers can be found in Westside Paterson. Along Union Boulevard and along Totowa Boulevard there are pockets of Kenyan immigrants. Other Kenyan immigrants can be found in the areas that border Westwood and North Haledon, which is close to Westside Paterson. Towards the Eastside of Paterson, near the Eastside Park, is another pocket of Kenyan immigrants. There are some African immigrants in the city of West Paterson, which is a different city from Paterson and was therefore not included in the study. All in all, there is not a visible settlement pattern for the African immigrants. At the same time their residences cut

across the neighborhoods and it is not easy to discern whether they live in some of the socio-economically better areas or not.

The Westside of Paterson is mainly residential, interspersed with small businesses. The homes in this area are nice with well kept lawns. In this section of the city, the busier streets are Union Avenue and Totowa Boulevard. Along these streets one can find various businesses, mostly Latino restaurants, small supermarkets, convenience stores and laundromats. Unlike the Jamaican population, there was not a significant presence of African-owned businesses but that does not suggest that they are no African-owned businesses.

Along Preakness Avenue which is off Union Avenue there is a popular African-owned business called Mt. Kenya Club. It is owned by a Kenyan and frequented largely by people from Africa and the Caribbean Islands. The club organizes Kenyan musicians to come and perform mostly young musicians playing contemporary music from Kenya. These younger musicians have incorporated hip-hop and rap music with Swahili lyrics and local dialects' lyrics. To cater to the musical tastes of the older generation, the club usually sets aside some days for such music referred to as *Zilizopendwa* (Golden Oldies) or *Lingala* (West African beat) night. At the club a free Kenyan monthly newsletter *Kenyan Empowerment Newspaper* is circulated. The newspaper is published by Kim Media Group (KMG) based in Acworth, Georgia and is distributed in various states in the United States. The newsletter promotes networking within the Kenyan community and also provides information on various Kenyan owned businesses. The businesses advertised in the newsletter generally include money-sending contacts, real estate brokers, companies involved in shipping merchandise, where to get Kenyan products,

legal services and investment opportunities in Kenya. The newsletter also covers news about activities being conducted by Kenyans in various parts of the United States, a section that highlights current events happening in Kenya, a forum to connect or reunite people referred to as, “*Je Uko wapi?*” (Hey where are you?) and an entertainment section. The reuniting section was mostly requests by people who wish to be contacted by former schoolmates or friends they believe are also in the United States. I believe that other newspapers specific to different African immigrant groups are available however during the time of this study, I did not come across any, and either at the food stores or the clubs that I visited.

4.3 Immigration history and profile of recent immigrations

4.3.1 Early immigrants

Because of its industrial basis and its proximity to New York thus providing access to the various ports of entry, Paterson was a major attraction for many immigrants who were seeking ample land or fleeing religious or political persecutions. Literature on Paterson shows that it has a long history of immigration. The Dutch colonists were among the earliest settlers in Paterson. The early waves of immigrants were mainly Irish, Italians and Germans (Murphy and Murphy, 1987), the later waves were heavily Eastern European and Jewish. The Germans arrived with more varied skills and economic resources while the majority of the Irish were poor (*Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, 2004: 403-404). Cotz (1985) indicates that by 1870 the Irish were the dominant group among immigrants in the city making up one-sixth of the total population of 33,500. There was even an area named Dublin, which referred to the area surrounding the mills (Cotz,

1985). This area is presently between Cianci, Market and Mill Streets. The building of the Irish Catholic St. John's Cathedral at Grand and Main Street between 1865 and 1870 also provides evidence of their settlements in this area.

With the expansion of the silk industry, there was need for more labor and Paterson began to draw skilled Italian textile workers in large numbers. The newer Italian immigrants settled in Dublin Area,⁸ since it had traditionally become a transitional community occupied by the newest immigrant group. The Italian immigrants in Paterson were largely peasants from rural areas and they worked mainly in low-status jobs such as railroad laborers and other low paying manual jobs. While Paterson had its share of Italian immigrants, much of the literature on Italian immigrants has focused on the more prominent Italian communities in cities such as New York, Newark, Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia (Cotz, 1985). The Italian immigrants in Paterson who worked in the textile industries were known to have participated in the labor strikes of 1913 (Murphy and Murphy, 1987).

The other dominant group of immigrants to Paterson was the Jewish immigrants. According to Ard and Rockland (2002) the Jewish immigrants, similarly other immigrants were attracted largely by the availability of work in the textile industries. They also point out that the Jewish laborers were not only involved in the silk industry as laborers and labor leaders, they were also involved in other professions and commerce. The majority came to United States as poor immigrants but they were able to use their skills to transform themselves into one of the most prominent communities in the 1800s. After the labor strikes of 1913 and the textile industry in Paterson started to decline they moved out to the suburban areas and became engaged in other businesses and

⁸ Currently, while there is still some Italian population in this area it is now largely occupied by the Latino.

professions. Ard and Rockland's observations of the Jewish communities ascend up the social ladder is in line with the postulates made in immigration literature, that, as immigrants assimilate into mainstream society they move away from their working class residences to more suburban areas or higher income areas.

Presently, there are very few Jewish residents in Paterson. There is evidence of their earlier settlement in this area because of the visible big synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. Some of the synagogues appear semi-abandoned e.g. the famous Barnert Temple while others have officially moved. One of the oldest Jewish temples, Temple Emanuel, established in 1906 moved to Franklin Lakes as a result of decline in numbers of Jewish residents (The New York Times, October 1995). At the time the NY Times reported that the number of Jewish residents in the city, which was once 30,000, had dwindled to less than 1,000, and many of them elderly people.

The population landscape has since changed with the largest wave of migration following World War II consisting of domestic movement of Blacks from the rural American South. Recent data on the population of Paterson reflects the changes in immigration population with more and more immigrants from the developing countries. As of 2005 the population of Paterson was made up of 28.6% White alone, 32.1% Black alone, 1.9% Asian alone and 54.3% Hispanic; persons of Hispanic origin may be any race. In Paterson, 2.2% of the Hispanics were reported as Black Hispanic (Profiles of New Jersey, 2006). Data on ancestry also reflects the changes in population; the five largest ancestry groups were Italian 4.7%, Jamaican 3.2%, United States (America) 3.2% and Arab 1.8%. Other ancestry groups reported included Irish 1.6% and Sub-Saharan Africa 1.3%.

4.3.2 Profile of recent immigrants to Paterson

Using the data reported in the Profiles of New Jersey (2006) the trends in ratio of foreign-born residents in Paterson showed a decline for the period 1900-1970 but thereafter the ratio increased. By 2005 the percent of foreign-born in Paterson made up 33% of the total population of Paterson. The trends are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Trends in foreign-born population in Paterson

	1900	1950	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005
Native born	66,380	111,025	123,834	112,433	105,536	100,298	99,065
Foreign-born	38,791	28,110	21,001	25,537	35,355	48,924	49,788
% of total population	37%	20%	14%	19%	25%	33%	33%
Total population	105,171	139,135	144,835	137,970	140,891	149,222	148,853

Source: Table compiled using data from the Profiles of New Jersey (2006)

At the same time the composition of the immigrants has changed. In earlier literature there was reference to Italian and Jewish immigrants; the recent numbers of foreign born population show higher percentages of Hispanic. Data from the 2000 Census and 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) confirm the trends reported in Profiles of New Jersey (2006). The ACS survey reported that Paterson had higher percentages of foreign born residents and higher percentages of residents who speak languages other than English at home. Paterson city had higher ratios of foreign born and residents who speak languages other than English at home compared to the state and national percentages. Table 4.2 shows the comparison.

Table 4.2: Comparison of population distribution by ethnicity

	Paterson City	Passaic County	New Jersey
White	31.0%	59.2%	71.0%
African-American	30.6%	12.5%	13.9%
Asian	2.2%	4.8%	7.7%
Hispanic	56.2%	34.3%	15.3%
Language Other than English Spoken at Home	60.4%	44.3%	27.4%
Foreign-born	33.2%	27.8%	19.5%

Source: Data compiled using U.S. Census Bureau 2005 American Community Survey

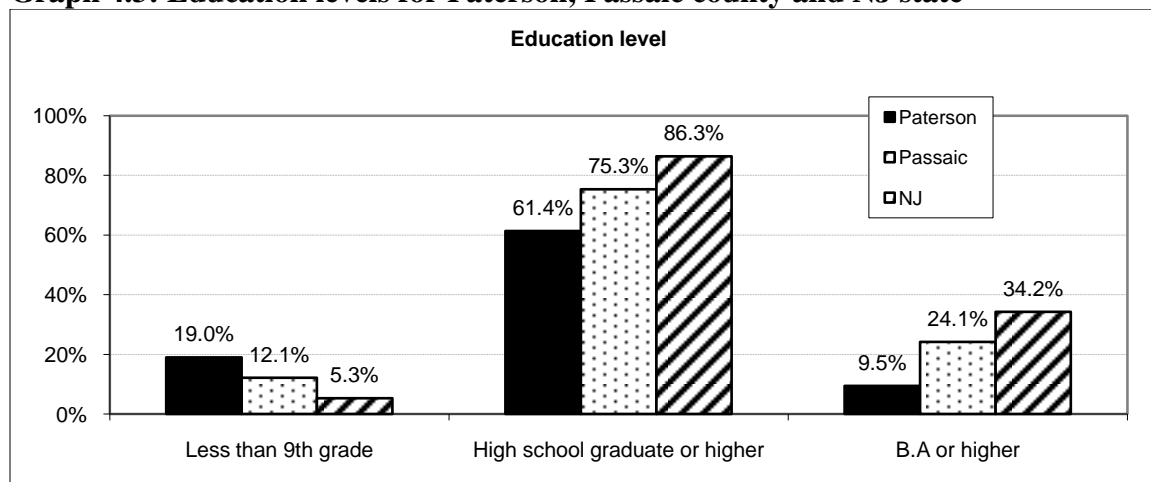
The data shows that Paterson has more than twice as many African Americans as they are in Passaic County and in New Jersey. The proportion of residents in Paterson who are foreign-born is one-and-half times more than that at the state level. Of the total 33.2% foreign-born residents in Paterson, 27.3% indicated that they were from Latin America. The Hispanic residents identified their areas of origin as Puerto Rico (16.1%), the Dominican Republic (10.3%), South America (9.3%), Peru (4.7%), Colombia (3.4%) and Mexico (3.3%). There were 9.0% Hispanic residents in Paterson who reported their area of origin “Other.” The data shows that the majority are from Puerto Rico. It is important to note that these trends of foreign-born in Paterson are also in line with national trends and confirmed data from the 2000 U.S. Census.

Paterson also has a growing population of residents who self identify as Arabs. According to the Profiles of New Jersey (2006) 2.5% of the residents in Paterson identified as Arab/Arabic. Paterson has become home to one of the largest population of Arab immigrants from Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan and Morocco. The presence of large Arab population was also noted in the 2000 census which reported Paterson as one

of the cities with more than 100,000 people who indicated an Arab ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b). The diversity of Paterson is also evidenced by the various parades organized in the city. These include a Dominican Day Parade, a Puerto Rican Day Parade and a Peruvian Day Parade. In 1999 the number of Parades increased with the celebration of the first African American Caribbean Parade Day.

The 2005 American Community Survey showed that the residents of Paterson city had lower levels of education with the larger percentage having less than a ninth grade education (19% as opposed to 12% at county and 5% at the state levels). Paterson had a smaller proportion of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher (9.5% compared to 24.1% for the county). The median income for a household in Paterson city was \$34,987 compared to \$51,016 for the county and \$61,672 at the state level. There were more families making less than \$14,999 on annual basis, 8.4% compared to 5.4% at county and 4.7% at state level (U.S Census Bureau, 2005). Graph 4.3 shows these comparisons.

Graph 4.3: Education levels for Paterson, Passaic county and NJ state



Source: Data compiled using U.S. Census Bureau 2005 American Community Survey

Another noticeable feature of the Paterson is the public transportation system. There are small minibuses that connect Paterson to other areas in New Jersey and to New York. Unlike other parts of the state where the buses are operated by the N.J. Transit Company with large sized buses, in Paterson there are mainly minibuses. These minibuses are owned by smaller companies or by individuals. This kind of transportation is very much similar to transportation means found in other countries in South America and Africa. The minibuses are stationed at the end of Dr. Martin Luther King Way and Van Houten Street. In downtown Paterson, you find the train station for N.J. Transit between Straight Street and Memorial Boulevard. On Straight Street you also find Paterson's Main Post office. Paterson has one community college, Passaic Community College and five high schools: Eastside, John F. Kennedy, Rosa Parks High School of Fine and Performing Arts, International High School and Paterson Academy High School.

4.4 Race and ethnic relations in Paterson

The various groups living in Paterson are not homogenous groups and while all of them belong to a minority group in the United States, there has been a history of tensions between the groups. The widespread daily that serves Northern Jersey known as *The Record* brought to the fore the race and ethnic tensions especially among the African American, Latino and Arab groups. One of the stories carried in a series titled "*Diverse and Divided*" by Elizabeth Llorente discussed the tensions between the African Americans and Hispanics (*The Record*, January 25 2004). The report highlighted the growing tensions as the demographic composition of the city changed.

The Record has reported the history of these incidences of violence among the groups, especially those that occurred in high schools. In October 1996, there was a report that Dominican and Arab students at the John F. Kennedy high school were involved in a brawl. The paper indicated that this was the third time fights had broken during that week (*The Record*, October 10, 1996). During the same week, Dominican and African American students at the Eastside high school had also been involved in violence. The report indicated that when the fights were stopped in school, students also took them off-campus leading to an escalation in the violence. The incidents have continued as reported in 2006 when a student of Arab descent was stabbed to death by a Hispanic youth in what was viewed as a hate crime by the Muslim community (*The Record*, January 18, 2006). At the same time the community and its leaders decried the split among the youth on ethnic lines both at school and out of school.

Through informal discussions with some residents they explained the source of these fights as stemming from need for respect and image among youth from the different ethnic groups where each group tries to overpower other groups. They noted that these struggles for position and limited resources extend to the larger population of immigrants beyond the high school gates. African American residents were concerned about the ever-growing Latino population and feared that soon they will be the dominant group in the area. The African Americans expressed dislike of the Latinos who they perceive as having attitude problems. Their feelings were that Latinos are arrogant and looked down on them. An elderly African American man I met at the store and struck a conversation with, expressed that Latino were not fond of African Americans and they extended their discrimination to business practices. He noted that when the Latinos move into an area

they refuse to conduct business with anyone else except with their own people. As a result, this kills African American businesses if Latinos move into their neighborhoods and that causes anger and hatred.

The Latino residents viewed the situation differently. During informal discussions they argued that they do not look down on Black people, some even mentioned they have friends who are African immigrants. They pointed out that they try as much as possible to minimize contact with Jamaicans and African Americans. As we conversed informally with a Mexican immigrant, he agreed that relations between Latinos and African Americans were strained but not because the Latinos look down on the African Americans but because African Americans harass them. He recounted incidents where Latino residents are allegedly harassed and robbed by African Americans; he emphasized that most of the earnings robbed are from odd jobs at minimum wage. He concluded that African Americans are jealous of the Latinos. On the other hand, the African Americans consider themselves friendly to the Latinos and attributed the allegations the Latino discuss as stereotypes. According to the African American contacts I spoke with informally, they believed that Latinos harbor mistrust as a result of the stereotype and lack respect for African Americans and it is for this reason that they were not friendly with the Latino.

There is no doubt that the question of economic inequality surfaces in the discussions of racial and ethnic tensions (Mindiola, Niemann and Rodriguez, 2002). The tension between Blacks and Latino can be viewed as an economic issue and a struggle for the scarce resources. There is a perception that the Latino workers and other immigrant workers will work harder than the African Americans and hence employers may be

inclined to pass over African American applicants. Immigrant workers have also been known to work for lower wages and make fewer demands on their employers since they are less aware of their rights. Immigrants groups are also known to have more developed informal networks and therefore will tend to bring in friends and family to a job thus ensuring a continuous supply of labor for employers. As such, the African Americans now face discrimination not only against whites but also against other minority groups.

All in all, the prejudices as expressed through the informal contacts seemed very strong with neither group seeking to understand the circumstances of the other, hence silently building up perceptions about each other. The tensions among the groups are also extended to political arena where the campaigns for African American and Latino candidates are very intense. Paterson saw its first mayor from a minority group was an African American, Mayor Martin G. Barnes elected in 1997 through a special election and re-elected in 1998 for a full term. In 2002, Paterson elected its first Hispanic mayor, Jose Torres. Some political analysts attributed the outcome of the election to the fact that Mayor Barnes was under federal investigation at the time on charges of corruption.

This political outcome was reflective of the Latino community ability to mobilize politically. It could also be linked to arguments by informal African American contacts that the Latinos seek to replace African Americans as the dominant minority group. Such a scenario implies that many of the privileges, which African Americans have largely enjoyed so far, would devolve to the Latinos. Other fears include the supposition that immigrants tend to accelerate the deterioration in provision of social services such as public education, undercut wages, and compete with African Americans for the unskilled

jobs. Since Latinos form the larger group of immigrants, the tensions between African Americans and Latinos have tended to be more pronounced and visible.

While most of the reported tensions were between Latinos and African Americans, there were some incidents of violence among other groups. *The Record* reported rivalries between Jamaican and Hispanic students at Eastside High School, whereby the students were unable to get along even when they were on the same school soccer team (*The Record*, November 02 1997). Besides, these historical incidents more recent incidents were related to the tensions with the Middle Easterners. As late as January 2006, the media was reporting ethnic tensions in the high schools among youths of Arab descent and other groups. The Muslim community especially those from Middle East have been subject to tensions in the community since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This is more so in Paterson, which was subject to intense scrutiny since it was alleged that at least two of the suspected hijackers had rented an apartment on Union Avenue in Paterson. However, the tensions are not entirely new, as even before 9/11 the Muslim community had been exposed to hate crimes. For example, in September 1995 the Passaic Islamic center in the Eastside of Paterson was attacked; the windows were smashed and the walls facing the prayer hall were sprayed with graffiti (*The Record*, September 18 1995). Another building that had been proposed as a Muslim community center for youth was burned down in a mysterious fire in 2005 (*The Record*, July 28 2005). In the post 9/11 era the Muslim community has reached out to other members of the community, have invited non-Muslim members to the mosques in a bid to allay the public's fears about their activities. They have even started to offer more sermons in English and develop inter-faith relations (*The Record*, November 16 2001).

Throughout these informal discussions, there was no mention of tensions between the dominant groups and the African immigrants. There was a noticeable silence about their relations. It was as though they were not part of the city's issues. At the same time, while the discussion in this chapter has focused on the dominant groups in general, one must acknowledge that there exist intra and inter group differences. For example, among the Latino community, there are tensions based on countries of origin. There are intense disputes especially when it comes to political mobilization and election of the candidates to run for office. Among the Middle Easterners there are differences between the Arabs and the Turks.

In general, Paterson, The Silk City, has a rich history as one of the old industrial cities in United States that achieved great status. It was also the site of historic labor unrest and saw eventual decline. Efforts to revive the city have been initiated and the immigrant community is involved in the revival of the city. This is not a surprise or new concept since the glory of the early Paterson City was also built by immigrants. And from the observations discussed in this chapter especially the many businesses run by the new immigrants, it is evident that the new immigrants are currently involved in urban renewal. In addition, the residents of Paterson who have lived there for many years expressed their love for the city and their commitment to remain in Paterson.

CHAPTER FIVE

REASONS FOR MIGRATION AND INITIAL IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCES

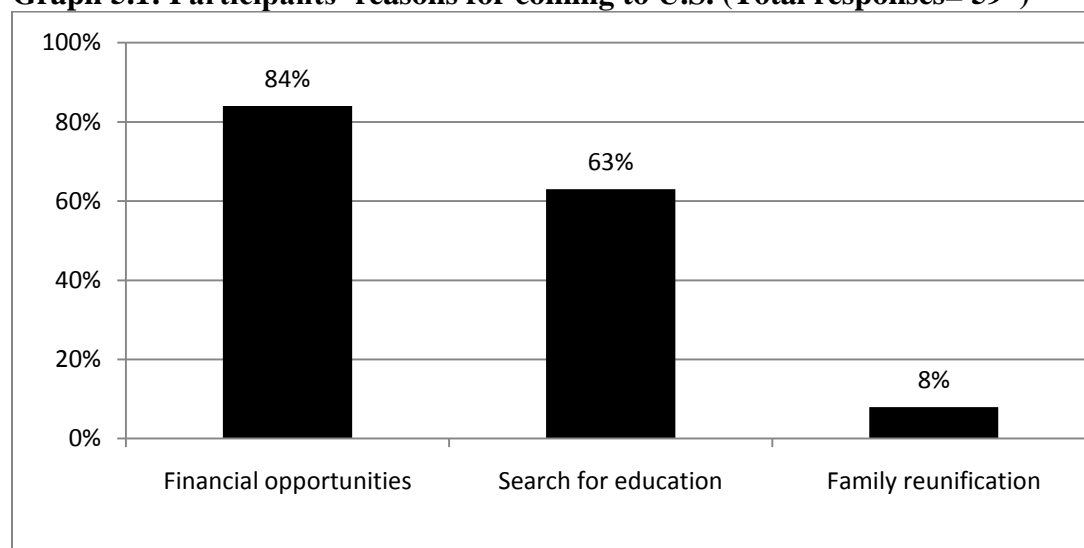
This chapter begins to present my primary research findings. The first part of the chapter provides an overview of the reasons participants migrated. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the reasons focusing on whether they constituted “push” factors in Kenya or “pull” factors from the United States. “Push” factors in Kenya included deteriorating economic conditions, lack of higher educational opportunities, political changes and visa policies and regulations. The participants’ belief in divine intervention in encouraging participants to migrate is also discussed. The “pull” factors to the United States which encouraged participants to move included the availability of existing contacts in the United States, flexibility of the education system, the attractiveness of United States as an English-speaking country and immigration policies. The findings are based on both interviews with participants and participant observations during activities organized by Kenyan immigrants. The names used here are all pseudonyms.

5.1 Overview of reasons to move

Participants cited multiple reasons for coming to the United States and rated multiple reasons as primary. As shown in Graph 5.1 32 participants or 84% of the sample mentioned the search for financial opportunities as one of their primary reasons for coming to the United States. The next most frequent response was the search for education with 24 (63%), only three or eight percent of the sample mentioned they came

to United States to reunite with their families. Twenty participants gave multiple responses as to the reasons for coming to the United States.

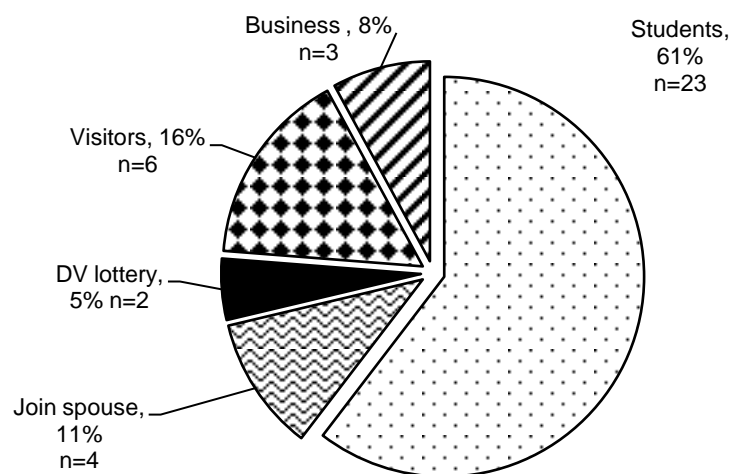
Graph 5.1: Participants' reasons for coming to U.S. (Total responses= 59*)



* There were participants who gave more than one reason

During the interviews it was apparent that the reasons participants gave for coming to the United States did not match the basis of their travel visas. Since travel visas are categorized by the reasons an individual intends to travel, participants were asked what type of visa they had used. An analysis of the visa on which they traveled showed that the majority of participants, 23 (61%) traveled on student visas. This suggests that most of the participants provided different reasons for visa purposes compared to the reasons they discussed during the interviews. Graph 5.2 shows the distribution of participants by their visa type. From the graph, only three (8%) participants traveled on business visas compared with 32 (84%) who stated in their interviews that they came to United States in search of financial opportunities.

Graph 5.2: Distribution of participants by visa type (N=38)



These findings suggest that while the search for financial opportunities was the driving motivation for most of the participants, the number who came to United States on business visas did not compare. The number of student visas was almost eight times more than business visas. Given the discussions by participants, one possible explanation might be related to the restrictive visa regulations. Participants explained that while they leave Kenya for economic reasons, the restrictive visa regulations hinder them from stating their economic ambitions openly. As such, many travel as students with the intention of pursuing economic opportunities. As Kariuki, a man in his late thirties and in the United States for fifteen years said:

For me, I knew that this [coming to United States] was it. I was sure that I could make it in America. Before I succeeded to get my visa I had tried several times. I tried coming with some church group but I was among some of the people who were cut off the list. You know how it is. The organizers put their family members and friends on top of the list. There was *ukabila* [tribalism/nepotism]

and so I ended up being taken off the list so that someone can put their friend or family. I knew nobody in those high positions so I guess that's what happens. Then I tried getting a visa to attend a business exhibition that was being organized here but the requirements at the embassy were just crazy. I could not show that I had the required amount of money or have such businesses so I got left out again. Then I tried as a student and was lucky, so after many attempts I made it. I never gave up because I knew one day I will come to America.

It was also clear through the interviews that the pursuit of education and economic opportunities were linked. Whether here or in Kenya, participants discussed how they considered education as a means for economic betterment. Participants emphasized that for someone to be successful in the United States, they needed to have some level of education, preferably college, to avoid being stuck in dead-end jobs and have a decent income to sustain oneself and family back in Kenya.

5.1.1 Immigrants' perceptions and expectations

Many of the participants discussed their lives in Kenya before coming to the United States. They explained how they watched and felt, as economic opportunities seemed to diminish day by day. The prospects of life in the United States seemed as an answer to their dreams and ambitions. They explained in great detail their expectations and dreams of how their economic situation would improve in the United States. They narrated the romanticized images they had of United States as "a land of opportunity." The prevailing notions about United States before they embarked on their immigration process relied heavily on their perceptions of the possibilities of earning more money, improving their living conditions and having a better life in general.

According to the participants, their fundamental goal was survival and they strongly believed that they would achieve it by coming to the United States. Their views

were evident through the words they used to describe their reasons for coming to the United States. They used words such as, “in search of better life”, “it is America and there is everything”, “it is everybody’s dream to come to America”, “to get a better education”, “money, money, money”, “tired of Kenya’s poverty”, “better prospects”, and “success.” The use of these words reflected their perceptions about how coming to the United States would change their lives. Their pre-migration views were shaped by the images of through the media, including popular culture in Kenya, images of Hollywood celebrities; American television shows seen on Kenyan TVs and exaggerated stories of success told by earlier immigrants.

Thirty-nine year old Karimi who has lived in the United States for sixteen years, sounded happy when she explained to me that:

I came here for better opportunities, more money, and better things. You know all the stories about America when you are back at home. People tell you that life is good in America; friends tell you it is good, the media also shows only good things about America and so all you can dream about is the great life in America. There is always this comparison between Kenya and America and America seems so much better [pause] always, America is always better.

Virtually all participants explained that at the time of their coming to the United States, they were convinced that the United States was far better than Kenya. This belief provided them with the impetus to migrate. They explained that it was the notion of a better life in the United States compared to the difficult economic situation in Kenya that pushed them to actively seek to change their life situations. Their image of United States was of a place where dreams come true and everything is possible, and thus they made their decisions to move. The participants also noted that the stereotypes of United States were very persuasive, and regardless of any other images portrayed, the one of better life

stood out. The statements by twenty-eight year old Ali, in the United States for seven years revealed such perceptions. He said:

People talked about how difficult life was in U.S. They would say that you might not get a job, that life is hard, stuff like that. I mean, most of it is true, [laughing] now that I know better. But I think that at the time I didn't care about all those things, I wanted to leave Kenya. I mean, I asked myself several times, could U.S. be worse than Kenya? So I came because I thought things will be better even though some people had told me stories about U.S. that were really scary. And now I know they were true, but I could not believe them at the time.

These findings suggest that many of the immigrants make the decision to migrate based on “expectations” rather than “actual” benefits. Their decisions are based more on perceived benefits regardless of any contrary or tangible evidence about United States. Participants reported that they came to the United States because they expected better life prospects.

5.2 Push factors in Kenya

5.2.1 Economic challenges in Kenya

According to the participants their search for financial opportunities in the United States was occasioned by the deteriorating economic conditions in Kenya. Kariuki, in his late thirties who has been in the United States for fifteen years, explained the situation very clearly when he said:

At the beginning the *mitumba* [second-hand clothes business]⁹ was doing very well. So for some time, a short time, life was okay but after that it was really difficult. The money I made could not meet my expenses. I was sharing a house with some other guys, my mother and younger siblings relied on me for their school, food and other needs. One day I sat down and said loudly, “things cannot go on this way, life has to change!” I was not yet married and could not pay for anything! [sighs of exasperation] By the way I had just finished Form Four and

⁹ Mitumba refers to second-hand clothing business which was a booming industry in the early 1980s. Most of the clothes are imported from countries such as United States, Britain, Germany and others.

had passed the exams and could not get a job. Even if I had gotten a job as a teacher I would still not have met my needs. The salary for teachers was pathetic and I wondered how people managed, it was a miracle. Anyway, I knew that I had to do something. So I started strategizing. I had some relatives who were in the U.S. but we were not close and because I knew that their families were doing well I decided to rekindle the relations so that they can help me to come to America. I knew that I would make more money in America, and decided there and then that if the money was in America, then that is where I should be, *I knew I had to get to America* [emphasis original].

Background to the economic situation in Kenya

About half, 17 (45%) of the participants had been in the United States for over ten years and discussed in detail the frustrations they had experienced while still in Kenya as a result of the declining economy. Many of them alluded to the reality that the economic situation contributed to their decision to move. Kenya, similar to many developing countries was plagued with a declining economic situation during the 1980s. In its early years of independence in 1963, Kenya had experienced fairly steady or growing levels of economic development. The decline in economic conditions in the late 1980s caused extreme frustration. This was coupled by widespread government mismanagement, inefficient policies and practices bogged down by widespread corruption, tribalism, and nepotism.

These feelings were supported by the participants' description of how they arrived at the decision to come to United States. Nyamweya, in his late fifties who has been in the United States for five years explained the situation in the following words:

I had been working for many years. I was a deputy headmaster in the school and have been teaching for a long time. When I married my wife and everyone else thought that I was the star in the village [laughs]. Every woman wanted me to marry them because I was a teacher. During Kenyatta's time it was good, I tell you. You people of 8-4-4¹⁰ do not know anything. Did you see Kenyatta? Do you

¹⁰ 8-4-4 is the current education system in Kenya which was started in 1985. It consists of eight years of primary education, four years of secondary school and four years of college. The previous 7-4-2-3 system had seven years of primary education, four secondary referred to as "O" level, two years of "A" (advanced)

know Kenyatta? [researcher responds]. When Moi came to power he was also good but after people tried to overthrow him in 1982 he became a monster. ... Corruption, corruption, everything went down. You could not get anything. Sometimes even your salary can go missing. I was supposed to get owner-occupier,¹¹ but I had to bribe people to get it. Imagine, and it is my house. I said no! ... Anyway, what did you want to know? [pause] Why I came to America? Because I had to feed my family, if I had not come to America, I don't know what could have happened to my family. It is not easy to wake up one morning and leave your country. When I was leaving I was already an old man. You know I already had a family, wife, children, mother, and people back home. It is not easy, but I had to do it otherwise I was not helping myself. I was a teacher and before I left Kenya, I talked with my priest for a long time. Many times I almost changed my mind but my wife would say to me, "okay, it is good you stay but what will we eat?" How will we pay for the secondary fees and another child in Russia? How? How? So I got up at my age, and left my wife and children behind. The economic situation back home was so bad. When I explain to the young people they don't understand this because when we got independence, things were not this way. It was much better but Moi ruined the country.

The participants' views of the economy are supported by economic performance reports. For example annual per capita income in Kenya declined from Kes. 18,699 (US\$ 271) in 1990 to Kes. 16,491 (US\$ 239) in 2002 with the number of people living in poverty in Kenya estimated to have risen from 48% of the population in 1990 to 56% of the population in 2002 (U.S. Dept of Commerce, 2004). The country's economic performance in terms of real GDP growth slowed from 2.3 percent in 1997 to below zero (-1.1) in 2000. Ten years ago, when Kenya's economy was more stable, more people were able to find jobs and make a living in Kenya. As the economy deteriorated and people were faced with great uncertainty and very limited economic opportunities, more people emigrated in search of economic opportunities. The trends support participants' assertions that as the economic conditions in Kenya declined, more people felt the need

level secondary education and three years of college or university. The 8-4-4 system has been heavily criticized for overworking students and providing lower quality education.

¹¹ Owner-occupier was a housing allowance provided to employees who lived in their own homes as opposed to renting and was based on the value of the home.

to move in search of better economic opportunities. Table 5.3 shows the economic conditions and corresponding numbers of immigrants to the United States.

Table 5.3: Key economic indicators and immigrants to U.S. 1997-2003

Indicator	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Kenya's real GDP Growth (factor cost)	2.3	1.8	1.4	1.5	3.1	4.4	5.5
Kenya's real GDP per capita	-0.1	-0.7	-1.1	-1.0	0.7	2.1	3.4
Number of Kenyan immigrants to U.S.	1,387	1,696	1,412	2,210	2,514	3,207	3,216

**Economic data derived from IMF data on Kenya Economic and Financial performance indicators 2003 and immigration data derived from the 2004 Yearbook of immigration statistics by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

5.2.2 Limited of educational opportunities in Kenya

The search for quality education in higher institutions of learning because of the decline in both number of institutions and quality of education in Kenya provided for both “push” and “pull” arguments concerning education. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the participants stated that their reason for coming to the United States was in search of education and 23 (61%) entered the United States as students. These numbers confirmed that the pursuit of educational opportunities was an important motivation for immigrants to come to the United States.

At the same time participants considered the search for education a major push factor, as they explained the decline of the education system in Kenya. Nyamweya, in his late fifties who has been in the United States five years said that:

I am an old man now and I have been in the education field for a long time, as a student, teacher, headmaster, you name it. When we got independence things were different. Those who wanted to go to school could find schools and attend, there were even forcing people to go to school. Later on, things changed, and the story became “there is no vacancy.” It started with secondary schools. Parents had to now run around looking for schools for their children when they finish primary

school and many of them missed slots in secondary schools. I could say it got worse in the 1990s, at that time there were more students than secondary schools. I will not even talk about the universities because that's another whole story and the situation was worse. Children finish secondary school and they have passed the exams but the universities cannot accommodate all of them, what do you expect parents to do? It was because of these shortages that encouraged corruption, what do you expect? When there are many people and the Form one slots¹² are very few, people begin to collect money to give your child a slot for Form 1. People have nowhere to take their children [makes gestures of desperation]. See! I tell you that is the time when people started taking their children to India, Russia and other places but mostly it was India. I think it was because India was cheaper and now America has taken the first position.

Similar views were expressed by other participants who provided parts of the history of the education system in Kenya. These views were mainly from the older participants who tended to compare the early independence years to more recent years when a major decline in educational facilities and opportunities occurred.

At independence, eradicating illiteracy was one of the three focus areas the post-colonial government embarked on as outlined in its sessional paper of 1963.¹³ The driving force for education expansion at the time of independence was occasioned by the mass exodus of the British and other expatriates for fear of retaliation for their misdeeds during the period of colonization. The new government needed people to fill the white-collar positions left vacant and therefore, embarked on an accelerated process of developing human capital, training the highly-skilled staff, which Kenya needed. Most of these jobs were located in the urban areas, and many people after completion of their

¹² Education system in Kenya consists of a primary school referred to as standard 1 through 8 (probably the equivalent of elementary school in U.S probably Grade 1-8) and secondary school Forms 1-4 (equivalent of high school in U.S. Grade 9-12). Throughout the study these are the terms that participants used when discussing levels of education. The earlier education system was based on 7-4-2-3 for primary-secondary-advanced secondary-college. The advanced secondary school was referred to as Form 5 and 6.

¹³ As outlined in the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on "African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya", this planning document focused on the eradication of disease, poverty and illiteracy. These were identified as the greatest challenges to development at the time. Forty-three years later these areas still remain major challenges for Kenya's development.

education left their rural areas and migrated to the urban areas to get white-collar jobs.

Onyango in his late thirties and in the United States for nine years explained that the idea of formal education in Kenya was always linked to employment in the urban areas.

I know what the main problem in Kenya is. People always think that you must get a white-collar job. Everyone who finished school moved to Nairobi. Then there were no jobs for everyone and “educated” people did not want to do manual work. That is why we ended up with many unemployed people. The education system taught people that when you reached Form Four you start to think that you are very educated and therefore must work in an office.

Therefore, the participants expressed the idea that the government was responsible for perpetuating an overall ideology that “education was the gateway to success and success was defined as working in an office and having a white-collar job,” as thirty-eight year old Wanjiku in the United States for eleven years concluded. These participants’ observations and discussions serve to highlight the value that Kenyans place on formal education and its association with increased earnings and improved life. These perceptions did not change despite changes in the material reality of people’s lives, especially in the 1980s when the highest rates of educated unemployed were recorded. Education completion rates were outpacing employment creation and there were no jobs to absorb all those who completed their schooling. The large pool of educated people with no jobs created a major strain on the urban resources. The problem was compounded by the fact that elementary and high schools had expanded exponentially while university educational resources remained stagnant.¹⁴

¹⁴ It is important to mention that while the colonial administration and later the Kenyan government focused heavily on promotion of formal education, these opportunities were not equally distributed. The concern was and continues to be that some parts of Kenya especially those inhabited by the nomadic pastoralists have been marginalized in the provision of education. Such areas include the North Eastern parts of Kenya and parts of Northern parts of Rift Valley.

Consequently, many high school graduates could not find placement into the few public universities. Attempts to expand admission rates in the universities only led to a decline in the quality of education. By the 1990s the public universities were in a state of decline and were faced with problems ranging from poor salaries for faculty, lack of teaching and/or research facilities, lack of opportunities for career development for faculty especially in the areas of research and publishing, the government infringement on academic freedom, political persecution, limited funding, poor management, corruption to nepotism. The education system was in a crisis and even the changes in education system directed by President Moi could not ameliorate the situation.

Given the situation of education system in Kenya and the unchanging ideology about formal education, many people started to pursue their educational ambitions beyond the Kenyan borders. Many skilled workers including nurses, academicians and engineers moved to South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, United States, United Kingdom and many others in search of livelihoods for themselves and their families. The participants highlighted concerns about the poor quality of education despite the willingness of people to go to school and lack of employment opportunities after completion of their education. As indicated by Kipkirui, in his late twenties and in the United States for seven years:

Okay this is what I think. We have the best education system. You may not agree with me. But imagine... we don't have many facilities but the teachers really work hard. Let me tell you most of the students who come here but don't have to struggle in their studies, yes there are a few differences but once you overcome the new things... it is *nyueee* [makes sound implying smooth sailing] I don't struggle very much in class here in U.S., when I see some of the Americans really struggle. I think the reason I don't struggle is because I got a good foundation. Our education system is really rigorous, oh, men, the things we learn in secondary schools back in Kenya are university stuff here in America. We may not have many fancy buildings, many books and all the supports but the education system

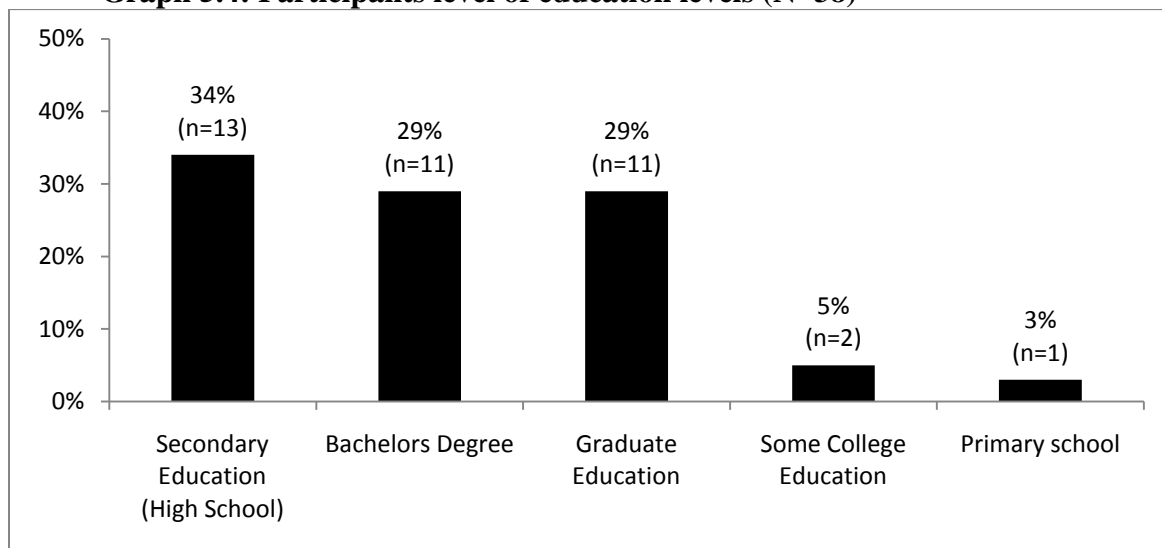
does a good job as it is. Imagine if they had the facilities America has [gestures with eyes and hands].

The desire for better educational opportunities to improve the chances of employment led to increased competitiveness in education. Parents' and students' desires to increase their competitive edge locally in Kenya and even globally, sought to reach their goals through acquisition of Western education.

Educational levels of the participants

The value that Kenyans place on formal education was confirmed by the education level reported by this group of participants. Findings on the education levels of participants showed that more than half the participants had some college education acquired either in the U.S. or in Kenya. The graph below shows the education level of the participants.

Graph 5.4: Participants level of education levels (N=38)



Five percent of the participants reported that they had some college education, this number specifically referred to those participants who had attended college at some point but may not be actively pursuing college education at the time of the research. That means that they had either taken some time off or were re-evaluating their study objectives. During the study a number of participants pointed out that they had noticed that more and more Kenyan students were dropping out of college due to financial difficulties. However, at the time of the research the question of when was the last time the participants had been registered for classes was not asked and as such it was not possible to assess the time lag or get a sense of drop out trends.

5.2.3 Contacts with Kenyan students already in U.S. institutions

The participants who came as students reported how other Kenyan immigrants already studying in the United States had facilitated their admission to and registration in schools in the United States. Of all the 23 participants who reported they came on student visas 20 or 87% were admitted to undergraduate college and three or 13% to graduate studies. Even though none of the participants had come in the post 9/11 period, the participants felt that the stringent visa regulations after 9/11 and a wave of anti-immigration sentiments may discourage potential students. They believed that fewer students were choosing United States as their destination.

There was consensus among the participants that when one is better educated, they are better equipped to face life's challenges and expand their opportunities. The participants also seemed to agree that the ideology in Kenya is one whereby formal

education is linked to white-collar employment. One participant, Onyango, in his late thirties and in the United States for nine years pointed out that:

You see these same people who finished Form Four and refused to do manual jobs in Kenya, come here in the United States and comfortably take on those jobs with no complaint. You tell me, I can't work for Securicor [leading security firm] in Kenya but I come to the U.S. and take on a security job! What's the difference?

In his discussions Onyango also explained that given the cost of living in Kenya and United States, the pay may be comparable. In addition, he acknowledged that working conditions in both places are very different and emphasized the monetary rewards.

5.2.4 Changes in political situation in Kenya

While none of the participants explicitly mentioned political reasons for leaving Kenya, they implicitly discussed the relationship between political situation and the decisions to move. Both Kamau, who is twenty-nine years old, and Cherono who is in her late fifties alluded to political reasons during their interviews, even though they did not out-rightly include politics as a reason for coming to the United States. Kamau who has been in the United States for seven years said that:

I am not sure about politics in Kenya but one thing is obvious, they are all corrupt. It is basically because of the levels of corruption among politicians that Kenya is in the mess that we see now. I can't stand it, that's why I am not interested in Kenya politics. It is all one and the same thing corruption through and through [makes sounds of disgust]. People leave, especially if you can afford it why stay in a place where you can't get anything done without bribery. Eventually when I got a chance I left too and I am sure many people want to leave, they just don't have the opportunity.

Cherono has been in the United States for six years said:

Cherono: How do you explain that all the lecturers, professors, engineers, all the educated people leave, anyone who is somebody gets up and leave? There must be something. For some of these people it is not even the money, because they

can make the money in Kenya. They are annoyed about some things in Kenya. You know their stories, everybody knew but nobody could talk because people were afraid of what will happen to them. It was a bad situation. The people who tried to say something were “harassed.” I know for sure many people here in America who got political asylum; they ran away because they were afraid. You know what I am talking about; it was not a joke people were killed. At one time I was very worried even for my family.

Researcher: Did this have anything to do with your moving?

Cherono: I don’t want to talk about it, you never know with people. Let’s talk about something else, something nice.

The participants’ remarks suggest that they were unhappy with the political situation but felt powerless. Their statements implied that people may have left because they were afraid and powerless. The participants’ disillusion with the political system in Kenya could be summarized in Kamau’s words, “For me, the saddest part is that, it is the politicians who exploit the people, they own everything. They loot government money to increase their control. The more they loot, the more control they have to get re-elected, it is a cycle and people are stuck with it.” Participants also made comparisons to the events in Kenya’s political history that lead up to the unfavorable political conditions. As Nyamweya in his late fifties explained:

When Moi came to power, he was also good but after people tried to overthrow him in 1982, he became a monster. After that attempted coup he changed and things became difficult, police [regular police] and the C.I.D [Criminal Investigation Department, the investigative division of police that operates mostly as undercover police] were out everywhere. It became very difficult to say anything against the government and he [Moi] started to surround himself with his own people. The people he brought in starting “*grabbing*”¹⁵ land, they wanted to get rich quickly and that is how things changed in Kenya.

The participants’ expressions indeed reflect the history of Kenya’s political situation and how the political situation became intolerable and forced people to move

¹⁵ “Grabbing” was a word that was commonly used to refer to corrupt acquisition of land or property.

out of Kenya.¹⁶ Even though the participants claimed they were not interested in Kenyan politics, during their interviews they revealed that they were up to date on the current political events happening in Kenya. One participant referenced to President Kibaki's comments when he took over power. Forty-year old Musembi who had been in the United States for fifteen years said the following:

Maybe now with Kibaki people will go back. Well, there are things he has tried to do but there are still many problems, but remember, he tried to include the learned [sic] people who have left the country. Actually it was very funny because he said that "it is safe to come back home and rebuild the nation." I know some guys who have returned and got good jobs, but most people are going to do business. So people are now returning and I bet if things get better more people will go home. Kenya is good and if it is well managed, I am sure many people [referring to immigrants in U.S.] would rather be in Kenya.

The participants were not optimistic about the future of Kenya's political problems. At least forty percent of the participants (n=15) thought that even a change in regime would not solve Kenya's political problems. There were four participants who felt that the change in regime would bring positive change in Kenya. They expressed optimism that the country's economic situation would be revived. The rest of the participants were not sure but they hoped that the political situation would change for the better.

5.2.5 Attitude towards risk and trust in divine intervention

During the interviews many participants indicated that it was God who made it possible for them to come to the United States. This was stated at various times when they described different immigration experiences. Various expressions, including "God made it possible for me", "God opened the doors", "I prayed to get a visa and God was

¹⁶ See Appendix D for political history of Kenya.

good and I got it”, “God knew I would come to America.” This is not say that the participants were devoutly religious, since some of them even indicated that they were not practicing Christians but they expressed a strong belief in a supreme being. Table 5.5 shows the distribution of participants by their stated religious affiliations.

Table 5.5: Distribution of participants by religious affiliation (N=38)

Religious affiliation as reported by participants	N (%)
Catholic	9 (24%)
Protestant	8 (21%)
Seventh Day Adventist (SDA)	5 (13%)
African Inland Church (AIC)	3 (8%)
Pentecost	1 (3%)
Anglican	1 (3%)
Other Christian denominations	4 (10%)
No affiliation	7 (18%)
Total	38

Participants expressed gratitude to God for their achievements and for the opportunity to be in the United States. Forty-three year old Kyalo, in the United States for twenty years said the following:

It was bad and anyway to tell you the truth, all this is by God’s plans. Yaani [Swahili for ‘meaning’], the way I came to America and settled and was able to help people home, I can only say it is God. I never thought, eeh honestly, even people in my village they can tell you, we were the poorest. We had no food; the headmaster helped me with bursary to finish school. People say there is no God, me I know there is God because even here in America, everything I have achieved is not easy. People come here and get lost and never do anything for their people, so every day I wake up and thank God. Even the way I got my citizenship, Maria I tell you God is good. That is why I do all I can to help some other people back home, because I know God put me here for a reason.

Participants expressed these sentiments across age groups, gender or length of stay.

Wanjiku, a woman who is 38 years old and in United States for eleven years said:

I thank God for many things, even though I suffer. I know there are people back home, they are in bad shape. Just being here in America is God's will, even though I don't go to church all the time and all that, I remember my mother used to sing a song about "*Mungu ni mwema*" [God is good] and we always sang it in Sunday school. Sometimes when I sit down and I am thinking things over, I hear the song in my head. That's funny, but I thank God."

It is possible that the participants' belief in divine intervention by a higher authority was invoked in times of uncertainty. While these expressions seem to point to the strong conviction about the power beyond human influence, participants also narrated in detail their own efforts to overcome in difficult situations. The participants described various activities they had undertaken and the support they received from friends and family. Yet, at the end of their stories they would always attribute their success to God. None of the participants candidly mentioned that it was their ability to take risks that enabled them to overcome adversity or that they considered themselves risk-takers. Their attitude towards risk taking behavior is expressed through their trust and belief in divine intervention.

The acknowledgement of a supreme being who controls things beyond human control and the non-acknowledgement of their role in their own success may be a reflection of their philosophy of life. It may be referred to as a philosophy of hope that offers optimism to potential immigrants even those without significant resources. For people in difficult situations such a philosophy suggests that there is the potential to succeed even when situations seem hopeless because there is possibility of intervention from a supreme being who is not under human control. This could also be linked to their value system. While there is no hegemonic African or Kenyan value system, most of the people believe in a supreme being who controls the order of things. It also offers hope to

potential immigrants. The sentiments reveal that although many of the Africans have converted to Western religions, they still embrace aspects of their cultural beliefs, which continue to permeate through their everyday lives. The sentiments also reveal the ways that immigrants have incorporated their cultural beliefs into their Westernized religious beliefs and practices to fit their specific situations.

5.3 Pull factors in United States

5.3.1 Availability of existing social contacts in the United States

When the participants were asked the question whether they had existing contacts who assisted them in making the trip to the United States, all of them answered in the affirmative. Table 5.4 shows the distribution of who the primary contact in the United States was for this group of first generation immigrants from Kenya. The responses showed that family and friend networks were mentioned most frequently as primary contacts.

Table 5.6: Participants' primary contacts in the U.S. (N=38)

	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Relative	15	39.5%
Friend	12	31.6%
Spouse/partner/fiancé(e)	5	13.2%
Business contacts	4	10.5%
No contact	2	5.3%
Total	38	100%

While only 3 (8%) of the participants had stated that they came for purposes of reuniting with their families, many participants discussed in detail how their decision to

come to United States was influenced by the fact that they knew someone in the United States. Relatives and friends accounted for 71.1% of the contacts participants had as they planned to come to the United States. Participant after participant explained how well the people who were in the United States were doing and they hoped to do likewise. The story was similar regardless of participants' age, gender or length of stay. The participants expressed how they wanted to be comparable to the people they knew here in the United States. Twenty-nine year old Kamau, who had been in United States for seven years, explained his story saying:

My main reason for coming was to study. I had also heard that United States is where everything is available. I had cousins who were here already, about seven of them and I was sure that there was good life in United States. I chose the United States because I had relatives here and from what I had seen and heard of them they were doing pretty well and they were also helping the people back at home and I was hoping I could do the same.

Friends were considered important as initial contacts when participants come to the United States. As Onyango, in his late thirties and in the United States for nine years at the time of the study said:

I met this girl and she was from U.S and we talked and she told me she will get me college admission and then I can join her here. ... Mmm, my first degree I got it from India. Say when I came back to Kenya I got a job with Kenya Wines Agency Limited, you know, KWAL. I was doing well, I was a salesperson and I had my own company car. See here now I am struggling in U.S working in gas stations and all that... So this girl she is from U.S buys us drinks and she has style. I said I have to go to U.S. We talked and she said she will make plans for me to come.

Business contacts were also considered important and influenced immigrants' decisions to move to United States. Cherono, a woman in her late fifties and in United States for six years at the time of the study said:

I knew deep inside me that life in America was good. So when the people organized for me to come to the exhibition, I knew that my time had come. ... When they come to Kenya, they bring such beautiful things and that was what I wanted. I wanted to come here and get those things myself and take them back to Kenya and sell. I was planning to be rich like them, or even richer.

There was also ample evidence of “chain-migration” whereby new immigrants were received by earlier ones and eventually they too invite and accommodate newer immigrants. Thirty-eight year old Wanjiku who has been in the United States for eleven years at the time of the study explained in detail how she came to the United States.

First it was me, I was the first one to come, and then I arranged for my brother to come here to school. After my brother came, I then made plans for my sister also to come. My sister came but she moved to Indiana and she brought her boyfriend, so they moved together. Then before my brother moved he invited our last born [sibling] to come to America, so most of my family is now here in America. My cousins came, my nieces, name them, they are all over America now.

Other participants also traced similar patterns of connections, being invited to United States and in turn inviting others. There were only two participants (5.3%) who mentioned that they did not know people in the United States at the time of coming to United States. The two participants stated that their contacts with United States were through the educational institutions they were coming to join. And upon their arrival they went directly to the educational institutions they were coming to join. One of them said they were met at the airport by a “meet-and-greet” service provided by the college. The other one, forty year old Kyalo, had a different story to tell about arriving in the United States not knowing anyone. He has been in the United States for twenty years and he recalled his arrival experience in the United States stating:

When I came here I was alone, I did not know anybody. I told you I was supposed to go to Canada but I didn't because of, actually ... [leaves sentence unfinished]. So I went to the school and started school, but then when summer came I was

homeless. Believe it or not I was homeless. I had to leave the school coz when I came I was staying in school but during summer the school closes and everyone goes home. So when the summer came I decided to come to New York and believe it or not I lived on the streets. ... I came to New York because I was told that there are many Kenyans in New York and that is what I was looking for. I needed to know where I can find someone who can help me. I was lucky, very lucky I say. One day I saw some people on the street and they were talking Swahili and I went over to them and introduced myself, from there we became friends, the truth is we actually became brothers.

The participants also reported maintaining high levels of interaction with the people they initially had contact with, even though some relations were reported to have gone sour. Such experiences reinforce the importance of existing social contacts for immigrants and this was not any different for this group of participants.

5.3.2 Reunion with family

Under the 1965 United States Immigration and Nationality Act (P.L. 89-236); new immigrants can be admitted on the basis of kinship ties. Since then, immigration through family reunification accounts for approximately 70% of the annual immigration intake (USCIS, 2004). For this group of participants there were extensive discussions highlighting the role of family in their decisions to migrate. As such, it was surprising that there were only three participants (8%) who reported that they came to the United States on family reunification grounds; two of them were women. Based on the responses from participants one possible explanation for this finding could be related to the differences in the definition of family. The United States Immigration and Nationality Service¹⁷ limits the definition of family to only immediate family (spouses, partners or fiancé (e)). The participants' definition of family ties was much more expansive and

¹⁷ Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) has since changed to Department of Homeland Security.

while they referred to various people as family, these people would not qualify on family reunification basis to travel to United States.

During the interviews participants elaborated on how they came to the United States because of their families. Since many of them did not travel on family reunion based visas, it is possible that there were many who may have found it difficult to apply for visas under the category of “family reunification” even though they believed they still came based on family ties. Many of the participants referred to extended family members as immediate family. During the interview with Moraa who had been in United States for the last nine years, she discussed her family ties in detail. After the lengthy discussion about the ties she maintains with her family, she added the following comment, “Sometimes, I really get upset with my elder mother and at such times I decide to talk to her daughter in Nairobi.” Upon further questioning about the relationships she had with her mother and why she referred to her as “my elder mother” and “her daughter”, Moraa explained that her ‘elder mother’ was indeed her mother’s older sister. She explained that she had always referred to her as ‘mother’ and when she wanted to distinguish her from her biological mother she would then add the word ‘elder’. According to Moraa she had a very close relationship with her mother’s sister. Therefore, the daughter Moraa referred to as sister was indeed her cousin. Off-handedly Moraa added, “What difference does a name such as auntie make? These women took care of everybody as though they were their own children and now we have to take care of all of them.” Moraa treated her extended family relations as part though they were part of her nuclear family. She stated that was how she knew family and that these were the family she grew up with and as such were her nuclear family too.

Moraa's situation was not necessarily unique, since other participants explained that they had polygamous family backgrounds. They expressed ambiguity in drawing boundaries where nuclear family relations ended. The participants also pointed that it was not that these relations were always harmonious. Some participants described how at times these relations caused tensions for them in their attempts to be fair in distribution of remittances or goods and in terms of who to assist to come to the United States. A case in point was Mwangi, in his late forties and had been in United States for the last twenty years. He said:

Let me tell you, it was not always this way, I mean, it was not always easy for me financially. Now I can send only 500 dollars every now and then to my parents. You know, I come from a polygamous family, and you know how our parents were. They had many wives and even more children. They were very lucky [laughs]. Yes, they could marry as many women as they wanted. Nowadays ... [shaking his head and leaves sentence unfinished]. So when I came it was very difficult for me to sent money to my father, my mother, then my step-mother, aunt, uncle, everybody wanted something. You know you can't leave them out there in the cold and when they write or call, they refer to you as "my son we don't have this, we don't have that." So I decided that I would bring one member from each *boma* [homestead].¹⁸ I brought my step-brother, cousins and brothers and then I shifted the responsibility of sending money to them. Then they started bringing their brothers and sisters. My job was done.

While the finding reveals the inconsistency between the definitions of family by the legal system and participants, it also shows the ways that participants found to accommodate their definitions of family. From their descriptions of family, not many participants would be considered under the category of "family reunification" as spelled out in immigration policies. But they believed that they indeed came as family members and according to their characterizations, it was a process of family reunification. The feelings of family obligations and to the extended family members who are not included

¹⁸ The literal translation of the word *boma* is homestead. Its usage here distinguishes an individual wife's house within large polygamous families, mainly referring to each wife and her children.

in the family reunification statute may lead to less usage of this option for coming to United States but this does not stop the immigrants from finding ways to accommodate their extended family members. This finding speaks also to the important role of family in decision making about individual migration decisions.

5.3.3 Flexibility of education system

Many participants came to United States as students. Even though many participants indicated that they had the option to study in other countries, they stated that United States was their choice because of the widespread notion that the education system in United States was more flexible. Prospective students believed that it was possible for students in the United States to simultaneously study and work to support themselves and their families back in Kenya. This flexibility was viewed as an advantage as participants made decisions whether to study in other countries such as India or Russia. Even though the initial costs seemed prohibitive, participants believed that upon arrival it would be possible to survive in the United States. Several participants expressed had similar perceptions. In the words of Wafula, in his mid thirties and living in the United States for the last five years:

Actually I had no plans of coming to the U.S. When I was doing my pre university in Kenya my intention was to finish my college in Kenya and start working and make a living in Kenya. I was not thinking about U.S. But during my first year, a friend of mine whose brother had studied in India started talking to him about going to India for studies. So my friend told me and we began the process of applying to go to study in India. We actually had gone to the embassy of India and applied for colleges in India and gotten admissions to universities in India. However, my friend's brother found out about studying in the U.S., he was influenced by someone who was already here. They told him that U.S. is better than India. So he made arrangements for his college admission. We had admissions to India but when my friend changed his mind I also changed my mind. So I told my friend to check out college admissions for me. ...Initially his

brother was in India. In India he can finish a bachelor's degree in three years compared to four years in Kenya so we thought that was good. In Kenya I was doing a pre university degree and we would take a long time before I finish college. Basically if I went to India then my parents would have had to pay the tuition but, if I came to the U.S. we were told that we could work and study and so my tuition will not be a burden on my parents. That sounded really good given that my parents were already struggling and sending me signals that they cannot afford my education.

Participants reported that the notion that it was possible to study and support family back at home was perpetuated by the earlier immigrants. Students who were in the United States established a trend of sending back money and gifts to family and friends. These activities of earlier students led people to believe that studying in the United States was favorable and these perceptions have persisted. In many instances, the participants narrated how their family back in Kenya helped them with the initial tuition payment and airfare after which they were left to fend for themselves. Participants discussed how people back home expected some financial assistance even though one was still a student. In Kenya, students are not expected to support their families or friends. The following statements from Mutua, who is in his late forties and lived in the United States for fifteen years, reflect these perceptions:

I came to the U.S. mainly because of my uncle who was a student here. He was doing really well. My uncle was doing wonderful things. He was building a house, supporting his family and he was also a student. In actual fact, he was doing so well that I felt I had to come to U.S. I expected to do as well as him. My uncle also told me that U.S. is good because I would be able to help my mother and family. You know, since my father passed away and being the first born son I was supposed to take care of the family. So I needed to find a way of doing that. My uncle had been here for only five years and he had done a lot of development in Kenya and was helping his family ... ohhhh that man had built such a big house in such a short time that everyone in the village went wooh... So I came to U.S. with such dreams and hope to make my family better and still be able to go to school and get a degree.

Other participants made direct comparisons of the United States and other countries.

Nyamweya, in his late fifties and in United States for five years who has a son studying in Russia said that:

I am trying very hard to get my son who is in Russia to come and study here. I am tired of Russia. Every month I have to send him money, for fees, for food, for anything. He is completely dependent on me, everything is on me. If he was here, it is different. Here he can go to school and also work, he can help his mother and brothers back at home. It is very hard for me now because I have to help all of them on my own. That is why I am trying very hard to find a way for him to come to America.

These findings show that the decision to move and where to move is not necessarily a random choice but a calculated one based on an analysis of perceived advantages. These advantages are based largely on the stories and images portrayed by earlier immigrants. The pattern of responses from the participants, even those who had the choice to migrate to other countries, they expressed more favorable attitudes about United States. For those who came in pursuit of education the reasons for their choice of United States was similar, they had come with the hope of pursuing their education aspirations without placing the financial burden on their families. These perceptions about educational opportunities in United States suggest that many of them pursue a parallel objective of financial stability alongside educational pursuits. Or maybe they pursue education in order to achieve financial stability.

5.3.4 Attractiveness of an English-speaking country to Kenyan immigrants

Another reason for choosing the United States over other destinations was related to language. All the participants were fluent in English even before their immigration.

This was confirmed during the interviews when participants were given the choice to conduct interviews in either English or Swahili and only one participant opted to do the interview in Swahili. The rest, ninety-seven percent, were conducted mostly in English, even though many interspersed their discussions with some Swahili.¹⁹ During the interviews, participants stated that they felt that knowing English was an advantage because they did not have to learn a new language. There were three participants who openly stated that they chose United States over Denmark, Norway, Russia and Germany because they felt that learning a new language was too much of burden. They chose to come to the United States because it would be much easier to integrate since they already were familiar with the language and also because they were more Black people.

Mwende a woman in mid thirties and living in the United States for eight years said that she had applied and been accepted to a college in Norway but because of the language barrier, she opted to wait for an admission to a college in the United States. She had to wait for two more years before she got an admission to a college in the United States and she said that she did not mind it at all. The participants pointed out that the ability to communicate in English was integral to survival in the United States. Responses showed that the ability to communicate in English was closely associated with the ease with which one initially settles in United States, establishes interpersonal relations with people from other groups, deals with constant and at times unnecessary censure and evaluation, and the ability to recognize and identify with current events.

Participants understood the importance of knowing and understanding English especially in the process of settling in United States such as, one has to take driving

¹⁹ This is a common practice among Kenyans. It is not uncommon for Kenyans to interject words from Swahili or their local languages in their conversations.

lessons, read signs and ask for directions. For some of the participants who were familiar with driving back in Kenya, they pointed out that since Kenyan driving licenses are not transferable to the United States, a person has to take the driving test in English or Spanish.

Most of the participants praised the Kenyan education system, because it offered instruction in English and Swahili. Furthermore, the system allows learning of different languages which are included as subjects in the school curriculum. Musa who had been in the United States for twelve years and is in his early forties put it this way:

Men, I see how the Spanish people and people from West Africa struggle and I say, "Thank God I know English." If I knew what I know now when I was in school I could have taken all the languages. I took English and Kiswahili [sic] but my school offered French and German too. Now I know that those people who made the school curriculum back in Kenya knew what they were doing, Funny eeh, at least there is something positive about Kenya.

While the participants considered knowing English as an advantage, they also expressed their frustration that they had to learn and adapt to new ways of communicating even though it was still communication in English. As one participant put it, "I found out that I had to re-learn English, 'American English'." Participants added that they had to learn the conversation styles and work hard on their accents in order to be understood by others. The following conversation with forty-two year old Otieno who had been in the United States for thirteen years aptly describes most of the participants' frustrations.

Ohh my God, no... [laughter] It was different, the language, the weather, the mannerisms, how people did things, how they talked, everything was upside down. Let me tell you this, the first time I came here even though I had finished Form Six and knew English, I could not understand what they were saying. It was so funny [laughs loudly] it was funny. I would listen and listen and I could wonder, "are they speaking English or what?" Wait until I talk, they all look at me and then ask me "what?" Thank God, I was working as a security officer and I

didn't have to talk to many people. In fact I liked it that way. I preferred to work in the parking lot where I did not have to come into contact with many people. And you know who was the most difficult to understand? [pause and then answers] African Americans. I tell you they are the worst; it is impossible to hear what they are saying. Even today, and I have been here many years, I still have problems. My God, language was a big thing. Then the mannerisms, here in America, you say something to woman, it is sexual harassment. You look at her, you will go to jail for that. My God! I could not believe that!

The idea that they were unable to communicate and yet they considered themselves to be English speakers was very frustrating. The participants indicated that the frustration declines with years of residence in United States, and some indicated that it was not because they lost their accent but because they don't mind it anymore. Their frustration was also heightened by low wages and other adjustment concerns as expressed by Chumba, age forty-one years in the United States for twenty years at time of study, who said:

It was a shock, my first time here. Things were happening differently and fast. A few days after I had arrived, my roommate brought in a girlfriend and she slept there. That was a shock to me. ... that was my biggest shock. Then I could not hear what they were saying. It took me a long long time coz I think I don't know whether it is being subjective or whatever coz I could hear what a White person could say but I could not hear what an African American was saying, it went something like waung waung [makes sounds while twisting his tongue]. I became frustrated a lot, my first two years I would say something and they would say what, they want me to repeat what I said and it used to be really really [sic] frustrating. When I started working, it became okay for a while but I was working many jobs, maybe three jobs. The money was little, I still make as much but now with one job, at the time it was three or more jobs. That was frustrating. The other thing was that I came with high expectations and so I was expecting much more. Nowadays, I don't mind about the language, sometimes I don't even notice it. I am sure that I didn't change much; after all I can't lose my heavy [ethnic group] accent. Now I just speak and those who are able to understand, they understand; those who don't understand they don't. Hey what can I do! Everyone here has an accent!

Such statements from the participants showed the importance of language and the aspect acculturation, learning how to engage in new contexts. The participants' better command of the English language had to be complemented by other contextual factors. Previous studies have argued that language acquisition is reflective of levels of assimilation (e.g. Gordon, 1964; Steven, 2003). The participants in this study expressed similar sentiments. They stated that they had to live in the United States and familiarize become familiar with the United States perspectives in order for them to have similar expectations.

The role of language in adapting to immigrant life

In Kenya, a country with more than 42 different ethnic groups each with their own language and Swahili as the national language and English as the official language for conducting business. Swahili as a language has played a major unifying role allowing communication across the various different ethnic groups. This role was highlighted by participants when they talked proudly of Kenya's different linguistic groups' ability to communicate with each other using Swahili. They compared this situation to other countries with different linguistic groups but no common language. The participants were not oblivious to the fact that association among Kenyans was also affected by ethnicity.

While Swahili was used to enable communication among Kenyan immigrants from different linguistic groups, people would also use their local languages to exclude other Kenyan immigrants outside their linguistic group. Participants stated that people from same ethnic groups would switch to their local dialect to exclude others from their conversations. Cherono in her fifties explained that Swahili plays a dual role of inclusion and exclusion. She said:

Then when you go somewhere where there are three or more people from one tribe [sic] they start talking in their language. That is rude! How can you start talking in a language that I do not know and I am sitting there too? I can understand that they feel maybe they need to talk in their language so that they can feel closer to their homes and remember old times or sometimes it is the only thing they have that they can call theirs. I can understand that because for me I know that there are some things that come out well when I say them in my mother-tongue, it is better and even funny. I can say funnier stories in my mother-tongue; you know I laugh more when I am talking my mother tongue. In fact, we should have done this interview in my mother-tongue and you will probably enjoy it more ... [demonstrates her point by repeating her earlier comments in mother-tongue causing much laughter] But with me, the thing is that I will not talk my mother-tongue when there are some other people who don't understand it. You see that is the big problem with Kenyans. Speak in English or Kiswahili [sic], in fact we are very lucky, Kenyans and Tanzanians are very lucky. You know, there is this lady at my job, she is from West Africa, she told me that they can only speak English with people from other tribes and if they don't know English then that's it, they can't talk at all. So we are very lucky and we don't even know it.

According to the participants, language is a powerful tool that can be used to include or exclude people into the social circle. It was evident that local languages provided a sense of belonging to the people and could be a sign of loyalty to their origins. Besides providing a sense of heritage and ease of communication, local languages could also be a source of tension. These observations emphasized the social context variables and revealed the diverse processes of adapting to immigrant life.

5.3.5 Immigration policies

General immigration practices

The participants discussed in detail the difficulties of acquiring travel visas and how it influenced their travel decisions, mainly in terms of the choice of destination. In their discussions, participants compared the levels of difficulty of getting travel visas to different countries. They mentioned Britain, United States, Germany, India, Russia,

South Africa, Denmark and Canada. This study did not assess the level of difficulty and therefore it was not possible to determine which countries have the most stringent regulations. It was evident from the interviews that Britain was also a favored destination probably because of its strong historical ties with Kenya and it is an English-speaking country, but strict visa regulations made it harder to travel there. Many participants discussed that they had tried to get travel visas to various countries simultaneously. They described how they kept moving between the various consulates and were ready to travel to any country that would issue them a travel visa. Njeri, in her mid-thirties and in the United States for seven years, narrated her experience and said:

Getting a visa is no easy work, visa! weee! If you think it is easy think again, people try forever, they try, try and try. The day before going for the visa interview you pray, your family prays, your mother, neighbors, everybody yaani is praying for you. I was lucky; it was God's plan, haki, [really]. My visa story is long, I tell you, you will not believe. First, I had applied to go to Britain. Ok, I went there and they asked me for some things. Ok, I went back. As I was preparing and taking the things there, I met with someone with another lady who was also looking for a visa. She told me that she had applied for South Africa and U.S. and was following on all of them. I decided why not also try U.S. So I went to the American embassy and they asked me for some things. Ok they ask you to bring things such as bank statements showing money that you can pay, show you have property in Kenya so you will come back, proof you are not a criminal and then an invitation letter or if you are coming to a school then you have to show the I-20. So I gave the things to both embassies and was timing both sides. Then I got this one first and I left for America.

Of the thirty-eight participants, twenty-six were willing to discuss how many times they had to go to the United States consulate for a visa. Of these, twenty (77%) got their visas the first time. The participants noted a decline in the number of students coming to the United States. After 9/11 there have been stricter immigration regulations, new restrictions on certain visa categories on visitors and increased scrutiny, all of which

participants understood as causing a decline in the number of students from Kenya coming to the United States.

The participants' responses revealed that they took time to understand the inner workings of a country's immigration policies before attempting to travel. Before they embarked on their travel plans they had an understanding of the visa requirements and regulations of various countries. While Russia was considered as a destination, not many participants indicated they had tried to get visas to Russia. During the Cold War, the former Soviet Union was a favored destination for studies by Kenyans. With the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union, its attractiveness as a destination diminished. Participants suggested that Russia in particular had very tough immigration policies and therefore many of them preferred to travel to other destinations in pursuit of their aspirations.

One of the strategies that participants mentioned that they employed as part of their strategy to increase their odds of getting travel visas, was to apply to various country consulates at the same time. Participants learned the strategy from the experience of earlier immigrants. None of the participants mentioned that they bothered to verify the information they received from the earlier immigrants.

Diversity Visa lottery

Through the DV lottery program a total of 50,000 permanent resident visas (Green Card) are made available annually to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. Kenya has been one of the countries eligible for the DV lottery. Two participants (5%) stated that they came to the United States through the DV

lottery program. However, during discussions they cited their reasons for coming to United States as economic. This suggests that the participants had already set their sights to migrate to the United States and used the DV lottery process as a vehicle to meet their already existing search for opportunities in come to the United States.

Even though statistics from the Department of Homeland Security showed that the numbers of Kenyans coming to the United States through the DV lottery program had been increasing over the years, for this group of participants not many had applied for the DV lottery program. The probable explanation would be that since the DV is a lottery, people consider the odds of being selected as very low. Furthermore, there are various approval stages where stringent regulations are enforced and the chances of getting permanent residency even after being selected are quite low. As of 2003 DV lottery program applications can only be submitted electronically. As such this may have locked out large numbers of potential applicants from developing countries, Kenya included. The application process requires that an applicant have access to a computer, internet, digital cameras or scanning equipment and printers. Such advanced technology may not be readily available to the majority of the people in Kenya where about 80% of the urban population and 99.5% of rural population have no access to electricity or electric based services (Rahab, 2005). In addition, the applicant needs to have the technical knowledge to use a computer which is not always the case.

5.4 Immigrants initial settlement experiences

5.4.1 Initial city of residence

Slightly more than half of the participants, twenty-one (55%), indicated that Paterson was their initial city of settlement in the United States. The finding suggests that Paterson is a destination for at least some immigrants from Kenya. The other cities that participants indicated they lived in initially included New Jersey cities of Irvington, Elizabeth and Jersey City, as well as Atlanta, Georgia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Wichita, Kansas. Those who moved from their initial towns of settlement to Paterson said they did so because they knew someone in Paterson; seventeen (45%) had initially settled in another town before coming to Paterson.

Another important factor that came up regarding initial place of residence was availability of transport. Kamau, in his late twenties who has been in the United States for seven years and moved to Paterson after living in Upstate New York his first year in United States, explained that he moved because he was unable to get a driver's license. He moved to Paterson because public transportation was more readily available and many of the facilities and amenities were in close proximity. Living in a more suburban neighborhood in New York was a major problem due to lack of transportation. Sanaipei, a woman in her late thirties in the United States for six years explained, "When you live in such places (with limited or no public transport) you are the only one walking and people drive by and wonder who that is? Here in Paterson, everybody walks, and so you fit right in. You can take a bus to New York; take the train, wherever you want to go." For Sanaipei, Paterson offered convenience in terms of transportation and services. These views from the participants suggest that the choice of the place of settlement depends on

the resources available such as social networks and existing ties and also by the limitations they face in the receiving country.

Relatively speaking, there is a significant number of Kenyans living in Paterson. Even though there was no noticeable ethnic settlement or ethnic enclave in Paterson such as the Latino and Arabs have, participants knew other Kenyan immigrants pretty well. They knew the street names or could describe the locale where other Kenyans lived and had met with them at one or another function. They seemed familiar with of each other and their backgrounds. The majority of the participants indicated that they did not have plans to move out of Paterson soon.

The participants' responses about their first impressions of the United States showed that most of them felt disappointed. Before they came to the United States they had grander images of it. They visualized big clean cities with all amenities. Upon arrival, many stated they could not believe their eyes and felt cheated. The images they had seen on television or in photographs sent by earlier immigrants seemed completely different. One man who had been in the United States for seven years said, "The marketed images of United States do not correspond to the real everyday life of people. I was in total shock." Upon arrival another man asked himself, "Where is America? Where is Michael Jackson? Where is Hollywood and all the beautiful women on TV shows and magazines? That was what I was expecting to see when I came." Another participant expressed that people should tell potential immigrants the truth about United States since when people are aware of the situation they are better able to deal with it. Njeri, a woman in her thirties in United States for seven years at the time said:

The other thing is that when people tell you about U.S. when you are in Kenya, they don't tell you the reality. They make it look as though it is very good and

easy but when you get here things are different. The people talk to show they are doing very well and when you come here you find that they are really struggling. But once you are here you can't get back because maybe back at home they sold the land to get you here and so they expect something in return and you don't want to go back and disappoint them. So you stay and hope that you can manage to help them a little bit to recover some of the expenses and then you get into the cycle whereby you get a little money and send most of it. The rest you pay bills and you have to work more and get some little more money and start all over again. Then life becomes a circle and that's how it is. That is America!!!!

The responses from the participants showed that the initial place of settlement plays a major role in determining what path your life takes in United States. If one arrives in United States and receives support from the people where s/he settles then their chances of being successful are greatly improved. If they fall into "wrong company" as Mwangi explains, then their chances at being successful are greatly reduced. Mwangi believes that since he had lived in United States for twenty years and he is in late forties, he had seen many of these cases. This is what he had to say:

I talk to them all the time, those who have ears will listen. I also talk to them about America [sic] life in general. American life is not easy it is very very tough and you can get lost easily. Some people listen and they see the benefits others don't and they also reap what they sowed. ... Let's say, you come and you started staying with people who go to school, they have two or three jobs, they help their parents home, and do many other things. They have a focus in life; if you arrive you will then follow what they are doing. You know what they say, where the first step or is it the hoof of a cow? Where the first one steps, is where the second one will step. I see some people like the case I was telling you, they came and they joined the wrong company. They get lost. They think America is their home, they start to talk like African Americans, dress like them, go out and party and party until they get caught driving while drinking. They lose their license, they can't go to school, and they can't go to work, tell me what else is left. People at home think their son is in America, and they are waiting for him to come back as a doctor and treat all the sick people in the village and he is on the streets, homeless. Then they get depression, they start fearing to come where other people are, before you know it they are already in too deep. Then they move out into the streets and you can't get them out. I have seen it my eyes!! These two eyes, I have seen these cases. I tell them when they come they have to be aware of where you land.

Mwangi's views were not unique, for many of the participants' definition of success in United States included getting a college education, having a job and helping people back home. Partying and behaving as Americans do was considered as wayward. Signs of success were expressed through maintaining a job or purchasing a house, finishing college and talking about various achievements in Kenya. These perceptions were most visible during get-together functions organized and attended by Kenyans. At one such event at the Eastside Park in Paterson where Kenyans came together for roast beef and beer, the following conversation took place between two men; Juma and Wambua. Juma had returned from a visit to Kenya and was telling a group of people about his achievements back in Kenya. Juma owns a house here in United States, is college educated and has what is considered as a stable professional good job. All these aspects give him authority and people tend to listen and take his opinions more seriously.

Juma: My trip was very good; it was good, very good. I spent much of the time finishing up a project I started at Koma Rock, near Nairobi. I intend to set up some residential houses there and I have made plans to have water supplied to these houses, there will be piped water in Koma Rock. Everyone was very happy, you should have seen the whole village, and I treated as if I was the chief. People lining up to talk to me, thanking me for this for that and then asking for more. ... Even though, they are poor I was glad that I was able to help.

Wambua: That's good, man, that is really good. We need to talk more. I have to follow in your footsteps but I have to buy a house here first then start making plans for my retirement in Kenya.

From these discussions it was evident that success also included maintaining ties with Kenya and having a network. Juma needed the audience at the park to tell of his success and for him to validate his ties to Kenya.

5.4.2 Initial immigration experiences

Since the participants admitted that they had idealistic views of life in the United States, they explained how they had come to terms with reality during the first few days or months after arrival. All the participants were similar in that they found the change to life in United States very stressful. Regardless of whether they had support from established networks or not, they all expressed the notion that the adjustment process was a personal journey. Their romanticized views about United States were shattered through various experiences including bill payments, soured relations with initial hosts, high costs of tuition, low paying jobs and time constraints.

For the majority of participants, the major shock was the amount of money needed to pay for bills such as phone, cable television, rent and daily living expenses. Even though they would get jobs and be paid, they still needed more money. High tuition costs and the cost of living were mentioned severally. Forty year old Musembi, in United States for fifteen years explained his situation:

My first job was at a hotel and the pay was \$4.00 an hour. Then my first impressions of U.S. started to change. Bills started to accumulate, tuition fees, accommodation [rent] and now the money was no longer enough. So I had to look for a second job at a Burger King and now it became tight schedules trying to juggle work and school. Still the money was not enough and the bills especially tuition needed to be paid. And I took on a third job. Now I was in school fulltime student and had 3 jobs, one job was full time and the other two were part time jobs. This was really tough and stressful. [sighs] At that point I felt I wanted to return home, but I felt that I could go on. Now the good thing was that the situation lasted for six months. Now I can sit here with you and talk about it and even make a joke however at the same it seemed that the situation was forever. It was like a lifetime. During the sixth or seventh month of this crazy time, I got my current job. It was at a gas station, and I am not talking about the pay because the pay was not much. It was the excellent benefits that the job gave me. The benefit package included tuition remission and that was the best thing. I didn't care so much about the pay, that is, the take-home pay.

As part of the settling process, participants had to adjust to the currency conversions. Participants pointed out that in the beginning whenever they received or paid money, they had a tendency to convert the figures to Kenyan currency. This became very frustrating for them since their wages in Kenyan currency seemed high and with such money in Kenya they would have quite high standards of living. But after paying their bills, they found themselves with little money left. Therefore, they were unable to live as they had hoped if they had same amount of money in Kenya. Their frustration was coupled with the fact that since majority of participants had come in search of education, they had dreams about the educational achievements. Upon finding that their education process in United States was not going to be as smooth as they had expected, they experienced intense disappointment. For a man such as Kamau, in his late twenties and in United States for seven years at the time of study, his dissatisfaction was almost unbearable at the time, even though now he can laugh when he talks about it. He said:

[Laughing loudly] The first few days were similar to the Kenyan poem that says on how to welcome a visitor, "*Mgeni siku ya kwanza mgeni siku ya pili mpe jembe*" [laughs] You know the poem? "*Mgeni siku ya kwanza mkaribishe na wali na kuku, mgeni siku ya saba mpe jembe*"²⁰ [laughter]. The first month was good. And after about one week I registered for school. I also got a job at a gas station for \$4.97 an hour. [Shaking his head] it was very very tough to go to work and school. But once I got paid and I had the dollars in my hands I felt very good, real good. I was very excited and thought I could buy whatever I wanted. At the time things looked cheap and affordable to me. It seemed that I was making much money because I was converting the money to Kenya shillings and that made it look as if it was a lot of money. I even thought that I can buy a brand new car because of all the ads I was seeing on T.V. I felt that I could buy a Mercedes since the ads on T.V said that you need to pay only \$250 a month and I was making that kind of money. But, first and foremost I had to pay my tuition and since I was in a private college it was very expensive. Being also that I wanted to pursue architecture I was looking at very expensive colleges. [Takes on a more somber

²⁰ This is a common Swahili poem that narrates the steps to welcoming guests to your house. On the first day you serve them delicacies like chicken and rice, the second day you serve them something less conspicuous and so on until by the end of the week, you give them the hoe so that they can go and dig in the farm.

tone] That was my dream, to do architecture. It was something I had really enjoyed and I was very good at it. Other people advised me that in the beginning I should go ahead and accept what was available at the college. Afterwards I can change to architecture when I am more settled and have some more money. I was very disappointed and that's where my dreams started being shattered. Being a foreign student I could not get financial aid, no scholarships, no assistance from the school since when you apply you have already stated that you are able to meet the financial obligations. So what I can say is that my initial days in U.S. were good but negotiating life here in States was difficult. I was in college and working two jobs since I had taken up a second job because of the high bills, yet I was still not able to pay my tuition. My life began going down and continued going down and down. Then the relationship with my uncle soured and that was a very bad experience.

Such difficulties with initial settlement were not limited to the young or single immigrants. Couples married or not also discussed their struggles to adjust to life in the United States. For those with young children, they mentioned the cost of day care or baby sitting as prohibitive and caused them financial stress. Over and above the difficulties of paying bills and working more than one job, the participants had to adjust to unfamiliar weather conditions especially the winter season.

Given that the participants mentioned all these difficulties they faced in the United States and admitted that they found life very stressful, I asked them why they did not turn around and return to Kenya. Some said that they felt that it was too late to turn back since they had already resigned from their employment in Kenya. Others felt that going back without money or education would be seen as a sign of failure, especially among the people they left behind who had placed a lot of faith in them. While for others, even though life seemed stressful here in United States, they felt that they were still better off here than in Kenya. And there were still other participants who claimed that it was not they had failed to return, they had postponed their return dates. At the same time, a majority of the participants felt that if others had made it, so would they. They indicated

that they shared their experiences with older immigrants who assured them that things would get better. Such discussions gave them hope that as they learned the ropes and adapted. Forty-three year old, Ochieng explains the situation laughing. When asked why he did not turn around and go back to Kenya, he answered saying:

That is the funny part [laughs] and that is what is interesting about States. *Yaani* [meaning] the life struggles do not change but somehow you always manage. *You know what I am saying* [emphasis in original]. I used to work two jobs; I still work two jobs even though now I get paid more. But what is interesting is that I think I used to have more money to spend when I was making less, the more money I make the more my needs. Before I used to try and make money to send home, but now the money I make I pay bills, go to baby showers, pre weddings, *harambees*²¹ and such, men. You know Kenyans are always asking for money. Regardless of where they are *wanataka pesa* [want money]. Anyway now I am more comfortable here in United States and I have gotten used to the life here and maybe now the problem will be if I go to Kenya, I might feel more stressed back in Kenya than here anymore [laughs]. But let's just say the stresses maybe different, Kenya has its own stresses. Is there anything like that? There is stress that you can handle, which is the stress here in States, some other stress you can't handle for example stress in Kenya. I would rather deal with stress here than in Kenya.

For other participants, it was not that their situations changed greatly; instead they felt that they had learned the way of life in the United States and after the initial shock had worn off they found themselves more comfortable and confident. As such their perspectives of the life in United States had changed and this was achieved through living in the United States for longer period of time. They indicated that what had seemed unusual now seemed routine and had lost the shock ability it had initially. Their perspectives changed the longer they stayed in United States and they began to identify with American lifestyles. They also learned when to express or magnify their Kenyan

²¹ *Harambee* is an ideological strategy introduced by Mzee Jomo Kenyatta at the time of independence aimed at mobilizing and pooling resources to collectively solve problems especially eradicating poverty, illiteracy and disease. The *harambee* spirit empowered people to develop partnerships, sense of community and encourage communities to deal with their own problems instead of relying on external assistance.

aspects and when to express more assimilated characteristics. Mutuku in his early fifties and in the United States for twenty years said:

The trick to American life is to know what to say and where to say it. Americans are people of perception; they are very judgmental and jump to conclusions. So when you are around them you are careful and say the things they say, “oh, how was your weekend? How’s your dog? You watched football?” and then you are good. Then when you get together with Kenyans, you can start a debate about everything and argue loudly and express all your views even absurd ones and make jokes, even crude jokes. The problem is not us, the problem is Americans. They can’t accept us. They have ideas about how they expect us to behave and if you don’t abide by them then your life will be very difficult here. They think since you are from Africa, which is poor, when you talk you should talk about poverty. Or because you are Black you should talk like an African American - loudly and in broken English. So to survive you learn to keep your conversation formal and about the things they want to hear. It’s that simple, be American with Americans and be Kenyan with Kenyans.

While not everyone agrees with Mutuku’s secret that you can straddle both ends, their actions tend to suggest that they subscribe to the idea. Ali, age twenty-eight and in United States for seven years, feels that you have to make a choice; either you go back and be Kenyan in Kenya or stay here and be Americanized. Interestingly, Ali rarely socializes with non-Kenyans, suggesting that while he holds these perceptions, they do not translate into practice. This is what he said,:

[Laughter] Once you learn the code, things are good. Men, when you relax things get fine. The thing is that, once you find out that you can actually stay Kenyan and start to learn American things, mannerisms, eat pizza, enjoy spaghetti, start putting “yo” into your sentences and learn how to complain about everything, you’re good. You have to eat, talk, act and live like you are in America to enjoy it. If you try to live Kenya in America forget it... you have to change with times. You have two options: go back or stay and be Americanized. It’s that simple. After that your life is good. The stress comes when you start to fight and want to retain Kenyaness [sic] and still live in States.

Ali’s statements reveal the ambivalent feelings that he has regarding living in United States. While he expressed desire to be seen as part of America, he still finds

himself compelled to spend time mostly with other Kenyan immigrants from whom he may get support and assistance. These statements could be indicative of the responses adopted to deal with the frustrations of acculturation. These findings showed that the participants' experiences were not binary opposites with extremes of either full host-country assimilation or home-country disconnection. Rather, they changed and oscillated one way or the other depending on the context.

While the participants did not openly state that staying in America longer and changing some of their cultural behaviors and thinking allowed them to appreciate their environment better, they discussed how their lives became more bearable as they got better jobs and higher incomes. Others explained that the initial challenges served to increase their resolve to succeed in their endeavors and propelled them to greater heights. Atieno in her mid-thirties and in the United States for eight years had very strong feelings about this when she said:

Now when I look back that time was difficult but it really really helped me a lot. It made me, it made me tough, it made me who I am. That is America, America toughens people. It makes people to be survivors. I survived that time, I can survive anything else. Now I look back at that as positive because it opened my eyes and made me see America not as a paradise as I thought but as a difficult world and I learned that I have to do what I have to do. I was toughened and I became a survivor, not the innocent small girl from Kenya.

This process of blending in was aptly summarized by one participant as 'addiction'. After twenty years in United States and in his late forties, Mwangi argued that he had finally figured out why people stayed in the United States and felt comfortable to the point that they found it difficult to return to Kenya. He said that:

I did not go back home, more because of legal status so I decided to stay. I do not regret because I think what happened was to my advantage. And to be very honest with you, American life is addictive. Ukishazoea basi! [Once you get used to it

that's it!]. You talk about addiction, American life becomes addictive after a while even with its problems, and we say it is not a bad life because we are addicted. You are addicted to running water, hot water, flushing toilets, working telephones, paved roads, as long as you can work a little hard and make some little money, and then you can have something.

Mwangi's comments mention specifically the material benefits derived from being in the United States. Mwangi's comments are similar to the notions that set in motion the desire to move – search for better quality of life. Therefore, it was clear that regardless of how bad life seemed to the participants initially, they always expected it to get better. The image of United States as a solution to all their problems prevailed. This finding suggests that it is very difficult to break the stereotypical image of United States even after the realization that the situation is very different.

5.4.3 Initial social support

Participants talked about the support that they received initially from the primary contacts they had in the United States. Of the total thirty-eight participants, fifteen (39%) discussed how their initial primary contacts gave them all the support they expected. Fourteen (37%) felt that they had received *some* support but they expected more than what they received. There were nine (about one-in-four) felt that they had not received any support from their primary contacts.

For those participants who felt that they had received all or some of the support they expected, they discussed the benefits of such support. Many admitted that they benefited from these relative and friend connections in several ways including receiving and picking them up from the airport on arrival and providing them with a place to stay. The participants stated that their primary contact also introduced them to other people

and showed them around. They talked about how important the expanded social networks were for purposes of securing employment, knowing their way around, getting important paperwork together and also providing a sense of familiarity. Kipkirui, in his late twenties in the United States for seven years at the time of study was very clear about the role of these social networks when he explained that:

When I arrived I was met by my friend, the one who got me the college admission. I came and because he did not have enough space in his room he asked one of his friends to accommodate me. Lucky for me where I was staying, there were three guys and one of them decided to move out and so I took his spot in the house. The guys that my friend introduced me to were very very good and we became good friends ever since. At the same time, my friend was looking for an apartment so that we can move in the two of us because we knew each other long. ... Actually, for about two or two and a half months I did not have a job. It was my friend who bought clothes for me, did food shopping and basically everything that I needed. Basically, I had everything I needed. My friend welcomed me very well. He assisted me to look for a job, told me where to look, what to say, the language to use so I knew what the best things to say or do. He actually explained about how you can live in America, how I can make ends meet in America. That is why I always thank him; in fact a few weeks ago I traveled all the way to Georgia for his baby shower. I don't do that for everyone, so you know he is different. I hold him in a different light, coz he was so good to me.

The participants pointed out that even though there are jobs advertised everywhere, acquiring a job through family and friends networks was considered more reliable. This was because the contacts will provide the new immigrant with information on what is required of the job and the working conditions. Therefore, one does not have to go through as many trial-and-error methods. The participants also said that friends and family provided advice on college selection thus providing one with insight on competitive courses to take and increased chances of completion. The importance of existing social networks was underscored by Musa, in his mid-forties and lived in the United States for twelve years, he said:

I tell everyone who comes here, this is what you need to do, because I know if you don't have people to tell you, you waste yourself here in U.S. I give them free advice; free advice and you know here people pay for information. The people who are coming now are very lucky because they find us. Those who came earlier did not have people to tell them a lot. Now as soon as new immigrants come in they are given directions and how to do things, they don't have to make the mistakes we made. When we came we did not have such support.

The participants discussed how they had established contacts with people in United States even before they made the decision to come to United States. They discussed how they had met with earlier immigrants on their return trips to Kenya. The earlier immigrants would then assist them to move to United States. Much of the assistance mentioned was in terms of information and acquisition of visas. As Mwende's statements revealed, immigrants to-be expected that immigrants in the United States help potential newcomers. She said:

Most of my friends back in Kenya want to stay in touch with me. Even before I travelled to the United States they reminded me not to forget them. They told me that when I get to America I should look for ways that I can help them so that they can also come. Since they are my friends I feel that I have to find out how I can help them. They want to know about America and how they can come here. They want the news about America and also opportunities to get to America.

So there was constant interaction between the potential immigrants and those in the United States. The conversations included available opportunities and eventually some potential immigrants get the chance to migrate. For those participants who reported receiving no support, they related stories of their disappointment. Some of them expressed extreme disappointment at how they had been treated by their hosts and subjected to gross exploitation. As stated by twenty-nine year old, Fauzia, in the United States for nine years.

I learned a lot, but now I know that many Kenyans exploit newcomers. There is a lot of exploitation, they use your money that you have, they ask for your money and use it for their own purposes and then when you ask them or find out and confront them they throw you out because they know you have nowhere to go and you don't know about America. That is very sad but that is what Kenyans who came here before others do. It is very sad but it happens. I tell new people to be aware of fellow Kenyans; just coz you come from the same place doesn't mean they will not exploit you, the more reason they might exploit you. Sometimes strangers can even help you more. Kenyans always want something in return.

These findings reveal that the relationship between earlier and more recent immigrants is not always based on kindness and generosity or that the earlier immigrants will provide for the new immigrants selflessly. Thirty-eight year old Wanjiku, in the United States for eleven years found herself in a situation when the fellow Christian her mother had entrusted her to was unable to provide her and expected her to pay bills right from the beginning.

When I arrived it was not what I had expected, it was completely different. The living conditions were not good. The man who I had come to stay with said he has no money, he complained all the time, and he was not very welcoming at all. The man asked me for money to pay for some of the bills and I was left with no money. Now I had no money, knew nobody, no work and no nothing. The little money that my mother had given me from Kenya was used up in a few days. We were two girls who had come at almost the same time to stay with the man and the other girl was more challenging, she questioned the man. Me I didn't ask him any questions I listened because I was naïve and did not know any better. Because the other girl kept on questioning the man on many things he started getting annoyed and our relationship with him became very bad. One day in the middle of winter he threw us out in the cold. I had nowhere to go and nobody to turn to. I wanted to cry and I prayed that my mother would know how much I was suffering here in America. I could not call her because I did not have money. The man had helped me to get a small job cleaning someone's home but the money I got paid, he would tell me that we have to pay for food, house and bills and so all the money would be used up. So now I had no money at all. Then there was the problem of the weather, the change in weather, I had never seen winter and this was so bad for me. Then now I had nowhere to go and no money. *Uuuuu* [sound of desperation] I learned the hard way, really hard way. People can be very bad even if they are Christians. But God repays them.

Some of the participants discussed how their hosts expected to be repaid for the assistance they have provided after the participants had settled. The repayments were not necessarily in the form of money but could also be requests for rides without the option of saying no. Other times it would be demands to participate in the activities organized by the host without the option to decline. Or it could take the form of requests for public acknowledgement of the assistance they received in coming to the United States. Twenty-nine year old Kamau ran into problems with his uncle who had invited him when his uncle constantly reminded him of what a huge favor he had done for him. His uncle told each and everyone about how poor his family back in Kenya was and were it not for him, Kamau would not have a future. Kamau explained that he even told his uncle that he truly appreciated his kind gestures and requested him not to tell everyone the story because he did not feel good about it. It was such conversations that created tensions between them such that Kamau had to move out.

Even though it may not be possible to generalize based on this sample, it is possible to discuss a range of experiences. The participants discussed experiences including patterns of exploitation reflecting instances where newly arrived immigrants are taken advantage of before they establish themselves.

5.4.4 Factors that determine successful settlement in United States

The participants acknowledged that an immigrant's success in the United States depends on the support they get in the initial stages of settling and their own initiative or desire to succeed. According to the participants, immigrants who had a more realistic and practical views of the United States were more likely to succeed upon arrival. Some of

the participants alluded to the fact that they would be much better off today if someone had explained to them realistically what it takes to succeed in the United States. From the discussions, participants felt that there are a number of things that newly arrived need to know. First, an explanation that while one makes more money in the United States, the cost of living is also much higher. Secondly, all the money one makes is “earned” money; there are no handouts and one must strive to work very hard to make a living. Some of the participants also felt that it was important for new immigrants to know that other Kenyans can and will exploit them, and that education will open up more opportunities.

The participants discussed the factors that are important for an immigrant to be successful. In general, they outlined three factors: a) getting college education, b) attaining legal status, that is, residency, and c) maintaining supportive networks. The following discussion with Kariuki who has been in United States for fifteen years and prides himself in assisting new immigrants make better choices fittingly explains these factors needed for success.

Kariuki: Yeah, yes I now know America much better.

Researcher: How?

Kariuki: This is what I am saying, if when I came someone had told me that all the stories I hear about U.S. while I am in Kenya are fiction, I would have been better off, well not better off as such, you know what I am saying, that I would have been more prepared [brief pause] more psychologically prepared. Nowadays when I talk to guys who just arrived, I advise them to go to school regardless of whether you have *chums* [slang for money] or not. When you get your first *chums* you go to school, you will never get enough, so you may as well pay for school. You must go to school otherwise you will end up in dead-end jobs and you will be working until you drop dead, you will die working. Let me tell, the *mzungu* [white person] has no problem overworking you and underpaying you, its business. Without education you will not make it. Number two, I tell them, they have to ‘chase status’²² once you have education and status nobody will take advantage of you. All this I tell them after I have told them to forget that they will ever see Michael Jackson or wear those clothes that they see in magazines. In fact I used to ‘thread’ [slang used in Kenya to refer to well dressed or outstanding attire] more

²² Chasing status refers to doing everything to ensure that one gets residency and eventually citizenship.

when I was in Kenya doing *mitumba* business than when I am here in the States, can you imagine that?

Upon arrival many of the participants initially lived with relatives or friends they had prior contact with. These contacts provided a support network. The participants felt that the type of people you came into contact with played a major role in shaping your experiences in United States. If one spent more time with people who were more focused on making their lives more successful, then they were impelled to follow suit. If one was in bad company then chances of them being successful were greatly reduced. This was also considered a key factor for success in United States.

In general, the main reasons for moving from Kenya were in search of better economic opportunities and education. The participants spoke at length about the deteriorating economic conditions in Kenya as a major push factor and their desire to better their lives and those of their families as a push factor. They chose United States because they existing contacts, understood the language and the popularized representations of America in popular media culture created a desirable image. The participants pointed to three factors they considered as important for a successful immigration experience, including: 1) having legal status to avoid dead-end jobs which offer no job growth 2) going to college/education to get the jobs that will allow them to make more money 3) maintaining ties with people from Kenya, having a strong social support network. It is important to note that their definition of success included maintaining ties to assist the people they left behind in Kenya.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF TIES

This chapter focuses on the findings about the ties that first generation immigrants from Kenya maintain. The first part of the chapter discusses the nature and characteristics of ties that participants reported they maintained with the people they left behind in Kenya. This is followed by details on the participants' responses as to the reasons why they maintained the ties. The second part of the chapter focuses on the benefits and disadvantages of maintaining ties with Kenya. During the interviews, participants discussed in detail their ties with fellow Kenyan immigrants and the third section reviews their responses. The chapter concludes by highlighting how ties with Kenya and other immigrants affect first generation immigrants' relocation experience in the United States. Overall, participants reported maintaining ties at both the individual and community level, person-to-person, person-to-community and community-to-community. Community-to-community ties were the least frequent. Ties generally took the form of communication, exchange of material goods such as money and other consumer goods, trade or investment and transfer of intangible resources such as information, knowledge, values and ideas and social support.

6.1 Characteristics of Ties

The ties that participants maintained were indicative of the strong longing they had for their home country and the people they left behind. As one participant amply noted, the ties were "trans-Atlantic" ties, as such they are the ties that connect the participants. The connection was evident in the words that participants used to describe

their feelings about ties to Kenya. They used words and phrases such as, “I cannot forget home,” “I am in constant touch because those are my people, my family, that’s what I have known for the most part of my life,” “I have to talk with people back home,” “They made me who I am, I can’t forget them.” Their responses were imbued with a sense of belonging. Some of the participants expressed their surprise that I would be asking the question “why they maintain ties with Kenya” because they deemed that the response should be pretty obvious. Their expressions regarding why they maintain ties were suggestive of the role they played as social and cultural bridges between the people they left back in Kenya and those who currently reside in the United States. This was made clear by forty-two year old Otieno, who has been in the United States for thirteen years when he explained to me that:

It’s not about whether you are there [Kenya] physically or not, what matters is what you have done for yourself, family, neighbors, if you helped your former primary schools or secondary schools, you helped your community. Those are the issues, if you do nothing then you are nothing, you do something then you are something.

Such responses emphasize the point that transnational ties allow people to be in more than one place. According to Otieno, having ties with Kenya enabled him to remain visible in his home community in Kenya even though he does not live there on a day-to-day basis. During the interviews participants discussed this issue in various ways about their lives “over there” while still “here.” Even though the immigrants are geographically separated, they remain culturally, socially, politically and economically integrated with their family and friends in Kenya. Another common theme expressed by participants was that ties are a “two-way street” with both groups needing and getting something from

each other. It seemed important for participants to express that both sides gained from these exchanges.

In reviewing the participants' responses, I was able to group the ties that participants discussed into mainly the following forms; a) communication ties, b) remittances or material exchanges, c) home visits and d) cultural practices.

6.1.1 Phone Communication ties

Communication ties included telephone calls, internet communication especially email, instant messaging and online chatting, letters and post cards sent through airmail. The most popular way of maintaining ties with Kenya was telephone communication. Eighty-two percent of the people stated that they called Kenya using the phone on a regular basis. "Regular" referred to calling Kenya at least once a week. The remaining eighteen percent said they called Kenya "sometimes," which referred to calling Kenya at least once every month. None of the people said they "never" or "rarely" used the phone to contact Kenya. Many participants indicated that they used phone cards to make calls and there were some people who indicated that they call at least more than three times a week.

The popularity of phone cards was visible in Paterson, through the ads on several convenience stores marketing long-distance calling cards, especially at discounted rates. Participants were very much aware of the popular calling cards especially the ones with cheaper rates. The popularity of phone cards was also visible through the numerous ads for long distance calling cards in a local Kenyan newspaper, *Kenyan Empowerment*

Newspaper. Even while participants admitted that making phone calls to Kenya was very expensive, they still considered it the most convenient of all modes of communication.

To avoid the high charges, participants relied on text messages. Interestingly, the participants revealed that phone communication was not always initiated by the immigrants in the United States. Participants reported that in the recent past, the trends have shown that people in Kenya sometimes initiate the phone conversations. In most cases, participants reported that the people in Kenya would send text messages using “Short Message Service” (SMS) to signal the immigrants to contact them. As thirty-eight year old Wanjiku who has been in the United States for eleven years explained, this influx in phone communication is related to the upsurge in cell phone usage in Kenya. She said:

I can call my mother directly at her rural home upcountry, not necessarily only when she is in Nairobi or another big town! Before she got a cell phone, I had to call somebody else and ask them to pass on a message to her and most of the time she would not get the message or if she got it she would get late or even the wrong message. Now when she needs something all she has to do is ‘flash’ and then call her back and we can talk.

Since Kenya liberalized the phone industry, there has been an upsurge in companies that offer cell phone services. Around the time of this study, Kenya’s cell phone subscribers had reached about eight million at the end of 2006, up from 6.5 million reported mid-year 2006 (Reuters, January 5, 2007). Cell phones have proved to be a great alternative to land lines, which were very expensive and took a long time to install. The cell phones have allowed participants to maintain more consistent and meaningful ties. The instantaneous communication using cell phones has also made it possible for the people in Kenya to be more involved in the everyday activities of those currently residing in the United States. News about the birth of a baby, death or illness or other issues can

now be shared as soon as the event occurs. Cell phones have also made it possible to communicate about commonplace issues such as talking about one's work or simply chatting about non-specific issues. The upsurge of cell phones in Kenya has created a great opportunity for the people in Kenya to be part of the everyday lives of those who currently reside in United States.

6.1.2 Internet communication

There were various ways in which people maintained ties using the internet including a) email communication, b) reading newspapers and Kenyan news on internet, c) blogging or chatting, and d) buying Kenyan products online for their own use or for people back in Kenya. Email was the most popular of internet communication with twenty-nine percent stating they used "regularly" and an additional thirty-four percent said they used it "sometimes." Only one participant said they never used email. Those who use email indicated that they email back and forth several times a week and they find it cheaper than making phone calls. Email was also used to supplement phone calls. Mwende who is in her mid-thirties and has lived in United States for eight years explained and said:

I call home almost twice a week and email is every now and then. When I want to explain something very much, I go to the email because explaining on the phone can be expensive. Sometimes I use the phone for long but I try very much to use little time on the phone because even with the phone cards it is very very [sic] expensive to talk for long.

Participants explained that email had disadvantages. It does not provide a voice and so the human feeling is missing and b) it is only available where there is electricity and internet service that is, mostly in the main urban centers in Kenya. Even though the

participants pointed out that email was not the most expressive of media, it still allowed them to remain in constant contact with people in Kenya.

Blogging or online chatting was not very popular. Seventy-four percent of the people said they had “never” used it and only thirteen percent said they used it “regularly.” Blogging and chatting was most popular among younger male participants compared to older and female participants. The younger male participants also seemed to be more technologically savvy and were willing to explore other options offered on the internet. The chat rooms and blogging boards mainly deal with Kenyan issues and information on where Kenyan events are taking place.

Newspaper reading was another way that participants stayed in touch with Kenya and kept abreast with events in Kenya. Twenty-two (68%) participants stated that they “sometimes”²³ and “regularly” read Kenyan news online. Eight participants (21%) said that they “never” read Kenya news. From the responses it was evident that the two popular Kenyan daily newspaper read were *The Daily Nation* and the *East African Standard*. Probably because these are printed and distributed by the two largest media houses and were among the first Kenyan newspapers to carry an online version. Some of the participants stated that they focused on the political sections while others stated that they focused on the sports section. Interestingly, some participants reported that they read Kenyan newspapers for political news, but when asked directly about their involvement in Kenyan politics, they responded that they were not involved in politics. Their reported interest in political events in Kenya and statements about not having political ties could be indicative of participants’ forms of distinguishing between active and passive political

²³ “Always” referred to reading the news daily, “regularly” referred to reading the news at least three times a week, “sometimes” referred to reading the news at least every week.

involvement. At the same time, none of them mentioned reading the Kenyan newspaper that circulates in the United States, *Kenyan Empowerment Newspaper*, a weekly newspaper published by KIM media group that operates from Atlanta, Georgia.

6.1.3 Regular mail

Writing letters was not very popular and those who used it indicated that it was for very specific purposes. For example, regular mail was used when sending bulky reading materials e.g., college applications or college information to and from Kenya. Also for those who have friends or family in remote areas where there are no phones and computers, letter writing is still the best means of communication. Some participants discussed that they used creative ways to try to speed up the delivery of letters to their folks in remote areas. Kyalo, a 43-year old man who has been in the United States for twenty years explained the changes with email:

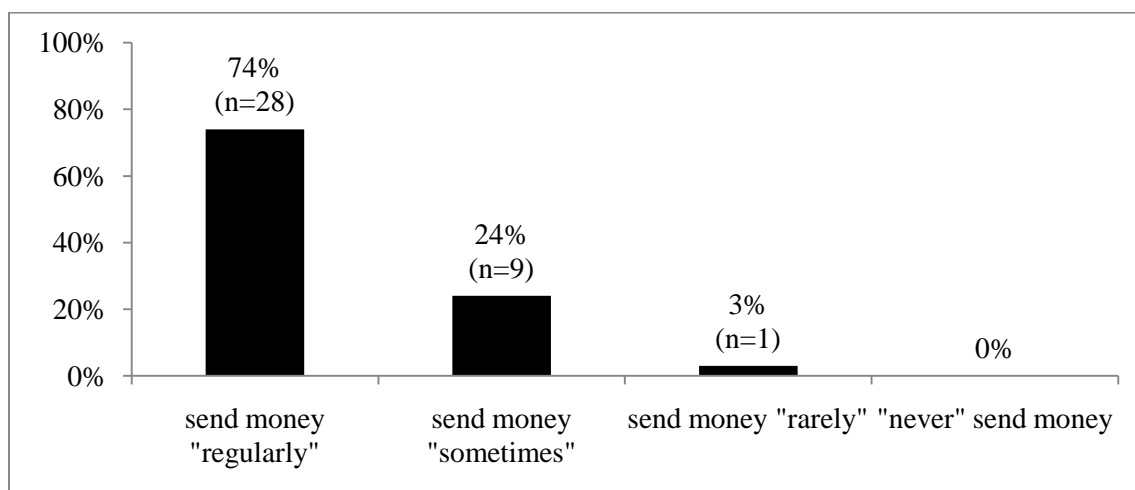
You know email is a new thing. When we came here we used to write letters and it would take a month for the letter to get there and then another month for their reply to arrive back. Imagine! two months or more for one letter! So, we gave up on writing letters. If you had a girlfriend back in Kenya and you left her there, your chances of maintaining the relationship were minimal. That's what happened to many of us, we had girlfriends back there and because of lack of communication things didn't work out. So, this internet thing is a really good thing. For me, I write to my cousin who is in Nairobi and I put my parents' letters on his email, so, when he gets it he will print it out and take it home [countryside] to them when he visits. He goes home every weekend so I get a reply in short time. That is why I am saying the person who invented the internet did the whole world a big favor.

These are some of the creative ways that show how people are able to mix the local and the global to achieve what works best for them under different circumstances.

6.1.4 Material exchanges and Remittances

Nearly all the participants indicated that they maintained ties with people in Kenya through sending money or remittances home on a regular basis. The graph below shows the frequency with which participants sent money. For purposes of the study, sending money “regularly” referred to sending money at least once every month regardless of the amount. Sending money “sometimes” referred to the act of sending money at least every other month or at least a total of six times in a year. When participants stated that they “rarely” it meant that sending money less than six times in one year. There was no one who stated that they “never” send money back to Kenya.

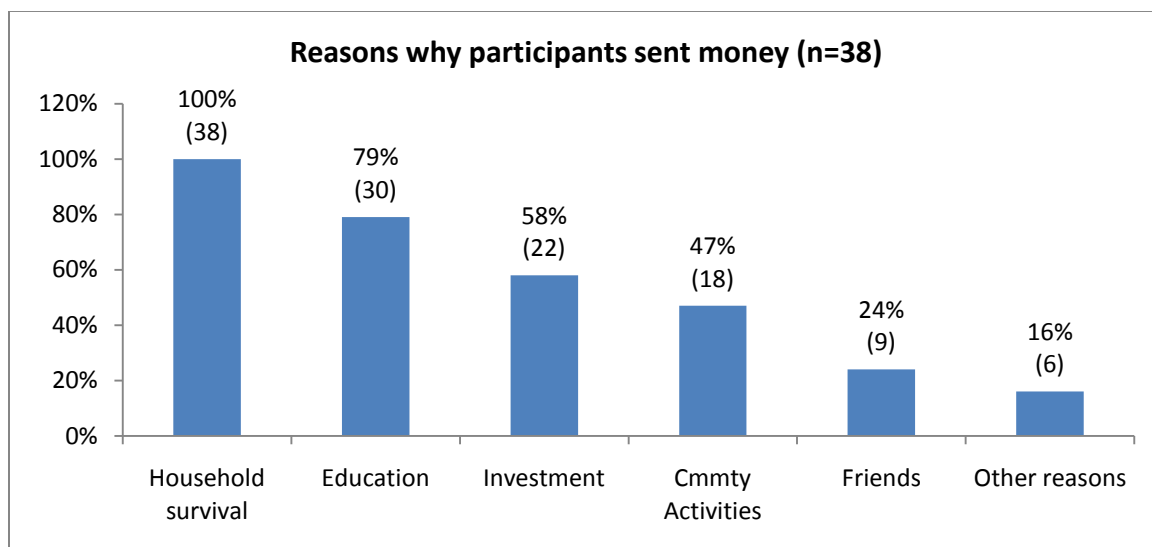
Graph 6.1 Frequency of sending money to Kenya



Responses showed that money was sent mainly for household financial support and education. Money for supporting households included the money sent so that people in Kenya can purchase food, clothes, pay hospital bills and in general meet their daily living expenses. When participants outlined the specific activities that they supported their responses suggested that this was money sent to ensure the household survival. The

responses included in this part of the analysis do not include money that was sent to buy a house or money sent to start a business; those responses were included in the investment section of the analysis. Graph 6.2 shows the distribution of participants' responses.

Graph 6.2: Distribution of the reasons that participants sent money to Kenya



The responses showed that there was consensus that one of the main reasons for sending money back to Kenya was to pay for household survival followed by money for educational purposes.

It was not possible to establish precisely the amount of money that participants sent to Kenya. Many of the participants explained that they sent money generally on an “as-needed” basis and therefore the amount varied depending on the need or the problem that the people in Kenya had at that particular time. The participants explained that the amounts and frequency of remittances peaked in the months of January, April and December. The finding that the first two months have high frequency of remittances is not surprising to people familiar with the Kenyan education system. The two months correspond to opening dates for schools in Kenya. Since schools in Kenya follow a three-

term school year; the months of January, April and August mark the beginning of the first, second and third terms respectively. At the same time many school administrators have regulations that at least three quarters of the tuition be paid within the first two terms of the school year. As such, most participants would be sending money for educational purposes during the start of the school terms.

The participants explained that they sent higher amounts of money in December so that their family and friends can celebrate Christmas and New Year holidays. Many participants explained that they bought gifts for their family, friends and community during Christmas. The participants also indicated that they sent money to their family and friends who reside in urban areas in Kenya to travel back to the rural homes for the Christmas and New Year festivities. Similar reasons were also mentioned for the month of April during the Easter holidays.²⁴ Participants did not mention the month of August as one of the months with peak amount and frequency of sending money yet it is the start of the third and last term of the school year. One possible explanation might be that participants make arrangements to pay the tuition and fees in two installments.

The most common method of sending money was through Western Union, even though participants mentioned that they do sometimes use other money transferring agencies such as Moneygram, PostaPay and Poapay.²⁵ PostaPay and Poapay are relatively newer and smaller money sending agencies compared to the more established Western Union and Moneygram. Participants also indicated that besides using the

²⁴ In Kenya, Easter is marked by two public holidays on Good Friday and Easter Monday; thus Easter provides an extended weekend. In the month of December, Christmas and the day after Christmas (Boxing Day) are public holidays.

²⁵ PostaPay is a money transfer service provided by the Postal Corporation of Kenya; Poapay is also a money transfer service that is based in Alabama but mostly operated online and provides money transfer services specifically to Kenya.

established formal channels of sending money, they engaged in sending money informally. The most common informal means of sending money used by participants was relying on friends or someone they knew who was traveling to Kenya. There was no mention of any other kinds of informal channels of sending money to Kenya. Participants expressed their preference for formal channels such as Western Union and Moneygram, which they deemed to be more secure and reliable. Their only complaint was the high fees that the established money transfer agencies charged. They expressed that they were not very confident about the newer and less well known agencies or the informal methods of using people with whom they are not familiar.

Besides money transfers, the participants reported that they maintained ties by sending goods to people in Kenya. Sending goods to Kenya has been one of the oldest ways to stay in touch. There were only two or five percent participants who said that they send goods to Kenya on a regular basis. A larger number of participants, sixteen (42%) indicated that they “rarely” send goods to Kenya. The most frequent reason for not sending goods to Kenya cited by the participants was that it was very expensive and there were not many shipping options. They also pointed out that even if the cost of sending goods was lower, there was extensive bureaucracy involved when the goods arrived at the port of Mombasa.²⁶

Faced with these constraints the participants said that they usually send goods to Kenya mostly with friends when they travel back to Kenya. This is not popular since many people are not willing to take extra baggage. The cost of air freight is also prohibitive. Therefore, many participants such as Moraa in her late thirties and in the

²⁶ Mombasa is the second largest city in Kenya and it is Kenya’s major port, situated along the Indian Ocean.

United States for nine years have resorted to sending the money to buy the goods in Kenya. She explained how she goes about this:

I find it far much easier to send money to the people in Kenya so that they buy the clothes there in Kenya because I am telling you whatever is available in the stores here in U.S., rest assured, you can find it on the streets of Nairobi. You will be shocked. So why spend money buying the clothes here and spend money sending them, you can simply send the money and they buy them in Nairobi.

Moraa's statements also reveal the extent of the advances of global economy.

Participants need only to go to Western Union and send money to someone in Kenya, the money can be received almost instantaneously, and the person in Kenya can purchase an American brand name product straight from a shop on the streets of Nairobi.

6.1.5 Home visits

Visits to Kenya were not very frequent. During the past five years, a total of 18 (47%) participants stated that they had not visited Kenya, 13 (34%) said they had visited Kenya once, and seven or 18% had visited Kenya more than once. Of the seven participants with more than one visit to Kenya, two men reported that they had visited Kenya more than four times in the last five years. Many of the people who visited said they had to attend the funeral and burial services of parent, sibling or other close family members. Others wanted to maintain contacts with their immediate family that they left behind.

The situation of forty year old Musembi, who has been in the United States for fifteen years, is very different because he travels to Kenya every year. Musembi explained that:

I go home every year, I have to go home. I am lucky now, before, it was difficult. It took me some nine years before I was able to travel. I had not seen my children

for nine years. So now I make up for that time and go home every year. I make sure I save money and go home, my children are there, and I have to go.

When asked why he would leave his children in Kenya instead of bringing them over, he answered that:

You know I have been in this country for long; I know and have seen what has happened to children who come here. The problems they give their parents, some get lost, they lose direction, they just... [unfinished sentence and instead gestures with hands in air]. So I decided that my children will grow up in Kenya and they will come to college here. They will have had a good foundation in Kenya, they know their home and where they come from, they have *roots* [emphasis] they don't think that life is only jeans and hamburger.

Other participants went home to follow up on the progress of their investment projects. There were two men who explained that they went home because they had started community projects and they had gone to check on the progress. Those who had visited Kenya spoke proudly of their accomplishments in Kenya, their experiences and surprises, and the traditional Kenyan souvenirs they brought on their return. A majority of the participants talked about how they looked forward to their eventual return to Kenya upon retirement yet none of the participants could provide a proposed date of return. In general men visited Kenya more often than women as analyzed and discussed later in the chapter on gender.

6.1.6 Cultural Practices

Ties with Kenya served to maintain cultural linkages especially for maintenance of cultural identity through engagement in specific cultural and religious activities. The participants explained that maintaining ties was one of the ways they expressed their commitment to their culture and demonstrated that they had not abandoned their old way

of life. They mentioned that maintaining a cultural connection with Kenya was a constant reminder of their origins. There were various things that participants were engaged in as part of their cultural ties. First-born men discussed the influential role that they still played in decision-making even when they are far away. Their roles ranged from making decisions about family activities such as when certain family rituals would be held, burial sites, how to handle conflicts, business decisions and other types of decisions. Men talked about how they would travel to Kenya for certain rituals that according to them require the presence of the first-born male especially in relation to burial and inheritance. On the other hand, while women acknowledged that they had more say in certain decisions because of their financial status they tended to talk about their role as encouraging the people in Kenya to make decisions on their own. The men talked extensively about their influence and seemed to appreciate the power they wielded while making the decisions.

While the participants emphasized their commitment to maintaining cultural ties and engaging in cultural practices, traditions did not always follow similar patterns they did while in Kenya. As Atieno, in her late thirties and in the United States for seven years at the time of study, explained in detail about baby showers, she said:

We [members of the women group] also do baby showers, *yaani*, [meaning] we call it baby shower here, but [pause] what I can say is that we do the Kenyan style. We bring the clothes for the baby after the baby is born not before we see the baby. You know how people do a baby shower here? They bring things for the baby before the baby is born, that is not good. It can bring bad luck or make something bad happen to the baby. We can't buy clothes for a baby until it is born, that's how I know it and that's how we do it. So we follow that and it is important because we do not want to bring bad luck to someone or her baby and also her family. Also, here people go to the baby shower and that's it. For us, the baby shower is not simply about the material things. It can go on for a long time even after the child is born. I don't know how to explain this. But to make a long story short, after the baby is born, people go and help the mother for some time. For us, the important part of baby shower is after the baby is born. The mother needs help, needs rest, needs someone to baby-sit, so that is the time she needs

people not before the baby is born. Before the baby is born, you are free, you can control it in your stomach, it is after it comes out that things change and then that is the time you need people to help.

The participants creatively redefined how to conduct some of the rituals and ceremonies to suit their circumstances. They were also selective about which cultural practices they wanted to emphasize and which ones they downplayed. Even though she uses the word “baby shower” her explanations of what constitutes one differed significantly from the prevailing practices of baby shower in the United States. The discussions with Atieno regarding the importance of the role of women when helping each other takes a different tone when she talks about relationships with men.

America is not the same as Kenya where men can do whatever they want. Here they have to participate in taking care of the children, cooking and helping with other things in the house. And I like it that way. And if they think they can get away with anything the system is there to make things work for women. Women in America are more protected, they are safer and I like that.

Such discussions were common and women switched between discussing cultural practices they wish to maintain and those they wish change. These discussions reveal that immigration offered the participants more options with regard to cultural practices. While I was not able to discern many examples of switching from the discussions with men, it was clear that men were ambivalent about certain aspects of their culture. The discussion with Wafula, in his late twenties and in the United States for five years, about the kind of wife he would prefer highlights this ambivalence.

Wafula: I am not married, girls here are a problem. It is not easy to find someone you can agree with and um ...

Researcher: What are you looking for?

Wafula: [laughs] A woman, just a woman. Someone who will cook *ugali* ²⁷ and listen. Personally I don't have a problem with doing housework. I mean I do it now so I have no issues with that. But you want someone who will be nice to you and listen, only listen, not someone who argues all the time. You also want someone who is hardworking; life is not easy here in America so you need two incomes if you will make it. Women come here and change, real change. You will not believe they are the same people you knew in Kenya.

Even though Wafula claimed that he was comfortable doing house chores, he was at the same time concerned about getting a wife who conformed to his traditional gender ideals of a wife who will show deference to their husband. He also includes other non-traditional attributes such as preference for an income earning wife who would supplement the household budget. These sentiments reveal the situation that men found themselves in as they grapple with gender issues. On the one hand they espouse the traditional gender ideals of submissive wife and on the other hand they acknowledge the reality of the economic conditions, which demand a non-traditional wife engaged in employment and hence to a certain extent more independent. It is probable the non-compatible perspectives that led men to make statements blaming the influence of American society.

The men spoke at length about the negative influence that American society has on Kenyan women. They frequently made emphatic statements that women's attitude and behavior changed drastically upon arrival in United States. Interestingly, these concerns about changing attitudes of men and women were discussed mostly by men; women were generally silent about such issues. Given these discussions with the participants it is possible that men develop negative perceptions about America's

²⁷ Ugali is a staple Kenyan dish made from mixing hot boiling water with corn flour and cooking it until it is a specific consistency; it is mostly served with vegetable or beef stew it is also commonly served with roast beef.

influence on Kenyan women when their expectations are not met. For many of the men they came to the United States and then made plans for their wives to join them or even ‘imported’ their brides from Kenya. Their expectations were that their wives would conform to the accepted Kenyan ideal of femininity; however, when their expectations were not met, they attributed it to the influence of American life.

6.2 Communication Ties

Participants maintained ties with family and friends in Kenya. They reported that they spend time and money on communication through phone and emails. During the discussions participants used Swahili proverbs such as, *mwacha mila ni mtumwa*²⁸ to emphasize their commitment to maintaining ties with Kenya. The ties with Kenya were a constant reminder of their home country. Thirty-eight year old Wanjiku who has been in United States for the last eleven years explained the importance of these ties when she said:

First and foremost Kenya is home, you can’t forget home. It reminds you of where you came from so that you don’t forget and think America is your home and that your life is here is merely as everyone else’s here in the America. It is not the same. You came from a different place and you can’t forget that place. There are times when I am talking to people here and I feel out of place but whenever I talk to people in Kenya I feel at home. I keep in touch with the people at home they remind me all the time of home, the people at home make you know that your life is not American.

While the participants expressed the importance of the ties with Kenya, they emphasized the role these ties played during their initial stay in United States. The case of twenty-eight year old Ali in the United States for seven years shows that when he said:

I came and lived with my friend but everyone was always busy and I called Kenya a lot. The first first [sic] days in America, *I called a lot* [emphasis original]. I mean whenever I saw anything new, good or bad or whatever, I called

²⁸ This is a Swahili proverb that states s/he who abandons their culture could be referred to as a slave.

and told them. In the beginning most of my friends were still in Kenya, I mean I had some friends here but they seemed distant. I didn't understand the language as well, didn't know the foods, the music was different, and there were no fun activities, no... I mean there were fun activities but not my kind of fun.

It was evident that social networks based in Kenya were very important to newly-arrived immigrants. Maintaining ties helped to fill in empty social spaces that participants may have experienced. Since it took a while to build social networks in United States, these connections allowed the participants to maintain the social support system that they had left behind. Phone and email ties strengthened social support and eased the feelings of separation and isolation. They also provided an emotional and mental image of home, which would motivate the participants to pursue their objectives for coming to the United States. The mental images of Kenya offered them the comfort of knowing that if things do not work out in their favor in the U.S, they still have the option of returning home. Such thoughts and feelings cushion the participants and provide relief from various stresses of being in a new country.

Ties with Kenya did not stop even after participants had been in the United States for longer periods of time. Communication ties through phone and internet continued. As such Ali explained how his ties have continued even after he settled down in the United States. He said that:

We talk about computers; he [the contact in Kenya] is good with computers. I talk to him because I grew up with him and spent most of my childhood with him. We grew up together and have a lot in common including girls, school and many other things. For the first few weeks after I arrived here we talked a lot about girls but that gradually stopped as I started to interact with other people here. Now we talk about education, he is doing engineering at JKUAT²⁹ and so we compare the education system in U.S. and Kenya. We still talk about the girls we grew up with [laughs]. It is funny, it feels good when we talk, we have known each other for

²⁹ Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) is one of the public universities in Kenya.

long, and he can tell me anything. We talk, you know, guys' talk. He updates me about everything. Which girls got married to who, who is dating who, who went where, who has changed jobs, who bought a new car, really about everything. Stuff like that, you know, maybe it's not important but it's good to know. I like to know and in fact I enjoy it. Funny eeh?

These discussions reveal that ties with people in Kenya provided an avenue for the participants to sustain the social relations they had while in Kenya. The communication ties also provided participants with a social network composed of people with similar backgrounds, people who they were familiar with. By getting all the current 'gossip' or information about other people's social lives, the participants stayed close to the people they had left back in Kenya. The participants' ability to be in touch with people in Kenya on an on-going basis and get information on social happenings kept them updated and "in the loop." Their continuous engagement with people in Kenya allowed them to participate in Kenya while residing in the United States. Indeed as some participants pointed out, it was as if they had never really left Kenya. What may be deemed as idle chatter may have great meaning to the participants. It can serve as means of social support and also a sense of belonging. In other words, it could have beneficial aspects such as acting as a buffer to stressful conditions that the participants may face in the United States.

Atieno, in her mid thirties and in the United States for seven years, pointed out another reason why communication ties are important to her. She said, "When you maintain ties with Kenya whenever you want them to do something for you in Kenya, they are more willing because, you have been in touch with them all the time." Maintaining ties suggests maintaining familiarity and keeping one's social position. It allows the immigrants an opportunity to insert themselves directly into the lives of people

in Kenya. This ensures that people in Kenya are constantly reminded of the immigrants' presence and existence through communication ties especially phone calls.

When the participants talked about their communication with people in Kenya, they explained in detail how their parents, siblings, children, relatives and friends have assisted them with their daily lives. They talked about how they shared their concerns or problems that they were facing as they went about their daily activities. The conversation with 42-year old Mueni who has been in United States for eighteen years shows the various issues she discusses with her family when she calls them.

Mueni: I talk about many things, very many things, and different things with different people. My parents usually we discuss about money for fees for my brothers or money to start business or start some investment. My parents we discuss those kinds of things. With my sisters, [long pause] we talk about their problems. You know, two of them are married and so we discuss our lives and things that are going on, are happening. You know men are the same all over the world, so I talk with my sisters about things like that.

Researcher: What things about men?

Mueni: Yes, yes about our families. If something happened with her husband or children we discuss it. ...Yes, things like that, you know, like problems in marriage, children problems, in-laws, it's not easy to be married, you know that. I need someone to tell exactly how I feel, when I feel like I am reaching the end, I call, same with my sisters. We grew up together and it is easy to tell them because you know they won't tell other people.

These sentiments from Mueni about seeking assistance with family problems were also expressed by other participants. The issues that the participants sought counsel from people in Kenya included marital conflicts, problems with relatives, concerns about bringing up their children and business/investment options. Mueni explained that she was aware that married life is a challenge but also believed that being in America made it even more challenging. She felt that the context of marital conflicts in America was very different citing especially economic demands and the means of resolving the marital conflicts. Mueni believed that coming from a different culture, the standard interventions

for marital conflicts may not work for her. She stated that it was very difficult for her to explain her marital problems to a stranger. She also expressed sentiments about the distrust that she has especially when she has to share details about an intimate and personal issues such as marriage. Other participants in different ways expressed similar views. Therefore, they felt more comfortable discussing certain issues with family members rather than seek a professional's or an outsider's help. Hence these ties benefit them in such aspects.

Furthermore, the upsurge in cell phone usage has allowed the participants to be able not only to send but also receive compassion. It also enables them to go through certain experiences together at the same time. As Cherono in her late fifties and in the United States for six years explained how she participated in her mother's funeral earlier in the year. She said:

My friend, Monica [not real name] and some other ladies from my church came over here on the day of my mother's funeral. It was very sad, I cried so much but there were a great comfort to me. My daughter who lives in Germany traveled to Kenya for the funeral and before she travelled, my son had prepared a CD. My son is good with such things; I mean music is his thing. I taped my eulogy and the songs I wanted for my daughter to take them home. When the funeral started she called me from her cell phone and I listened to the funeral rites. I was very sad, very very sad. You should have heard the eulogies. My mother was a really good person; the church praised her, the government representative, her grandchildren and great grandchildren. It was really moving. After the funeral I spoke to my father, uncles, aunts and other people who had come to the funeral. Even the women from my church were surprised at how many people came and how well organized the funeral was. The following day my daughter had the pictures on the internet and I made a video. Remember, the DVD that I showed you, that's it.

Through phone ties, Cherono was able to be part of the funeral ceremony for her mother. Even though she stated she would have loved to be there physically but she acknowledged that her grief was eased by participating via phone. She was also able to

share pictures with her friends here in the United States connecting her networks through internet ties. These are some of the creative ways that immigrants build their social capital.

Immigrants are likely to be engaged in low-income employment and belong to a minority group and the phone conversations and videos allowed participants to challenge their low status in United States. As Cherono mentioned, through the videos and conversations she was able to show her friends here in the United States that there are places where she regarded as a person with high status. Such ties allowed her to challenge her image and indeed boost her status among the people here in United States. On the other end, in Kenya, her ability to use technology effectively to express her commitment and loyalty as a daughter boosted her status.

The discussions with the participants showed that ties to people in Kenya have social value. The detailed explanations by participants demonstrated the extent of social support they derive from the ties and that the ties are beneficial. The communication ties also served as means of maintaining a cultural identity. One of the common themes was that if they (participants) held to their culture they would avoid some of the problems they see in the United States. They believed that they needed to maintain their customs which they deemed more supportive of better family relations. Mutuku, who has been in United States for twenty years, discussed the importance that culture plays in maintaining harmonious relations when he said that:

Women who maintain ties with Kenya will have less marital problems, unlike those of them who come and disconnect their ties with people in Kenya. They end up adopting American ways and then they get lost and lose respect for family values. Maintaining ties with Kenya also helps with child rearing because when someone talks to people in Kenya they learn more about respect and their cultural ways and this gives them more direction and also maintain discipline. Therefore these groups

are really needed more here because of the problems of being in new environment and new challenges.

It seemed that understanding origins and the lifestyles back in Kenya was a major concern for the participants and they wanted their children to understand life in Kenya. Some of the participants explained that they travel with their young children back to Kenya so that they can see the “other side of life.” They emphasized they wanted their children to understand where they come from and also be proud of their culture. Maintaining ties with people in Kenya provided an avenue for participants to instill in their children a sense of their identity. Thirty-nine year old Karimi has been in the United States for sixteen years said that she thought that her culture was important to children because it instilled a sense of social control and responsibility to the community. She wanted to emphasize these attributes to her children because her parents emphasized the same things to her. She said:

[Exaggerated pause] It is important for us to maintain our culture, especially for our children. Our children need to know where they come from and how it was. If you come here and don't maintain ties with home then you will lose the importance of home. You know that proverb that says '*mwacha mila ni mtumwa*'? [s/he who abandons their culture is enslaved]. I look around here in America and some of the things or problems we see are because people have no roots, when you know where you come from there is a kind of responsibility given to you. You have to maintain that standard, you don't want to disappoint your father, mother, aunt, relatives. I think that is important and I want my children to know that. Here children are made to believe they have more power than their fathers and mothers. [scornfully] Yes, I believe in discipline, you can call it communal discipline or social control or whatever, but I know it works. If a parent can't discipline their children then who will?

Karimi's explanation of why she thought ties were important was geared towards distinguishing herself as someone who had 'roots', she belonged to a group and she wanted her children to belong to that group too. Thirty-nine year old Barasa, who has

been in United States for ten years captured the essence of this argument very clearly when he said that; “Yes. We Kenyans are used to Kenyan lifestyles that are more communal living compared to United States where people are more segregated. So I will maintain ties with people in Kenya.” These responses indicate that when participants maintain ties and participate in development in Kenya they acquire status and in some ways have the ability to resist the subordinate status they occupy as a minority group in United States. For others, they are able to sustain the status they had while living in Kenya.

6.2.1 Communication ties as source of information

During the study many participants explained that they maintained communication ties with family and friends back in Kenya to serve as a source of information. The participants reported that they provided information to potential immigrants concerning college admissions and application guidelines. They also provide information on upcoming events in United States that for those people in Kenya are willing and able to attend. The comments by Wafula, a man in mid-thirties and in the United States for the last five years clearly demonstrate the importance of this reason:

Yes, yeah, I talk to my father mostly about my sisters. A lot of times when I talk to my father it is mainly about my brother who is in [country withheld]. My father wants my brother to come to America but my brother prefers [name of country]. He does not want to leave [country]. But he can't get a job there so my father worries about him and believes the solution is for him to come to America. My father thinks that to come to America you only walk from [country] to here. I have to send my brother information on how to get a visa and all that, I have to make all the arrangements and send them. At times my father is a pain because he does not understand and my father thinks I am big-headed [sic] and don't want to help my brother. I have to make sure that everything will work and they don't understand that it is not easy. I know from experience that I better make sure everything is right before I send it.

At the same time, the information was not necessarily about moving to United States. Participants expressed that people wanted to stay in touch with them simply to know about America and confirm or refute the things they see on television. According to the participants, people are “thirsty for news about America.” This perspective was clearly expressed by Mwende, who is in her mid-thirties and has been in the United States for eight years. She said:

People call me to ask me about something that they heard in the news about Louisiana or California. I live here and I am not even aware of it! Gosh, they call me and are asking, “did you see that huge fire somewhere in Ohio?” I respond with, hello! I live on the East Coast, that’s like another country. They call me just to find out if I know about the fire.

The information exchange is not only about current news or America; it extends to technical expertise including business advice. This exchange of ideas was very impressive as Njeri who is a nurse and has been in United States for seven years. She is in her mid-thirties and was very enthusiastic about her conversations with people back in Kenya. She said:

So when I went to Kenya, I took some medications and embarked on teaching the basic health stuff. Things for First Aid and what they can do in case of emergency and such things. Because the hospitals are very far and they are little things they can do to save lives before they get medical attention. I have been telling them especially the importance of the aloe vera plant. This is a plant that grows wildly back home and yet it has so many medicinal values. So I tell them what they can do, I also tell them about the *Muarumbaini* [neem] ³⁰ tree which can also be grown easily in any part of the country, any part, even the dry areas, and can be used for many ailments. I keep telling them that medicine is not necessarily in a white tablet or capsule that even herbal ³¹ [sic] works. They laugh when they hear that people here in the U.S. are going herbal, they can’t believe that white people take herbal medicine.

³⁰ “Muarumbaini” is the neem tree which has been known for its various medicinal purposes. It is commonly referred to as “healer of all ailments” or the “village pharmacy.”

³¹ In this case, the participant was referring to herbal or organic remedies. She laughed because currently in Kenya there is a move towards organic produce and most of it is labeled as ‘herbal’.

The information exchange related to the support for use of indigenous materials was also a topic discussed by the founders of one of the non-profit organizations. They indicated that one of their initiatives was to support science studies in high schools. Since the equipment is very expensive especially science dissection kits, they are embarking on a project to develop cheaper science dissection kits using local resources to develop the small knives and other pieces of equipment. This is an important aspect of the exchange of educational and development ideas as a form of remittance.

Other participants exchanged information about business. It was apparent that information that was sent back to Kenya was especially about the service sector and how to start a small scale business. The focus for these types of exchanges seemed to provide information on possible linkages, donors or sponsors for their activities. Participants also stated that they asked people in Kenya about viable investment opportunities especially in real estate. As twenty-nine year old Fauzia, who has been in United States for nine years explained, communication ties have their downside. She said:

When they [the people in Kenya] call me in the early hours of morning, I get upset. I have explained to them so many times the time difference and they just don't get it! And when they call they are always asking for something. If you don't send it they will keep calling and flashing and emailing until you respond. Another thing, when they find your number, you are in trouble. They share it with everyone else and now you will be getting more calls from Kenya than from within U.S. Can you believe that?

Even though participants appreciated communication ties with people in Kenya they also felt that at times it invaded their personal space. They no longer could choose when to respond to requests because of the increase in cell phone ownership and usage. Since more people in Kenya now have access to cell phones, they can contact family and

friends in the United States directly to make their requests. The participants pointed out that the number and frequency of requests for assistance from Kenya have increased and to some extent it has become a burden. As many participants mentioned, most phone calls end with a request for some form of assistance, to which the participants feel obliged to respond. Frequent and direct phone and email communication also provide the people in Kenya an opportunity to express in detail the situation on the ground with the hope that it will expedite their requests for assistance. Participants revealed that at times they have gone out of their way to hastily provide assistance only to find out later that the situation had been exaggerated. They expressed disappointment at such occurrences.

6.2.2 Ties and Political engagement

The participants did not have much to say about political ties. From the interviews, the participants did not mention politics as a common topic of discussion when they contacted people in Kenya. Furthermore, none of the participants mentioned outrightly that politics was a factor in their decision to come to United States. During the interviews the discussions about Kenyan politics required more prompting than discussions on social and economic issues. When asked whether they maintained political ties with Kenya, the most common response was that all they engaged in was reading about Kenya on the newspapers available on the internet. Their next source of political information about Kenya was the news brought back by people who had visited Kenya. In his discussion about his political ties or lack thereof, twenty-nine year old Kamau who has been in United States for seven years said:

[In a dismissive tone] I don't follow Kenyan politics because it is rubbish, the same old politicians being recycled. I used to follow the politics but I realized that

it is a political game and that it will not help me. I don't follow the political news because it is the same same [sic] person who is corrupt and yet that same person will still be elected and be president and then he will elect his corrupt friends as ministers. It is the same cycle and no change. It is only talk, talk and no change.

Kamau was very passionate when he expressed these comments about the political situation in Kenya and the failure of the political system to address the peoples' problems. Ironically, the level of passion with which they discussed the political situation was indicative of their involvement in the political issues in Kenya. Even though the participants' initial response to the question on political ties was that they did not maintain political ties, many proceeded to engage in lengthy discussions of how the political system had failed. They made reference to recent events that were either indicative of progress or failure revealing their intimate knowledge about Kenyan politics.

It is possible that the reluctance to admit political ties was related to history of repression in Kenya. Until recently, openly opposing the president was considered treasonable and people were detained.³² Some of the immigrants from Kenya in the 1980s and 1990s were running away from persecution by the government mostly for their dissenting views. As such it is possible that there was a disparity between their political activities and opinions. Even though the participants reported that they did not send money or actively support political activities in Kenya they expressed very strong opinions about the political situation in Kenya.

³² By the mid-1980s, after a failed coup in 1982, the ruling party K.A.N.U (Kenya African National Union) heavily curtailed freedom of expressions and association. The constitution was amended to make Kenya a de jure one party state and the ruling party expressed intolerance for critics instilling a culture of fear and silence (Kiai, 1992).

It is also possible that the participants genuinely did not feel very involved in political activities because of their limited on-the-ground knowledge about Kenyan politics. Cherono who has been in United States for six years, in her late fifties summarized the political knowledge of Kenyan immigrants when she said:

Sometimes I am working but when I get a chance I attend the meetings. I go there to talk, eat and socialize. At these places you find people talking *siasa ya pesa nane* [petty politics] and how they feel about the country. I don't like the talk because they talk mostly negative things about the political situation in Kenya and how the government is not helping the people. What I don't understand is how can people in the U.S. criticize Kenya? Some of them have been here for twenty years and never gone back home and when they stand up to talk; they consider themselves experts on politics in Kenya. How? I think that if these people are genuine and interested in Kenyan politics they should go home and see for themselves what the government has done and then come back and talk. It does not help Kenya much when we are here and talk because we don't vote! So we don't do much! I believe that we can support politics by giving politicians money, but not me! I will not give politicians money, I would rather give it to the individual women groups or other people who will do better things for people than politicians.

The comments by Cherono reveal that the lack of involvement and support for political activities back in Kenya could also be linked to limited knowledge and also a lack of confidence in the politicians. One participant who had attended a political meeting organized here in United States expressed that he was very disappointed with the meeting. The meeting did not provide the details he had expected and as such he chose to remain uncommitted to political activities back in Kenya. Talking about the political meeting, twenty-eight year old Ali who has been in the United States for seven years, said:

Actually, when I get a chance sometimes I go to the Kenya *Umoja* [unity]³³ group meetings. I am not very active in politics but I do attend some events when I have time. The last time I went to one of those meetings, first the meeting was late and I found the meeting very biased. Even the politicians who had come from Kenya

³³ Kenya *Umoja* is a local community group of Kenyans.

didn't answer the questions they were asked. For me I will only support those politicians who show a great commitment to the *wananchi* ³⁴[citizens]. You remember the other politician, what is his name? He's a minister now [pause] ahhh Koigi Wamwere! You know him. [nod] Actually, the guy came here and was talking great things and all that, then when he went back to Kenya and got elected to parliament, he forgot everything! Now he talks government language. It is amazing even the people who have lived abroad when they go back and join politics, they become the same as those who are over there. I think political rottenness is a contagious disease, very contagious.

These findings suggest that while participants had political ties, they felt that these ties were not addressing their issues. Given that many of the participants carry the financial burden of education and household maintenance for their families in Kenya their expectation was that politicians address how to alleviate such burdens. Furthermore, their disappointment with the previous government regime may explain their lack of political enthusiasm and their focus on economic survival for their family and friends in Kenya. As a follow-up question, I asked the participants whether they were actively engaged in United States politics and they generally responded in the negative, claiming that they did not have time. Non-participation in United States politics could also be related to their migration status, which may prevent some of them from voting or engaging in public affairs. Therefore, most of the participants were not politically engaged in either Kenya or United States and they expressed that their focus was on economic improvement.

³⁴ The word *Wananchi* is a Swahili word for citizens that has mainstreamed into common usage even when people are speaking in English and is used even in news reporting on television, radio and print media.

6.2.3 Consumption practices in relation to ties

Participants talked about how they needed products from Kenya and acquired them through their connections to Kenya. Atieno, one of the participants in her mid thirties who performs hair braiding on a part-time basis explains:

Many of my customers are Kenyans and they prefer the hair from Kenya more than the hair from here, they say it better. They say that the hair from Kenya lasts longer when braided and has a better look than the one from here. It is true the hair from Kenya is better. It is not only Kenyans who say that but now I have people from West Africa also asking me for some of the hair because they think it is better. I am always in contact with Kenya so that they can send me the newest brands of braiding hair. I also get some clothes from Kenya especially *Kitenge* [traditional African attire] so that I can wear something different while I am here. Any time my sister or brother find out there is someone coming to America they give them 'cargo' for me.

Since most of her customers are immigrants, they are able to identify with these products from Kenya. Using products from Kenya that the customers are familiar with and probably grew up using them allowed them to reconnect with Kenya and experience home. Hair braiding is a routine practice but it becomes a major rallying point of connection to Kenya when one uses braiding products from Kenya. Atieno is able to creatively use the products from Kenya, such as the hair braids, to make hairstyles that are more popular in America. This kind of service gave customers the satisfaction that they had used their 'own' hair and still had a hairstyle that was in line with the fashion trends in United States. The importance of this seemingly simple routine is demonstrated by Atieno's overscheduled calendar. I interviewed her as she did my hair because she was fully booked and could not find time to participate otherwise. I also had to make the appointment a month in advance. Her contacts in Kenya enabled her to conduct more

business and in return she was able to send them money to support their various activities.

In most instances the participants explained how they received day-to-day Kenya household products through their contacts in Kenya. As thirty-eight year old Wanjiku who has been in United States for eleven years informed me:

Every time I see someone going to Kenya, I have to ask my sister to put some package of *roiko* and *pilau masala* [spices] for me. At my job, we have some days when people bring different foods and we can share, when I bring my food made with *roiko* everybody asks “oh, what did you put in, it is so nice, it’s really good.” They love *roiko* and they love the *pilau*,³⁵ so I have to have a regular supply of spices.

Maintaining ties provides access to markets for Kenyan products and therefore enhance businesses in Kenya. While these activities have not yet translated into large scale ethnic markets, there are small shops that specialize in Kenyan products. Some participants discussed how they would travel to such stores, commonly referred to as international food market stores to purchase Kenyan products. Some of the stores that sell such products were located in New Brunswick (about 40 miles from Paterson), Irvington (about 25 miles away) and Jersey City (about 20 miles away). The most popular products in stock included *Ketepa* (Kenyan tea), Kenyan coffee, Kenyan music CDs and tapes, spices such as *roiko*, *pilau masala*, *tea masala* and curry powder. Other popular items included African outfits, t-shirts with Kenyan words, arts and crafts.

The purchase and consumption of these Kenya products allows the participants to maintain consumption patterns that they had back in Kenya and sustain a bond with consumers in Kenya. It also provides a market for Kenyan products and improves

³⁵ *Roiko* is a popular blend of spice and herbs used to enhance the taste and aroma of food; *Pilau* is a rice dish introduced by the Arabs to the coastal people. It is a mixture of rice, meat and vegetables and spices including cumin, cardamom, cloves, garlic and ginger. *Pilau Masala* is the ready-made mixture of all these spices and is used to make the *pilau*.

Kenya's national income, which in turn will boost development. The demand for these products also encourages economic growth as more businesses get established to meet the demand.

Technology has also played its role in promoting ties especially through online shopping, e.g. *MamaMikes* and other business sites advertising real estate property and investment opportunities. Kariuki, is in his late thirties and has been in United States for fifteen years said:

I email them almost daily. The internet is a very good thing because I stay in touch with them all the time. Whenever I send money via Western Union, I send an email with the Western Union number and they go and get the money. It is faster. After they pick the money they call and tell me. When I email they respond, I email back they respond, it's as if we are together. Just like the old days when I could shout across the fence, you know what I am saying[laughs].

The inference about 'shout across the fence' was very fitting because money transactions are conducted much faster now through the internet than before. As Kariuki mentioned it was instantaneous to the point that he felt as though the people in Kenya were merely across the fence. The reality however, is that he is far away in the United States but technology has granted him the opportunity to be able to maintain more instantaneous ties with Kenya and experience some feeling of being close to his family or friends. The internet has not only facilitated faster money transfers but has also expanded shopping opportunities. At the time of the study not many people were familiar with many websites or companies that offer online shopping for products from Kenya. Only one participant said that they were familiar with *MamaMikes*³⁶ and *BiasharaBiz*, two companies that offer online shopping for Kenyan goods.

³⁶ *MamaMikes* is one of the pioneers in online shopping. It offers goods remittance services, whereby people can purchase products which are then delivered to the designated people in Kenya. The products range from local supermarket vouchers, mobile phone airtime, flowers and greeting cards.

These websites offer people in United States or in other parts of the world the opportunity to purchase Kenyan products and pay in dollars, sterling pound, Euros or the currency of their choice. What is unique about *MamaMikes* is that it sells vouchers from Kenyan supermarkets, which can be picked up and used at various supermarkets in Kenya and Uganda. Therefore for someone in the United States all they need to do is purchase the supermarket voucher and it can be delivered or picked up by the intended recipient for use at the designated supermarkets in Kenya. This kind of shopping is very convenient especially for participants who worried that their money they sent may not be used for the intended purposes. By purchasing a voucher which will be used for specific purchases one is assured that the money will be used for what it was intended. The participant who was familiar with the service also considered it convenient. This is what Kipkirui, a man in his late twenties and in the United States for seven years had to say about *MamaMikes*:

I used it [referring to *MamaMikes*] once and found it was very convenient. The only limitation is that it is not everywhere in Kenya, they do not operate in rural places for example, where my parents live so I can't use it. But I have a cousin in Nairobi and I used it to buy household goods such as soap, food, and things like that for him. He was so happy and he was praising my name everywhere. For that time I was the hero, he made sure everybody knew he has a cousin in U.S. That was all before somebody else sent him something too.

These findings reveal that maintaining ties through sending goods has more than symbolic meaning. The individual sending the goods receives recognition, the people living in United States are recognized, and this reinforces the image of United States as a country of opportunity. Even though online shopping was not very popular, those who had used it said that they would use it again. They also said that they expected online

business would pick up because they notice that the variety of products offered was becoming more diversified and they had noted more online companies than before.

6.3 Remittances and Material Exchanges

6.3.1 Household sustenance

All participants said they had sent money for household maintenance at one time or another. Money was sent for general daily household needs for the immediate family and in some cases for extended family as well. Forty-three year Ochieng, who has been in United States for nineteen years, explained his commitment to helping his family:

I am very involved in Kenya. I send money to my parents to maintain their living back home. I also send money to my relatives when they need some help. I help them all the time, my parents I send about \$300 every month. When there is something specific then I send more money as needed. For example if they have a trip to the hospital or they need money for some task then I send the money as it is needed. Most of my relatives are poor, so I have to send them something; fees for their children, clothes here and there, some money for food when they are stranded, money for what they need because they don't have any other source of help. At other times what happens is that I sent money to my parents and then they help them as they wish, anyway, that's how life is in Kenya, one person can't have and watch as other starve. People in Kenya love one another and they will do anything to help each other.

These findings show that participants were heavily involved in the maintenance of households in Kenya. The finding is not surprising because of reported high levels of poverty in Kenya. Decades after gaining independence, the country is still plagued by high levels of poverty despite the government's development plans, which have always hinged on three tenets of fighting disease, illiteracy and poverty.³⁷ While the trends of

³⁷ By 1973, it was estimated that 3.7 million Kenyans were living below the poverty line. By 1994 the number had increased to 11.5 million and in 1997 it was 12.5 million. Between 1996 and 1999, the number of people living under the poverty line rose from 11.5 million to about 15 million, (Participatory Poverty Assessment, 1997). The World Bank Report (2002) showed the incidence of poverty in Kenya had

poverty have not changed much since independence, reports show that rural areas have a higher incidence of poverty compared to urban areas. For this study I did not ask the participants specifically whether their financial assistance efforts targeted the rural or urban areas of Kenya.

The participants' responses showed that remittances were most helpful in sustaining livelihoods through increased purchasing power for food, health and consumer goods or durables. Maintaining ties with Kenya allowed participants to make a change in the lives of people in Kenya. Since most of them had mentioned that they left Kenya because of economic issues, this could explain their commitment to boost the living conditions of people they left behind. The participants experienced some sense of satisfaction that they were able to make some change. Thirty-nine year old Achieng, who has been in the United States for ten years said:

Sometimes, I think about what could have happened if I had not come to U.S. and it looks real bad. Imagine all the people I have helped would have had nobody to help them. Food, building house, clothes some of the things that these people would never have known about, they have them because I came to U.S. I feel good about that.

From the participants' discussions, themes of commitment, obligation and responsibility were frequently mentioned. As participants talked about their commitment to people in Kenya through maintaining ties they also included the component of an obligation to assist them with their concerns. The participants felt responsible for assisting the people in Kenya because they felt that they had better economic

increased from approximately 40% in 1994 to 52% in 2000. For more details on Kenya's poverty trends see Omiti, J., Owino, W., Otieno, W., and Odundo, P. (2002) Poverty reduction Efforts in Kenya: Institutions, Capacity and Policy, Institute of Policy Analysis and Research, Discussion Paper No. 033/2002, February 2002, Nairobi, Kenya; Kenya Economic Survey (2004); National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP) 1999 – 2015. Ministry of Finance & Planning (2004) Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERSWEC) 2003-2007.

opportunities. These discussions reveal the interrelatedness of economic and social practices through maintaining of ties across borders.

Maintaining ties allows the participants to address feelings of obligation and enable them to be viewed as benefactors by the people they assist. This view was apparent from Mwangi's expression when he stated that:

The way I look at this is that the independence wars to free Kenya from colonialists were fought using machete by our forefathers, the present global war is an economic one. It can only be fought with economic, that is, money. Where is the money for Kenya? It is here with us, believe me or not, I am telling you and you will tell me one day. That is why we need people to help people back in Kenya.

The participants considered that it was their duty to help the suffering people back in Kenya. These statements about the conditions they left behind suggest that participants viewed themselves in relatively better positions than the people they left behind in Kenya. Sending remittances to people back in Kenya, they acquire status in the eyes of the people in Kenya. Therefore, maintaining ties means more than simply the act of sending money for household maintenance, ties takes various meanings including status, identity, maintaining positions within society and influence. These expressions reveal that the exchange of goods does not take place in a vacuum; it happens within existing social relations. In this way, it is possible that participants gain the ability to resist the subordinate status they occupy as a minority immigrant group in United States.

Some participants, seven or 18%, who felt that sending money to Kenya was not always a good thing. They felt that it perpetuated dependency. In the words of twenty-eight year old Ali who has been in United States for seven years, he said that, "The more money you send back home, the more they will need. I mean, we are trying to give them a life that is not affordable by Kenyan standards. It is very expensive to maintain the ties

because you have to send them something all the time.” These participants expressed the pressure they felt to maintain certain lifestyles for their families in Kenya.

Even the participants, who pointed to the disadvantages of maintaining ties, de-emphasized it by pointing out that they made major contributions to community development. Though they felt that the financial burden was sometimes too heavy to bear, they also stated their commitment to continue providing for their families and communities back in Kenya. One possible explanation for such a finding is that the participants felt caught in between the reality of their financial situations and the desire to assist their families and friends in Kenya. This could explain why they found it necessary to deemphasize the issue. Another possible explanation is that the participants may not wish to be perceived as having been unsuccessful in the United States and therefore they struggled hard to maintain the impressions that they are doing well. Sending remittances and supporting their families and friends back in Kenya could be seen as the measure of their success in the United States.

6.3.2 Community activities

Almost every participant had a story to tell about what they had done to assist their local communities in Kenya. For most of them, it was primarily activities within their villages of origin. Forty-seven percent of the participants reported that they sent money to Kenya to support community activities ranging from building schools, hospitals to caring for HIV/AIDS orphans. Forty-three year old, Ochieng, who has been in United States for nineteen years, summarized how participants were engaged in supporting schools when he said:

When I visited Kenya I went by my former primary school. I was shocked because each classroom needed some repairs things such as windows, floor repairs, roofing sheets. There was one class where the iron roofing sheet was almost coming off. It was swinging dangerously and if the wind came it would blow it away easily and may cause much harm to the children. Imagine, this is where we came from. When I asked them why they had not fixed the iron sheet, they said it was because there was not enough roofing sheets so because of the space left the wind keeps blowing and detaching the last sheet. I purchased missing iron sheets and paid the construction worker to do the work. Then I bought windows for five classrooms and had them fixed because the children were sitting in open classrooms with no windows. I know that is how we went to school there but I felt really when I looked at the situation. The conditions are terrible and I feel strongly about them and I can't forget home. So before I left I mobilized the old students who went to the primary school and we are now planning to help rebuild the whole school. I mean we will help other schools in the area but we will pay more attention to this school. We will also try and equip the school. That is my project now. We need to get an organization and help these schools; you walk into that place and see how the place is falling apart, even the headmaster's office. The headmaster cannot concentrate; I mean you can even hear the ants walking. The situation is bad and you can't ignore it. I also went to the secondary school where I had taught for some time and I gave them money for a library they were building. Actually I gave money to two secondary schools.

Participants were engaged in community projects, which were close to their hearts -- projects with memories. Many of these projects were based in participants' home villages or places where they grew up or had contact with when they were in Kenya. Their nostalgic memories prompted them to maintain contacts and offer assistance. As Ochieng expressed he felt saddened when he remembered how his old school was run-down and he felt obliged to help restore it.

Other frequently mentioned projects were health-related, especially assisting community members affected by HIV/AIDS. There were twelve participants (32 %) who said that they had in one way or another supported an initiative to assist people with HIV/AIDS, especially the children left behind when parents died of AIDS. These children are referred to as AIDS orphans. Thirty-nine year old, Karimi who has been in

United States for sixteen years actively supports her own sister who takes care of AIDS orphans. She said:

Yeah, I send money to my sister who has started a small project that she helps some children who have been left on their own; left alone after their parents died of AIDS. Most of these children are our relatives' kids and so my sister asks me for money and I help the children. If we don't help them they have nowhere else to go and their lives will be finished. Also the people at home expect me to help more because I am in America and my relatives ask my sister to ask me for money to help these people. I have to struggle here in America so that I can meet their expectations.

Cherono in her late fifties and in the United States for six years is also engaged in similar activities. She said, "I am looking for sponsors to help the children, I got clothes from my local church [implying church in U.S.] and I want to look for people or organizations that can help one of the women's group in my home area that takes care of these AIDS orphans." These findings highlight the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the fact that it is considered a major social problem. Within the last decade the HIV/AIDS epidemic has been rampant in Kenya and Kenya was ranked among the top ten countries worldwide with the highest rates of HIV/AIDS.³⁸ The concern with the epidemic was reflected in participants' discussions about what the various projects they are undertaking to assist.

One of the explanations for participants' engagement with community projects even after their departure from Kenya could be related to the importance attached to communal living and self help, especially the spirit of *harambee*. Thirty nine year old Karimi who has been in United States for sixteen years said:

³⁸ The Ministry of Health, Kenya reported the HIV prevalence in Kenya had risen from 0.8 percent in 1985 to 13.5 percent in 2001. One of every eight adults in rural Kenya was infected, while one in every five people in the urban areas was infected with HIV. There were about one million children who had been orphaned due to AIDS-related deaths of one or both parents. (Ministry of Health, 2001). For more data on HIV prevalence in Kenya see Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2003).

Often they ask me for money for *harambee* to build the schools or to pay hospital bills. People back home have a different picture of America, they think we have much money. The money is there, yes, but you must work very hard to get it. In Kenya you work and get some money but here in America not only work but you must do the work right. I do a lot of harambee, send money we have a harambee for so-and-so, next week another harambee, harambee after harambee.

While in its original sense *harambee* referred to the pooling of resources including labor, time, finances, skills etc, in its most recent usage it mainly refers to pooling of financial resources. The *harambee* spirit has transcended the Kenyan borders and participants easily referred to the collective activities in which they engaged as based on *harambee*. These ties to community and supporting community activities are a form of global philanthropic endeavors on the part of the immigrants. While they seemingly appear as less formalized they would count as philanthropic activities.

It is important to note that participants conducted these community initiatives on an individual basis. There was no mention of formalized or collective efforts by participants residing in the United States to assist either one or several communities in Kenya. Every participant outlined their own individual efforts to assist people usually in their own villages in Kenya. There was only one participant who reported that he had invited other people in the spirit of *harambee* to assist with raising funds for a project in his home village. In his discussion about the efforts, he also mentioned that he had targeted more people from his own ethnic group or people who were more familiar with his home area. Mwangi who has been in United States for twenty years explained how he organized the event.

I have never disconnected with home and I have always tried to do much with them and also for them. I have done some work for the church, hospital and schools. Every now and then I send money for the buildings and upkeep of the church; not much money maybe a total of about \$500 a year and I send it about

three times so maybe every time I send about \$200. For the hospital, I needed to do something because in my rural area there was no nearby hospital and that was very sad. So the people back home organized a harambee to build a hospital. I decided to have a *pre-harambee* here in the U.S. with my friends and the money I would raise I would forward it to Kenya for the main harambee. My objective was to build one ward [i.e. a wing] of the hospital and that is what I had agreed with my cousins back in Kenya. These plans were made when I was on a visit to Kenya. So I invited people mostly Kenyans in Paterson and a few from New York. ... The harambee raised a total of \$4,500 and then I added my personal contribution of \$1,000 therefore a total of \$5,500. This came to about almost Kes. 450,000 and that was almost enough to build the intended ward. In total, by the time the project was over I had given Kes. 700,000 because I had some friends in Kenya who ‘escorted’ me to the harambee and gave more money. Actually when I went home I saw they had named the ward after me and I felt very good. I knew that I have done something and given back something good to the people. ... Well yes, the hospital has about three wards, the other wards were built with the rest of the money from the harambee through the help of my cousins who had raised about two million Kenya shillings and so that was good. But I am happy I did my part.

Mwangi said that he would be willing to do things such as this that bring people together to do common projects but he cited selfishness as the main obstacle to collective organizing. People were more concerned with helping those from their villages and in extension people from their own ethnic group. Even though the participants were drawn from seven different ethnic groups, when they discussed their initiatives to assist people back in Kenya, their projects were based in areas where their ethnic groups live. The participants were asked about these trends and they responded that it was related to the history of ethnic divisions in Kenya.³⁹ As thirty-eight year old Wanjiku pointed out when she said, “We Kenyans have a problem; I socialize with *Kamba* because I am *Kamba* and

³⁹ Generally speaking, when someone makes reference to an administrative region in Kenya it is easy to discern the tribe residing in that region; in some ways tribal identity corresponds to administrative regions. This kind of administrative planning has a long history. Originally people from the same tribe groups settled in the same place and when the colonial government wanted to establish administrative units, it simply divided these tribal settlements into administrative units. These administrative units have remained to-date and as such when one person mentions where they come from, it is easy to make a calculated guess to which tribe they belong. These classifications have at times intensified ethnicity or tribalism. The major urban areas have more ethnic/tribal mixed neighborhoods but for smaller urban towns their regions most likely affect the tribal composition.

engage in activities that will benefit Ukambani [region where the *Kamba* live]. If I hear something for *Kikuyu* or *Kisii* people I may not go, or they may not even invite me. They invite their own people and I invite my own people.” This was clearly a concern as various participants pointed it out at different points of their interviews. The participants stated that ethnic grouping was evident through most of the fundraising initiatives which in most instances were limited to the organizers’ ethnic community.

The participants acknowledged that there was minimal organizing with a unified national front and that this hindered the greater impact that their ties would have on development in Kenya. They cited various problems associated with organizing activities based on ethnic groups including limited the amount of resources and ideas. The participants also mentioned that organizing within such a limited context hindered the undertaking of major projects with a national development agenda and sometimes focused largely on household sustenance. The participants used various expressions to articulate their desire to see Kenya immigrants present a unified front. They talked about diverse groups coming together for the benefit of Kenya as a whole. The issues related to ethnicity are not new to Kenya. Ethnicity has been used to a larger extent for political purposes and politicians have been known to drum up ethnic differences to gain leverage over their opponents. It is possible to allude from these discussions that the participants used the objective of national agenda to disguise possible ethnic tensions that have accompanied immigration.

In addition to sending money for community activities, participants sent money to friends. Money remittances to friends occurred whenever a friend was in need or the friend assisted them in having something done in Kenya and was given as a token of

appreciation. The conversation with Mwende, in her mid-thirties who has been in United States for the last eight years, explained how her friends were involved:

Anybody who calls or writes to me from Kenya wants money. My friends have problems... you know how it is back home. There is no money it is very dry [this refers to financial situation], no money and so my friends ask me for some money. If I ask them to do something for me, I sent them the money and then they can keep the balance and that helps them out.

Maintaining friends overseas was common and undoubtedly important in terms of gaining status. Having moved to the United States gave the participants different status and their friends now view them differently. Since one of the predominant images associated with the United States are those of successful people engaging in a luxurious lifestyle, participants have to send money to their friends to maintain such images. Not sending money may be seen as a sign that one is not doing well in the United States, which in turn will lower their social standing in Kenya. Even though participants were far away from Kenya, they still consider what people in Kenya would think of them. It was common to hear participants repeatedly use phrases such as, “what will they think of me back in Kenya if I don’t help.” So participants were under some form of pressure to help their friends in order to maintain the social positions.

6.3.3 Investments

Slightly over half or 58% of the participants indicated that they are engaged in some form of investment in Kenya, mainly in the areas of real estate, establishing private schools, printing businesses and the stock market. The responses showed that participants’ reasons for investing in Kenya were not necessarily for their own benefit but mainly as a source of income for their families back in Kenya. Twenty-eight year old Ali

explained that he had attended a seminar where Barclays Bank of Kenya representatives were talking about their various business opportunities.

First I went because these other guys were going, then when we got there I actually got interested, really interested. A manager from Barclays of Bank in Kenya spoke very well, men, you can't believe these people, they are good. I was very impressed. I didn't know that business had advanced that much in Kenya. It was a good meeting, very good. ... Yes, there were other people who spoke, it was one for two days but I went only for this one presentation. I didn't have the time, but if I hear another such event I will definitely make sure I attend.

The high number of participants investing in Kenya could be related to the intensified efforts by the current administration to harness the potential of the diaspora. The participants showed that they were aware of the government's efforts to attract investment in Kenya by Kenyans abroad. Such forums have been addressed by government officials, private sector entrepreneurs, academicians and civil society representatives. The aim of the forums has been largely to provide information on investment opportunities in various sectors of Kenya's economy to encourage more participation in the country's development.

These findings show that participants were involved in investment ties. The fact that participants continue to invest in Kenya while living most of their lives here in United States allows them to create and maintain attachments to Kenya. Investing in small businesses start-ups or owning a house or property in Kenya allows them to experience a sense of ownership and consider Kenya their home even though they are not there physically. In many instances the investment projects in which the participants were involved were planned jointly with people in Kenya - either family or even friends.

Thirty-nine year old Achieng who has been in the United States for ten years said that she had long term reasons for investing in Kenya. She explained it this way:

I am investing in Kenya. I have bought some rental property back in my home town. It is interesting how I bought these properties, I got information from people. My friends really helped they got me information and helped me to acquire them. I mean they identified the properties and did much of the work, all I had to do was sign the papers and fax them back and then wire transfer the money. I want to buy another one so that the money collected as rent will be used to send my brothers and sisters to school, then I don't have to keep sending money all the time. Because I don't have the money myself, the people at home think there is money in America but they don't know that I have no money.

The story by Achieng showed that participants were actively involved in establishing income sources back home to avoid dependency. The participants discussed that they wanted to ensure that the people in Kenya who relied on them would gain economic security. The reasoning behind the efforts to ensure economic security was that participants felt that they did not have enough income to support both themselves here in the United States and the people in Kenya. They also worried about what would happen if they were unable to send the money that the people in Kenya had become accustomed to. These findings suggest that participants are so involved in the welfare of the people they left behind such that they would engage in long term planning for them.

6.3.4 Investments and eventual return

Participants' engagement in investment in Kenya was also linked to their retirement planning and the uncertainty of where they will settle. During the interviews a total of twenty-nine participants made reference to Kenya in terms of their eventual return to Kenya. Table 6.3 shows the distribution of participants' responses including those who did not mention eventual return.

Table 6.3: Participants' intentions to return to Kenya (N=38)

	<i>Women</i> (<i>n=18</i>)	<i>Men</i> (<i>n=20</i>)	<i>Total (n=38)</i> <i>N (%)</i>
Will definitely return to Kenya	11	13	24 (63%)
Will not return	2	1	3 (8%)
Not sure	1	1	2 (5%)
No mention of return to Kenya	4	5	9 (24%)

Of the twenty-nine participants who discussed returning to Kenya, 24 (63%) were definite that they would return to Kenya, two or five percent were not sure and three or eight percent would definitely not return to Kenya. For the participants who were not sure, they said that sometimes they considered returning and at other times they felt that they would settle permanently in United States. For those participants who intended to return to Kenya, they talked about how it was important to maintain strong ties with the people they left behind in preparation for their eventual return. They said that they focused their efforts on building a base for their eventual return. The participants indicated that they would stay in the United States while they were still productive and able to work and then retire to Kenya. As Mutua, in his late forties and in the United States for fifteen years explained:

I have invested heavily in Kenya, my mind is that I don't want to grow old in America and die in U.S. I have a time limit of how long I want to stay in U.S. That is why I have strong connections in Kenya through investment, family. There is life in Kenya, U.S. life is very fast, everything is on a time limit, do this there's a deadline, do that the deadline is tomorrow, it is too fast. All the time you are running. There is never enough and there is no slowing down. In U.S. you have to keep running until you drop dead, you can work until you are about almost seventy. You are old and you are still working. Kenya there is more relaxation for people to appreciate life and not working all the time. There is different pace of life between Kenya and U.S.

Investing in Kenya is also indicative of participants' ambiguity regarding whether they will settle in United States or plan to eventually return to Kenya. Such conversations

were not limited to the research interview only. During a birthday party at Eastside Park, there were various discussions of the viability of investing in Kenya for retirement purposes were a common topic. Mostly men engaged in these discussions about investing in Kenya for eventual return. One of the recurring themes was the reason for the choice of Kenya as their retirement destination; they all seemed to agree that the elderly are treated better in Kenya compared to the United States. They compared in detail how the elderly people are treated back in Kenya as opposed to how they live in the United States, emphasizing that the elderly received more attention and respect in Kenya.

For other participants, the idea of migration is not new. They made reference to the process of rural-urban migration whereby the migrants never considered the urban areas their permanent homes. Mutuku who is in his late fifties and has been in United States for twenty years compared in detail earlier migration experiences to recent ones.

He said:

See, the way I look at America is that I am here for purposes of investment and I will definitely return to Kenya when I have made enough money to live comfortably in Kenya. What I can say about America is ... you know when Nairobi started to develop and had many employment opportunities. People used to leave their rural homes and go to Nairobi to search for employment to look for jobs and better their lives in the urban areas. But they didn't forget their homes in the rural areas, people had to have a home in the rural areas even if they have a big house in Nairobi they must have a *home* [emphasis in original conversation] in the rural areas. You remember, these people moved to the urban areas in search of employment and better lives but they always maintained ties with people at home. I remember very well, people coming from Nairobi with nice clothes and good things and people who worked in Nairobi built big houses with tin roofs. That is how we all wanted to go to Nairobi and be like so-and-so. The people also always send money to us in the rural areas and the people in rural areas also supported the urban people by preparing the rural areas for their eventual return. It was great [laughter] it was good very good, imagine at the time we thought Nairobi was the big thing, who thought of America, now the people in Nairobi think of getting to America. It is all about wishing for more and more and better and better.

These culturally based reasons for maintaining ties underscore two issues; a) participants' non-economic reasons for maintaining ties and b) that participants are people of two worlds. The participants' sentiments reveal that the decisions to maintain ties are not made solely based on an economic rationale but are imbued with social and cultural considerations. The emphasis on 'home' provides a common cultural understanding because home is a very important aspect. These discussions regarding their ties with Kenya expose how participants' decisions are not made separately based on economic, social or cultural considerations; but that these factors are intertwined in the decisions made on a daily basis.

6.3.5 Education

Seventy-nine percent of the participants stated that they sent money for educational purposes. The conversation with Musa, in his mid-forties and in the United States for the last twelve years emphasized the point when he said:

I have responsibilities, especially school fees, which is the biggest of them all. See, I have a sister who is in secondary school and two brothers going to college, my parents don't work and have no income. I have educated all my siblings, it has always been my responsibility. Then I have my elder sister, she is married but her husband has no money, no job, no nothing. So what should I do, sit and see her kids chased home from school. She calls me and she is crying and mark you these kids are very bright. She has smart kids, one of them just finished class 8 with flying colors, so I have to educate them. You don't want to know how many letters I get from home, people asking me to help them pay only the school fees for their kids, only school fees nothing else. I feel bad because I can't help all of them, I try my best and help those that I can, but look at me, I am not a millionaire or anything close to that, so how much can I do?

Education costs in Kenya are very high and many people struggle to keep their children in school. The situation is worse for girls because in the event of financial

constraints, parents prefer to educate their sons rather than daughters. After coming to power in 2002, the current administration made a bold move and abolished primary school fees (tuition) in January 2003. This move opened up opportunities for disadvantaged and marginalized children, especially girls, who had never enrolled in school or had dropped out because they simply could not afford the costs.⁴⁰ Even with the elimination of tuition for elementary schools, associated costs such as transportation, books, uniforms and school development contributions still force make education unaffordable for many people. It will be interesting to watch the trends as the current administration policies take root.

A large proportion of the remittances that participants sent to Kenya were still being spent on funding education related costs. Education was definitely a high priority in sending money to Kenya. The importance of education was best captured by thirty-nine year old Karimi who has been in United States for sixteen years, when she said, “there are times I ignore the money requests that they have. The only thing that I never turn down is if someone is sick or they have been sent away from school because of unpaid balances.”

Since a substantial amount of remittances supports education expenses, participants considered this a major benefit to people back in Kenya. Participants explained their sense of relief that they were here in United States and thus made it possible for their siblings and relatives to complete their education. These findings suggest that the participants’ ties with Kenya are very close such that they take on the daily responsibilities such as paying for school. Furthermore, the importance of formal

⁴⁰ The move to provide free primary education led to an increase of 104 percent in primary school enrolment. With an estimated net primary school enrolment rate of 77 percent, the country is far from achieving universal primary education, (Vos et. al. 2004).

education to the majority of Kenyans cannot be gainsaid. Formal education is strongly associated with white-collar employment and hence supposed to make much difference in an individual's life circumstances.

When participants support educational projects they are engaged in life changing process for those people they maintain ties with to support their education needs. In Kenya, education has value not only in terms of employment but also in terms of future investment. It is common that parents in Kenya educate their children and their children take care of them in their old age. It is possible that participants engaged in paying for education expect to receive some benefit in the future from those they have assisted. Even though they may not be planning to return permanently to Kenya, when they visit they may expect that their support will be reciprocated. As Saitoti in his early forties and in the United States for twenty-three years said:

Those are just as though they are my children and I send them school fees all the time. And when I travel home, I tell you those boys protect me seriously. If anybody tries to plan anything bad against me, those boys will take care of him in a minute. I mean, I have helped them a lot, I pay their fees and so they stay out of trouble. If it was not for me, I don't know where they will be today.

Participants' role in educating their family, friends or relatives may also have deeper significance than altruistic motives. The efforts to make changes in peoples' lives can also be used to advance one's position in society. Involvement in development activities in one's constituency has been used as a stepping stone to advance to positions of political leadership. Education is one of the main areas people with political ambitions target to advance their political aspirations. Even though none of the participants I interviewed mentioned that they had political ambitions, paying for school fees would go a long way in advancing their chances if they ever chose to run for political offices. Such

efforts at improving the lives of people would also put them in positions of opinion leaders.

In summary the findings discussed above show that participants sent money for household survival, education and health suggest that immigrants in the United States contribute greatly to improving the living conditions in their home communities. In this way, it could be argued that they contribute to economic growth of their home or Kenyan communities and in turn that of the country at large. They in return, even while away, gain social status and recognition and they enjoy a sense of belonging. Their involvements in activities that bring changes to peoples' lives also make them influential in the community.

6.4 Home Visits

6.4.1 Visits to Kenya

For those participants who had visited Kenya, they spent considerable time describing their experiences and the situation in Kenya. This did not happen during the time of research interviews only but it was also evident at other functions. Those who had visited Kenya seemed to command the attention of various groups at social functions. For example, at a barbecue held at the Eastside Park, one man who had recently returned from Kenya gave lengthy descriptions of the situation in Kenya. The conversations focused mainly on the levels of poverty, insecurity especially in urban areas, the lack of social services in many areas, the very poor infrastructure, which is old and in disrepair, the arrogance of politicians and the disempowered civil society such that the same corrupt politicians keep getting "recycled" at election time. Many of the participants'

discussions of the shortcomings in Kenya focused mainly on drawing comparisons between Kenya and the United States. When asked whether it is fair to compare Kenya and United States, Mwangi who has been in United States for twenty years and had recently returned from Kenya responded promptly:

You know where those people in big offices in Kenya went to school? Here in the States, some studied in Britain, others in Germany, Canada, name any developed country and I can guarantee you that a Kenyan has been to school there. Most of these people, the big people, the leaders, the politicians, CEOs of companies and whatever have studies abroad. They have been out of the country [Kenya] and they have seen what other countries have done, tell me, do you think they don't know what to do? Some of them worked in those countries and they know better. They know much better, in fact they helped those countries to progress but when they go home they simply want to enrich themselves. Poverty is big business, keep kidding yourself that these people don't know any better. You know how old the road system is here in U.S? Much of the development in U.S happened since the Great depression in the 1930s, how old is that? Kenya does not even have to invent the technology, all they have to do is apply it, the work has already been done.

The discussions about Kenya were not all negative, the participants talked positively and at great length about the resiliency of the people left behind, the generosity of the people, the more relaxed pace of life back in Kenya, the simplicity of life that people enjoyed, the cheerfulness of the people, the great food with no chemical additives and the acceptance by the people. Those participants who had visited explained how they had been treated as great people, the respect they were accorded and how they were easily accepted into the communities even after having been gone for a while. These were some of the things that they felt they missed while here in United States.

With a voice filled with emotion, Njeri who has been in the United States for seven years before she went home for a brief period of time, explained, “the way people welcomed me I was so humbled, *gaaki!* [expression of amazement]. I did not even bring

them much, but they were so happy, they prayed and sang and we were all laughing. I felt good inside, I keep those moments, I treasure them in my heart, now I write and talk to them more often.”

The participants also discussed the political changes and the advancements that they noticed when they went home. The views were mixed about how the current government was performing but in general there was consensus that some good things had happened especially in terms of education and the country’s economy. Those who expressed concerns with current administration discussed their feelings about corruption and tribalism. All those who had visited Kenya recently, that is, within the preceding three years, agreed that there was positive contribution but the country’s economy had deteriorated so much it will take a long time and commitment to rebuild it.

Participants repeatedly referenced Kenya as home; and as such it is possible that visits to Kenya gives one proof of their belonging to Kenya. The attachment to Kenya as a country was frequently expressed by invoking proverbs or commonly used Swahili adages. According to Atieno, after seven years in the U.S, she said, *Mwacha mila ni mtumwa* [Whoever renounces their culture is similar to a slave], while Mutuku who has been in United States for twenty years echoed the sentiments when he said that *Damu ni mzito kuliko maji* [blood is thicker than water]. Visits to Kenya therefore seemed to confer an enhanced status among other immigrants as it expressed an individual commitment to the people in Kenya. Even though commitments can be expressed through ties, some form of ties seemed to be held in higher regard, the visits which allowed face-to-face interaction were placed higher than other forms of ties.

Participants romanticized and castigated Kenya simultaneously. Such tensions were revealed through conversations. For example, thirty-eight year old Wanjiku who has been in United States for the last eleven years talked fondly about Kenya and said:

First and foremost because Kenya is home, you can't forget home, it reminds you of where you came from so that you don't forget and think America is your home and that your life is similar to everyone else here in the America. It is not the same, you came from a different place and you can't forget that place. When you keep in touch with the people at home then you are reminded of this all the time. The people at home make you know that your life is not American.

Earlier in the interview she had expressed totally different views about Kenya when she had said:

Sometimes I do not even know what to say about Kenya. Yaani [because] it is [pause] I don't know. First, the poverty and yet the government does not even seem concerned. Some people even think we were better off when we were under British, nothing works, the roads are full of potholes. Some roads that were destroyed during El Nino, which was in 1990 or 1989 that, those roads are still not repaired. Don't even talk about jobs, even for those with jobs the pay is so little. Those who work for the government get such little money, the poverty is unbelievable. By the way it is not because Kenya is poor, no there are people who live their lives as Kings. There are people with money beyond belief, they shop in London and Paris, they take vacations in Bermuda or Seychelles. It is corruption, mismanagement and I really hate it. I hate it. I hate that even the Kenyans don't talk about, they can't put their foot down and say enough is enough! Why elect the same people who you know are the same ones who have put us in a hole? Explain that. Sometimes, I think the problem is not the politicians, they are taking advantage of a situation that we present to them. The problem is Kenyans and that is why I am annoyed with them.

The visits to Kenya were an important part of maintaining ties and different from other ties in that they offered a more concrete way of enforcing the image of immigrants. When the people returned to visit, they prepared in advance wanting to display their success in America. As Awour in her late forties and in United States for eleven years said, "It is expensive to travel back home, it needs a lot of money. Not only the fare but

also money to spend in Kenya.” Traveling to Kenya allows participants to reinforce the notion associating United States with prosperity. When the participants travel to Kenya with all the trappings of economic success, it allows people back in Kenya to see firsthand the benefits of immigration. Awour continued and stated that, “people were so happy to see you in Kenya and you are treated as if you are a king. People line up to see you, the only problem is that they all want some money, I mean there is so much poverty.” Other participants who had been on visits to Kenya also expressed that they had felt appreciated and even felt that they had been elevated to higher status by the people in Kenya. Hence, it is possible that the ties reinforce the differences in statuses between the people in Kenya and those who reside in Kenya, with those who reside in United States being considered of higher status.

6.5 Cultural Practices

Even though the Kenyan immigrant community in Paterson did not have a visible ethnic enclave, it was evident that they had developed prominent social networks. Many of the participants were familiar with other participants and were up-to-date on events happening within the Kenyan community in Paterson and elsewhere. In general, participants were involved in various social activities; they supported each other during times of funerals, weddings and other social events. They came together for other social activities including soccer games, prayer meetings, baby showers, celebration of Kenyan holidays such *Kenyatta* day, *Jamhuri* day, *Madaraka* day and others.⁴¹ During these

⁴¹ Madaraka day celebrated on June 1 marks the day that Kenya gained self governance from the British in 1963; it precedes Jamhuri Day on December 12th commemorating the day Kenya got full independence in 1963. Kenyatta day celebrated on October 20 is in honor of all the freedom fighters who fought for Kenya’s independence, it is named after the first president of Kenya.

social activities they assisted each other with immigration issues and other problems, passing important information through their social networks.

In terms of organized group activities participants were active in groups such as the Jersey City Swahili Catholic group, Marantha Seventh Day Adventist church, ethnic-based organizations catering mainly for funeral arrangements; women based organizations engaged in self-help projects and ‘*merry-go-round*’⁴² activities. There was not an organized Swahili religious group in Paterson at the time of the research, however, the participants discussed plans to set up a similar group to the one in Jersey City.

It was clear from the participants’ discussions that they engaged in these group activities because they felt a sense of familiarity and common purpose. For forty-seven year old Mukami who has been in United States for fourteen years, she explained:

Anyway at these events there is also Kenyan food there is ‘*nyama choma na kachumbari*’ and people really love it. Everybody comes for a good time. Sometimes there are some people who look for problems and when they come, they try to start chaos. Such people we know them and we always take care of them by refusing them entry.

While the men discussed soccer games and investments at the barbecue events, the women talked mainly about baby showers and Christian community activities.

6.5.1 Social events

Participants came together during times of funeral arrangements, for a fellow immigrant or one of them experienced death of an immediate or close family member both in the United States and in Kenya. During these conversations participants explained

⁴² ‘*Merry-go-round*’ is a form of informal revolving credit group whereby members come together and agree to collect money at regular intervals and give it to one of their members. Usually the objective of the group is self improvement; groups have their own internally developed set of rules.

that they formed associations with the primary objective of handling funeral arrangements. Forty-two year old Otieno who has been in United States for thirteen years explained how such associations operate. He said:

We have an organization we contribute every month, we pay about \$20 every month. This money is paid out to any member who meets some misfortune for example their immediate family member dies. We meet twice a year so we can meet and set an agenda and see how much money we have collected and paid. If there's need we elect new officials. We meet about twice a year but we communicate throughout by phone and email.

These associations act as insurance. The association sets forth specific amounts of money to be paid within set periods of time to ensure continued membership. In most cases, the amount was between \$100-150 paid quarterly and the association had a set amount that they paid out to members whenever needed. Therefore in order to remain eligible for benefits, members have to abide by the agreement set by the association. The association can also call upon members to make extra contributions especially when they have to distribute funds to many members. It is important to point out that even though the association operates as if it were insurance, none of the participants referred to it in insurance terms. These associations were similar to other activities in which participants were engaged in that they too followed ethnic lines.

Participants mentioned that the Kamba tended to have their own association with a membership composed mainly of Kamba except in instances where a spouse or partner is from another ethnic group. These observations were confirmed through an analysis of the emails received from different groups. Since I had provided my email address to various groups, I was included in different mailings regarding events such as funeral and baby showers. Whenever I received an email, I examined the names of others included in the email. The majority of the names would be from specific ethnic group and in most

cases those related to the host or the person for whom the event was being organized. The emails and the participants had a common element; there was no ethnic group, which was entirely exclusive or homogenous suggesting that there was some level of inter-group ties.

The practice of coming together at times of death is in line with most cultural practices in Kenya. For instance, many cultures in Kenya have a tradition of people coming together during times of funeral to assist in digging the grave, consoling the bereaved relatives and maintaining vigil until the burial is over. Participants used similar words when describing the functions of the associations here in the United States. For example, when fund raising the emcee informed people that the money needed to be contributed was to go towards purchase of coffin, transportation of the body back home and money for digging the grave.

It is possible that the participants formed associations because of the economic implications of transporting the deceased for burial in Kenya. Many participants expressed that they preferred to be buried in Kenya 'with their own' or 'to avoid curses from the ancestors'. This leads to higher funeral expenses and participants often found it difficult to meet such expenses on their own. In other ways, this common need brings the participants together. People also have to continually maintain ties with each other in the United States because the amount collected at such fundraising activities depends on the number of people who will attend. It is in their interest to have more contacts because it pays to have a wider network of ties.

Participants discussed in detail how they came together for religious meetings. Apart from providing religious nourishment, these groups provide a venue where people

socialize and exchange news, information, opinions, and ideas. Such environments provide a comfortable place where the immigrants share their inner perspectives about the world outside with no inhibitions. They get an opportunity to reminisce about Kenya without attracting undue attention. Nyamweya in his late fifties and in the United States for five years explained how he found common ground with other immigrants during religious meeting.

The first time I joined the charismatic group at my church, it was very inconsistent. I was surprised very few people came and I did not feel connected. Then I attended a funeral for [mentions the name] in Newark. There I met some people and they told me they have a small '*jumuiya*' where they meet, since I started going I have encouraged my family and friends and it is growing. We go to Baltimore and other places and it is growing we are not many but it is growing. We hope that we can organize and be having a Swahili mass, they have one in Jersey City, Baltimore and Philadelphia. That is our next goal.

Usually, after the prayer service, there is a reception with food and most of the foods served are Kenyan such as, *mandazi*, *chapati*,⁴³ and other foods such as rice and chicken. Information exchange is a key element of such services. For example, at one event, the priest announced to the members that a new Kenyan food business shop had recently been opened and he encouraged them to support it. Such incidents reveal that there is no separation between religion and business, the immigrant ties superseded all. Discussions about child-rearing practices and family relations are also common. The conversation below between two women, Mwajuma and Kasichana is an example of such interactions:

⁴³ Mandazi is a type of pastry, similar to doughnut made using wheat flour rolled out in different shapes and deep fried in oil. Chapati is also another type of food which resembles 'pita' bread. It is also made from wheat flour and the dough is rolled out into discs on a flat surface using a rolling pin. Then it is browned on both sides on a frying pan and greased with oil or butter. In Kenya chapati is not an everyday food and it is usually a food for special occasions and holidays, especially Christmas.

Mwajuma: Here in America you have to be very careful, I always say this to young parents, when my children were small, I was happier. Now [throws hands in the air] I don't know what to say.

Kasichana: America is good and bad, but for children it is bad. My younger son, we kept on telling him that these people were not his friends and he would always complain "why you picking on my friends, leave them alone." Let me tell you, when these American kids stole his credit card and put \$600, he was crying. Because they were his friends, they knew where he kept everything, he would give them rides in his car, he would buy them things. See, he is more active than even his older brothers so he started working early and bought a car. These other kids did not work, they only followed him for the money, we tried to tell him he would not listen. He learned his lesson, now he is more careful.

Mwajuma: I need your son to talk to my son because I am tired of this... sometimes I even think I should have let them stay home and they come when they are more mature.

One of the major challenges that participants faced when they wanted to engage in activities organized by other Kenyans was availability of time off from work. Most of the participants said they missed many activities because of conflicts with their work schedules. Participants were also active in church activities. They talked about small prayer groups that they had established, choir groups that they were involved in singing at Swahili services.

6.5.2 Cultural values and attachments

Ties with Kenya were also maintained through engagement in specific cultural practices which promoted certain cultural values familiar to the participants. Chumba, a forty-one year old man in United States for twenty years explained why his reasons for sending money to Kenya. He said:

You know I have to send the money, you know how our culture is. When you 'have' you are supposed to share and help those who don't have. At the same time especially for my parents, people will look and see them suffering and yet they have a son in America. That will be a shame and I can't live with it. That's the way it has always been. Among the Kamba, the elderly parents lived with the

youngest son and I am away so I have to make plans for how they will live. I wish I could only bring them here but my mother will not agree. I can't ignore them, they will be '*kiumo*' [curse] and me and my children and generations to come will suffer the effects. I don't know whether '*kiumo*' is real or not but I don't want to be the one to test that theory.

From Chumba's discussion, he felt obligated to provide assistance to his parents and he worried that failure to adhere to these cultural expectations may lead to shame and also misfortune to his family and its future generations. Taking care of one's parents, poor relatives and other members of community is a moral responsibility. Even when the financial pressures to take care of the elderly seemed overwhelming many of the participants still strove to undertake obligations. Therefore regardless of the miles that separated them the fear of repercussions for not assisting the elderly prevailed. Sixty year old, Mumia, who had been in United States for nine years at the time of the study, expressed this very clearly when he said:

Yes, yes, you have to send money back home especially when you know where we have come from. I send money to my family, I have to help my aging mother. I want her last days to be good, that way she will leave blessings for me, my children and their children. You see people who don't help their parents in their old age, they get cursed. Their lives have problems after problems and they don't even understand why; it is because they left their parents to suffer. I don't want that to happen to me or my family.

Other participants rationalized their sense of obligation to assist in moral terms as one participant stated "When someone gets a chance to be here in America they must help their people, otherwise God will punish them." These findings and the earlier discussions brings to the fore participants' sense of obligation to the people they left behind and remain connected to provide support based on their cultural and moral beliefs.

Another recurring theme was that of reciprocity. The participants explained how they had been brought up in a culture of reciprocity and they considered this an important

aspect of their lives which they would prefer to retain. Furthermore, as Mwangi explained, he owed his education and success to the community back in Kenya. They had supported him to come to United States and as such he felt that he in turn should assist others. In his own words, he said:

It took me some time to find employment, say about five months before I got a job. During that time I had been surviving on the money that I had come with from home. You know before I left home the people had done some small '*harambee*' to raise some money for my school and survival. That's why I can't forget the people at home. In fact, most of my education was community sponsored, that's why I have to give and give back as much as I can.

These sentiments about helping and feelings of reciprocity were expressed in various ways by the participants. Participants felt committed to support each other because they had received support or would receive support in the future. Participants expressed that they maintained ties was one way of expressing their commitment to their culture suggesting they had not abandoned their way of life.

6.5.3 Symbols and Rituals

Other cultural responsibilities that the participants were engaged in included partaking in rituals organized in Kenya. There were instances where participants explained that cultural responsibilities that would not be simply fulfilled by sending money or making a phone call. Such cultural obligations required that the individual be physically present in Kenya. Many participants explained that they had been faced with such situations especially when it involved the death of a parent which requires specific funeral rites. Some cultures in Kenya require that certain burial rites be performed and in some instances the surviving kin e.g. spouse, children, parent, in-laws, must be physically onsite. Therefore, participants maintain ties with people in Kenya to keep up with such

events, which may require their participation. Among some ethnic groups, physical presence is not only required at the time of funeral but most importantly at the first anniversary of the death, commonly referred to as *makumbusho* [memorial service].

There are also other customary rites, which are not connected to death that require the physical presence of certain individuals. Different ethnic groups have different requirements, some are common to all but are practiced differently by various groups. Some of the rites mentioned included dowry payments, initiations, start of building or move to new farm, ancestral blessings and many others. Twenty-nine year old Kamau, in United States for seven years found himself in such a situation.

I was on the phone with my dad and he says that I must go home. See, I have to travel home no matter what. My father has made that very clear to me. Men, this is a long story [pause]. See, among the [name of ethnic group withheld] there are some very interesting rituals that must happen before a new house is build. My parents have lived in Mombasa for a long time but now they are getting old and they want to retire to the rural area. Traditionally, they cannot start building until the first son is present and participates in the rituals. So I have to travel for this ritual, it kinda of ground breaking ceremony! I have to go otherwise my parents can't build their house and therefore will not be able to retire to the rural home. I have to go so that he can build his house, it is a must the firstborn to be there. Men, if I knew this before I came, I could have insisted he start the house. Now I must abide by the customs even when I am many miles away. Kenyans we will never progress. By the way I am the one who will be paying for the house to be build and now I travel to Kenya so that the house to be build!! [laughs loudly].

Not all events are given equal weight. The participants explained that they were very selective about the events that they engaged. They preferred events that they considered beneficial in terms of information. They also considered other immigrants who would reciprocate with their attendance in the future. Forty-one year old Chumba referred to such contacts as “productive social networks” and explains that this kind of selective socialization is recent. He said:

In the earlier days, we met to celebrate; there was no focus in those celebrations. There was only beer drinking and drinking and we could celebrate anything, name it and we have a party for it. There was nothing positive. I even used to go all the way to the embassy in New York and Washington to celebrate Kenyan holidays at the ambassador's party. But the celebrations were not constructive and not productive and it was a waste of time and money. I also felt that bad things will come out of these celebrations and I decided to stay away. But nowadays when I attend events organized by Kenyans, I prefer to attend events that are productive; somewhere I will gain something. I must say that there is a difference between the earlier immigrants and the new ones. I think the immigrants who are coming recently are more focused and engaged more in constructive discussions and activities. They are more energized and they want to do positive things. Before we used to be like 'cold chicken',⁴⁴ we didn't do much. I purchased my house recently and yet I could have done this way before when the prices of real estate were even lower. But most of the earlier immigrants were not focused. I think it is because we believed in going home and most of us were trying to make more money and go back home and do something big so that people see you are from the US. But I think the current immigrants are smarter. Before we merely used to have fun, beer drinking and partying and then more beer. For example, last week I met two guys from Kenya who were talking about what they are doing in Kenya helping AIDS orphaned kids. Then I met another man who was talking about how he will help to build schools and develop Kenya.

These and similar comments showed that he considered the Kenyan immigrant community to be making progress in terms of assisting people back in Kenya. His assessment of the community's progress is based on what they have been able to do in back in Kenya. Therefore, the aspect of ties gets prominence in evaluating the state of the community here in the United States.

6.5.4 Jealousy and competition

Participants seemed to have considerable information on what was happening to other Kenyan immigrants not only in U.S but in other parts of the world. Overall, participants gave positive evaluations of their relations with other Kenyans but they also

⁴⁴ This reference was used as a direct translation from Swahili to refer to dull situations, inactivity or a 'laissez faire' attitude.

pointed out to some issues, which they felt were drawbacks within the Kenyan immigrant community. According to participants, social ties were not always amicable; they discussed in detail the existence of intense feelings of jealousy and competition among immigrants. They felt that these jealousies affected their own individual and community development.

There were incidences of people undermining others even at their places of work. The participants explained that if someone works hard and achieves some level of success, there are people who question this success and want to know how s/he made it. Kariuki's fifteen years in United States have shown him much about ties, he said that:

Kenyans have one simple problem. They do not wish for others to progress. They undermine each other and are competitive very competitive. They are non-supportive. If they think they will tell you something that will put you ahead of them, forget it they will not tell you anything. They hide information from each other. That is the problem with Kenyans. That is why you see many of our people get lost and they lose direction. Because we don't provide them enough supports and give them the truth, facts about America and the life and how they can avoid some of the pitfalls. Unless you are very very close to someone they will not simply give you the information. We forget the important issues and prioritize concerns. It's not easy to get back on track once someone loses direction. Sometimes it leads to suicide. I know at least two who committed suicide because they had lost direction and it was very difficult to find their way back to normal. I can also say that this problem is also tribal. The two people who committed suicide, one was Luo and another one Kisii. People I have talked to from these communities express a lot of frustration.

The participants also discussed how immigrants from Kenya don't talk well about each other. The participants explained that whenever they experienced strained social ties with fellow immigrants, they usually tried to resolve it within the community. Sometimes they will call close friends and family and discuss the issue in an attempt to reach an amicable resolution. In the event that the issue was not resolved through such consultation, participants explained that they generally opted to avoid contact with

specific individual(s). None of the participants made reference to seeking legal redress or seeking external assistance or services such as therapy to amend their relations. Other participants added that even avoidance does not help because if you socialize with them you are in trouble and if you don't they still talk negatively about you. In such, instances most of the participants agreed that the best thing is to focus on one's goals and stay to themselves.

Another concern expressed by some of the participants was that Kenyan immigrants appeared to socialize mostly with other Kenyan immigrants. As Kariuki, in his late thirties and in United States for the last fifteen years observed, "When you go to a function organized by Kenyans, you find only Kenyans and you ask yourself, don't they have friends from other communities? Even if they don't invite Americans, at least they can invite other immigrants; Spanish, Nigerians, or whatever else." Participants invariably felt that Kenyans were a closed community of immigrants and needed to open up more as the Nigerians. Twenty-nine year old Kamau who has been in United States for seven years explained his reasons for having mostly Kenyan friends. He said:

The people I have had a relationship with are the people I know and these are Kenyans. This is because when I came from New York to New Jersey the only people I socialized with were Kenyans. Not because I prefer Kenyans but because I already have these Kenyans friends. If I lived in a place where there were other non-Kenyan people I would have known them. I came and found a system in place where it was Kenyans only and I continued with it. I found a small all-Kenyan community and therefore we lived I lived the Kenyan way in U.S. I don't live the life of people in U.S. This system perpetuates itself and there is no motivation to know people outside this group and I hold the community and I am still in that circle. This group kinda of provides me with all that I need to know, if I was in a strange place I would have known other people but I have no had that need because I am happy. Since I am in Paterson and if there were no Kenyans in Paterson I would have socialized with the other groups and maybe my life would have been different from the way it is now. It is not because I don't want to it is because I have not had the need to.

The participants outlined that the problem with such organizing is that it limits ideas and resources from outsiders. One of the possible explanations for this type of organizing is because the Kenyan immigrants organize based on a need for familiarity and people they can relate to easily. Furthermore, they consider that other Kenyans may identify more with their objectives. Even though the participants seemed aware of this kind of separateness and talked about it, they did not seem overly concerned, or even viewed it as assimilation issue. Their discussions showed that assimilating was a goal that they pursued. As explained by forty year old Musembi, in the United States for fifteen years who said that:

Listen, I don't sit down to seriously plan who I will socialize with. When I am at work where I spent most of my time, I socialize with co-workers and at that time I am American, even my accent changes. Then I get back from work and I meet with my friends outside work and most of them happen to be Kenyans. I don't plan it, it happens. I hang out with them and they understand me, I don't have to be politically correct, I can relax and say whatever I want. What's wrong with that? It is not that I don't want to socialize but I also want my time, time to de-stress and time to laugh and catch on what's happening within the Kenyan community.

As Kamau's and Musembi's discussions reveal these socialization patterns are not planned in advance. As the participants go about their daily lives to make ends meet, they engage in these groups in different ways. It is possible that the participants inadvertently socialize mostly with other Kenyan immigrants and it is probable that their choices are based on their origins which evoke feelings of belonging. Even though the activities they discuss appear as social and leisure engagements, they have the potential to develop into more organized collective activities that have effects on the immigrants, people they left behind and the host country.

The participants seemed very much aware of the relevance of American society and explained clearly they used their advantage of English language and higher levels of education to be able to integrate especially in terms of employment and settlement. The participants explained their dual existence whereby they socialized and integrated at work, while limiting their social functions to their own groups, providing an escape valve. These findings show that first generation immigrants from Kenya do not necessarily subscribe fully to the linear pattern of assimilation as postulated by earlier assimilation theories. Neither were they fully focused only on their transnational ties with the people they left behind in Kenya. Their responses showed that they adopted a combination of both, as they settled and became involved with life in the United States they continued to maintain or in some cases renew ties with their places of origin. They were actively engaged in both their host and home countries.

6.6 Frequency of Ties

6.6.1 Length of stay in U.S. and frequency of ties

From the discussions with participants, the frequency of ties fluctuated depending on length of stay and the need to maintain ties. Frequency of economic ties fluctuated based on the financial needs of the people back in Kenya including tuition payments, hospital bills whenever needed and investments. Social ties fluctuated based on availability of time and cost of maintaining ties to the participants. Participants reported that they tended to call more when they had time between their work schedules and their everyday activities and when they could afford phone cards. In general, the majority of the participants indicated that they used to call more frequently when they arrived and the

frequency of communication declined as they became more involved in activities in the United States. Onyango who is in his late thirties and has been in United States for nine years explained the frequency of ties as follows:

The first few days when I came I used to call my folks almost every day. I wanted to tell them the many new things I was seeing and encountering. I would call and say ‘Guess what? I went to New York today,’ [laughing] it felt great. I was in the world’s biggest city you know. So the first few weeks I called very frequently to Kenya simply to tell them everything. Then I started working, coming home tired, now I would stay a month or so. I still call my parents. I used to call my friends often more than my parents but at present I call maybe my friends after a month or so. Sometimes now they call me, lately they can call using the internet. Lately they call me and then I call them back. I still talk to them a lot. Then I had to focus on my school and so many things, I just didn’t have enough time. [Pause] Then guess what, after I went back home, I had been here say five years or what? After coming back from home, now I call more. More so because, I am following up on some projects and other things. I talk to my father most of the time. About 90 percent of the time I can say it is my mother... oh no, my father that I talk to. Then my cousins, so he calls me and I like him and we talk and talk. And many others and now with email I can also send an email and it is ok.

This pattern was also confirmed by other participants who had been in United States for longer periods of time. As expressed by forty-two year old Mueni who has been in United States for eighteen years, she said, “For some time I lost contact with people back home, I rarely called. I had so many things to do, it was crazy, my mother used to ask what happened to me, and she would never understand American life. But nowadays, I call every now and then; I call even when they don’t expect it.”

Evidently, the longer an immigrant is away from home, the more they lose contact with the people they left behind since people’s circumstances change and they lessen contact. Furthermore, the time right after arrival is devoted to establishing oneself. As one gets more immersed in the daily activities in United States, they tend to reduce the frequency of ties. The low frequency as expressed by the participants was the time when

they are struggling and adjusting to the new environment. After they establish themselves they renew their ties. Therefore the general frequency of ties takes on a U-shaped curve with most ties upon arrival, declining as one settles in and then picking up again.

Sometimes, the renewed ties are not necessarily for the reasons the ties, as Kamau concluded:

... as I told you when you are able to travel to Kenya, you can then visit or invest in Kenya. So, if you maintain contact with your friends in Kenya then they can help you when you want to invest in Kenya because here in the States it is as if you are blindfolded and you don't know what is happening in Kenya so these people can help you. It is as if your eyes on the ground.

Participants who were able to travel to Kenya reported more benefits from ties. These findings suggest that ties are enhanced if one is able to travel back to Kenya indicating a renewal of ties every time one travels back to Kenya. It would be interesting to establish the threshold for the surge in renewal of ties. There were a few participants who indicated that their frequency of maintaining ties through phone calls had remained relatively constant. These included participants whose family especially children and wives were still back in Kenya.

Some participants expressed that they renewed their ties because they felt betrayed by fellow immigrants and considered their old friends or contacts back in Kenya more trustworthy. The participants who reported that they had increased their frequency of ties with Kenya were asked whether they thought that the frequency would decline again in the future, they responded in the negative. From these findings it is possible to suggest that frequency of ties is related to length of stay but not necessarily assessed in number of years but rather through self perceptions of one's achievement. It is also

related to the needed time to attain legal status allowing for travel Kenya and United States thus enabling the renewal of ties.

6.6.2 Relationship between ties among immigrants and length of stay

The responses from participants showed that length of stay in United States affected their ties with people back in Kenya and also their ties among other immigrants. According to participants, ties among immigrants are influenced by their education level, success in their personal lives, length of stay and ethnicity. Income was not mentioned as a factor that influences ties among participants probably because they assumed that everyone in the United States has some form of income. Personal achievement was important and was subtly linked to length of stay. Participants noted that immigrants' relations with each other tended to be based on length of stay. As Kipkirui who is in his late twenties and has been in United States for seven years observed when he shared his views:

The main concern is always the length of stay, the question that is asked all the time when people meet is; how long have you been here? That is typically the first question immigrants ask each other. That is what I see all the time. People ask you how long have you been here? When you say one year; well [pause] then [shakes head indicating not so good]. If the answer is something like five years; oh yeah that's good. Then the next question is, so what do you do? Then when someone hears that you have been here a longer time, and then they assume you have accomplished a lot, you have more experience, you can maneuver in different situations, you know how to survive, you have been rich, you have been to school, you have a nice job and basically you are making more money. Compared to one year... you don't have a nice job, you don't drive a nice car. Basically it's about money, experience and status.... Yes, you have been here longer you are more settled if you came a year ago you're still organizing your life.

His observations were also echoed by other participants. During the interviews participants talked about other immigrants who had been in the United States for longer periods of time and what was expected of them. It was evident that participants assessed each other using length of stay in the United States. They explained a person's achievement or lack of success based on how long they had been in the United States. From their discussions it seemed that the expectation was that an immigrant's education and economic situation should improve the longer the period of stay in the United States.

Length of stay was also an indicator of authority. Immigrants who had been in the United States for longer periods of time were considered to have social positions and their opinions were sought more frequently. Consequently, much more was expected of them. Other participants anticipated that those who have been in the United States longer should have at least completed college education, purchased a house and demonstrated more understanding of life in the United States. Participants also linked social standing in the immigrant community to educational achievement. Education was important especially education from American institutions since it implied better jobs and higher incomes. Ethnicity was also mentioned but it did not appear to be a strong predictor of social standing within the immigrant community. A possible explanation could be that since participants tend to interact with people from their own ethnic groups, observations and experiences within mixed ethnic groups are limited. Overall, participants placed greater emphasis on the role of length of stay in United States than education, age, ethnicity or gender.

There was no clear pattern as to whether it was possible to transfer class privileges from Kenya to the United States. Participants described their experiences of

changes in class status in both positive and negative terms. Some of the words they used included: “It was an eye-opener” and “humbling.” Others really resented their experiences and used words such as “humiliating” and “frustrating.” Some participants observed that previous class status in Kenya was irrelevant in the United States. Most of these participants felt that the United States had offered them a chance to be considered on the same level as people who had considered themselves of higher class in Kenya. For this group of participants the United States had offered some upward mobility for them in relation to other Kenyan immigrants.

6.6.3 Relationship between technology and frequency of ties

Participants maintained ties through internet via emails and reading Kenyan newspapers, so the role of internet and technological development cannot be discounted in accounting for frequency of ties. As Saitoti in his early forties explained:

I did not know many people here and so I used to think a lot about home. At the time I was thinking “when will I finish my school and go back home?” I stayed in touch with many people. Then I started slowly by slowly losing contact, at the time it was writing, there was no internet so you write letters. Someone could write to me and I don’t reply, they write again and I say I will reply but there was no time. Everything was rushing and I had school and work and work and school, mark you I had three jobs and full time school, so where do I get the time to write. It continued for some time and the people who used to write stopped writing, the girls I was talking with got married and that was finished, there was no hope. Then we started getting phone cards, now someone could call and it was cheaper. So I started calling a few more times. I also now had some money. After a couple of trips home, now I have so many people to call I can’t even imagine. Then they text you, flashing they call it, they email and now you write a letter it is in Kenya within 3-4 days! What are you talking about? When I talk with my grandmother back home, she thinks I am standing next to her, the sound is so clear. With fiber optics, there is no static and echo, before you would call and when you talk, you have to wait for a few minutes, it was difficult making a phone call back home. What the internet has done, you have no idea, it has changed everything and I mean everything, even the price of air tickets!

The advantages of internet were cited variously and it was also noted that in the past, people in United States initiated ties or phone calls. Things have changed and for those people who live in urban Kenya, especially Nairobi, they can even make phone calls to United States very easily. As such, frequency of ties is also dependent on technology.

The discussions in this chapter show that participants maintained various forms of ties including phone calls, internet, mail, material exchanges including money/remittances, traveling back home and cultural activities or ceremonies/rituals. These ties were maintained on regular basis but were not based on a systematic format of weekly or monthly patterns. They followed their own regularity based on need such as social activities or other life events. More phone calls were made when certain events happened e.g. someone died, birth of a child, elections, natural events, or people wanted to discuss their problems. It was evident that participants maintained ties mostly family, relatives and friends. The ties were mostly with people from their local villages and in many cases this was implied that by and large ties were with people from their own ethnic groups. Reasons for maintaining ties varied and ranged from need to know how people are doing, follow-up on projects, sending money for education, hospital bills to general household sustenance. The frequency and amount of remittances sent back varied with season such as when school starts, holidays such as Easter and Christmas. Length of stay impacted ties in that across the years the frequency of ties took on a U-shaped curve. At beginning of their stay they maintained more ties, and as the anxieties and frustrations of settling down to new life set in the ties decline. Thereafter, the ties increased after some period of stay in the United States - either old ties were renewed or reestablished through visits

to Kenya. The discussions with the participants also brought to the fore how ties are embedded in the social, economic and cultural aspects of immigrants' lives.

The interviews with participants showed that they maintained ties among themselves and they considered these ties just as important as those with people in Kenya. The participants meet for social events and assisted each other in times of need. These ties also served to balance the participants' American and Kenyan lives. While there was no visible ethnic enclave of Kenya immigrants in Paterson, their discussions showed they were a very close-knit community. They remained in contact through their established social networks.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GENDER ANALYSIS

This chapter deals with gender analysis and reviews the findings in terms of gender relations. It focuses on issues related to how men and women perceived their immigration experiences and the role of their pre-migration situations on their experiences. It also addresses how men and women maintained ties with Kenya and whether the processes discussed in the previous chapters affected men and women in different ways. The chapter shows how immigration offers both opportunities and constraints to men and women.

7.1 Men and women included in the study and reasons for migration

Eighteen (47%) women and 20 (53%) men were included in this study. There were small age differences between men and women; the average age for women was 38 years and 40 for men. Men had resided in the United States longer than women. More than half of the men (55%) had been in the United States for more than ten years compared to 35% of women. The average length of stay for women was 10 years and 13 years for men. There were five men who had lived in the United States for at least twenty years or more. None of the women had been in the United States for 20 years; the longest length of stay for women was 18 years. Men reported higher levels of education with three out of every five men having a bachelor's degree compared to one out of every five women. Thirty-five percent men had a graduate level education or above, while 22% of women had same level of education. A large percentage of women (44%) reported their highest level of education as high school.

In terms of marital status, 39% of women were married compared to 60% of men. There were more single women in general - 39% women compared to 30% of men. Even when broken down by age, there were still more single women under age 35 than men, 30% compared to 28% of men. Two (11%) women reported living with someone or a partner to whom they were not married. None of the men reported such a situation. Either women were vocal about their relationships or wanted to define themselves in relation to their male connections in the immigrant community. The men probably saw no need in revealing such situation for it did not enhance their status or standing in the community. It was interesting to note that none of the men or women reported being married or living with a non-Kenyan; all those who were married or living with someone said that their partner was also a Kenyan immigrant.

All the men and women included in this study were employed at the time of the study and reported their occupation within the last six months. Three men (15%) were self employed, running their own businesses such as sale of handicrafts and cab driving. One woman had a hair-braiding business on a part-time basis and also maintained a regular full-time job. Sixteen women were employed in social service occupations including certified nurse assistants (CNAs), home health aides (HHA), nurses, social workers, direct care workers in group homes and baby-sitters. Men had more diverse occupations including accounting, college professors, pharmacy, radiographer, public health and systems engineering. There were only three men (15%) who worked in the social service sector as compared to 17 (94%); only one woman reported holding an administrative position in a group home.

Women had an average income of \$38,333 compared to men who had an average annual income of \$43, 500. Sixty percent of the men reported incomes of \$40,000 and above annually compared to 40% of women. Women's occupations explain their lower incomes because majority of their jobs pay less. In addition, men's education levels were higher and afforded them better paying jobs. Overall only participants with at least a bachelor's education and above reported incomes of \$60,000 and above annually. Since more men had at least a bachelor's degree, it followed that women had lower incomes.

These findings reflect trends reported by other studies, but it must be noted that most of the studies focus on Indian, Filipino, Jamaican and Latino women immigrants and African women immigrants are rarely mentioned. Zhou (2003) observes that there has been an increase in the number of women among contemporary immigrants. In this study, the differences in length of stay for men and women supports that men have been in the United States longer than women; women arrived more recently. During the interviews, there were four men who supported the finding by stating they had observed an increase in the number of Kenyan women coming to the United States. One of them explained that Kenyan men no longer had to travel long distances in search of Kenyan girlfriends as they had done in the past. He also noted that in the past, men were able to keep track of all newly arrived women from Kenya. He placed his observations in context when he indicated that he was aware that the number of Kenyan immigrants in general had grown but still insisted that the number of women had increased greatly.

The findings on gender disparities in education follow similar trends to those reported by other studies. Fry (2006) report that while there is an increase in the level of education of contemporary women immigrants, their education levels are still lower than

those of their male counterparts. Even though it is not possible to generalize with this small sample, the trends in women's marital status reported in this study differ from those reported by Jeffreys (2005) suggesting that female immigrants are more likely than their male counterparts to migrate as dependents. The findings from this study are in line with those reported by Zhou (2003: 84) that women immigrants tend to be less educated and less likely to be married.

By and large, men and women expressed similar reasons for moving to the United States, searching for better financial opportunities. They all arrived in the United States with great hopes and expectations with the overarching reason for moving as the search for better life. The search for educational opportunities was also a common theme among the participants. Seventy percent of men came to United States to study compared to 50% of women. Four women (22%) traveled to the United States for the purpose of family reunification. None of the men stated that family reunification was a reason for coming to the United States.

7.2 Pre-migration experiences of men and women

For this group of participants three women and one man reported having had business contacts in the United States who arranged for their travel to the United States. Fifteen men (75%) and 11 (61%) said they were engaged in some form of income-generating activity before they came to the United States. Six men (30%) and two women (11%) were running small businesses in Kenya before they came to the United States. However, they all agreed that their earnings were insufficient to support them and their

families in Kenya and the search for better financial opportunities was a driving force behind their decisions to move.

The women discussed in detail their various efforts to make ends meet by engaging in different activities, some of which they had never considered as possible in their lifetime. Awour's story is similar to other women as she explained her efforts:

If anybody had said to me that one day I will be in America I would have laughed at it and said, 'not in a million years'. I grew up in [local village] and my dreams were only to finish high school, then get married and have a good family. Yes, I got married and got a job, a very good job in the ministry [public service]. At that time that was a very good job, you know. We worked with my husband in the ministry of culture and social services, that is actually where we met and we married. We got children, five of them and it was ok then because we could make things work and as time went by I started doing small small [sic] business on the side to get more money for other things. But life kept on getting harder and harder and it was becoming difficult to keep up with the expenses, pay rent, go to work, pay school fees for the children. It just became almost impossible. Then the big thing!!! My husband took the golden handshake⁴⁵ and decided to go and start business back at home [laughter and then pause] Guess what? The business failed and he would not listen to me anyway. [...] I looked at the situation and realized if I didn't do something, I will be left on the dry land similar to a tadpole when the pond dries up before it has matured to a frog. [...] So my friend had come to America and we stayed in touch and then she invited me and here I am.

In their endeavors to sustain their families, women developed coping strategies that engaged them in new roles. Through the interviews, women outlined a continuum of strategies, some of which included moving away from their homes in search of better opportunities. However, the women's migration process did not happen at once; they started with traveling short distances, mostly for trade, and returning home daily or weekly. As the markets dwindled, the women moved further and further in search of newer markets. Cherono's experience aptly captured this situation when she narrated her story. She said:

⁴⁵ The 'Golden handshake' was an incentive package offered to public sector employees to encourage them to take voluntary or early retirement as part of the downsizing of government firms.

You remember the time women started crossing the border to Uganda, going to Busia and buying shoes, handbags and materials [fabric]? That was when I got started with this kind of business. I would go to Uganda and get things and come and sell them to women in offices. The women pay in small amounts and I go every end of month at their offices and they give me my money. I was among the first group of women, so I made some good money with that. Then many women joined and the profits went down. At the same time, my husband got sick and I would not leave him so I started keeping cows and selling milk. [...] After my husband's death, I had to do much more to pay all the hospital bills, so I sold one of our tractors and started going to Dubai. This was where the money was. [...] Then going to Dubai to get clothes was not bringing in money as I wanted, I wanted more money. I started importing cars, [laughter] ok cars now. So now I joined a men's group and started importing cars from Dubai. The milk supply business was still going on, this is what I was doing until I came here to America. I came because I wanted to explore the market here, see what I can buy and take back and sell and then come back again. I wanted to start coming to America instead of Dubai because not many people were coming to get things from here. So now I knew that my solution was America.

Cherono captured the circumstances of women and illustrated the challenges they faced and the ways that they attempted to mitigate their circumstances. Other women talked about their endeavors and how they started small businesses selling vegetables and household basics. Many of them talked about how they were employed but at the same time ran 'kiosks' in the areas where they lived from which they sold vegetables, fruits, bread, milk, salt, flour and other basic household items. Many of them viewed their move to the United States as part of their efforts to provide for their families, but migration was not a long-term plan. They did not set out to migrate to the United States; their move was intertwined with their survival strategies. This was not the case for men who maintained that they were clear about their intentions to travel to the United States. Men did not describe their move as a chance opportunity rather as part of a long-term strategy.

The responses by women are in contrast to reports in other studies that show women migrate as dependents; they generally migrate based on family-sponsored

immigration (Jeffreys, 2005). Statistics from the Department of Homeland Security show that women made up 60% of those who entered the United States as immediate relatives, compared to 40% of men (Jeffreys, 2005). While the reasons for moving to the United States cannot be explained in simple causal terms, the important thing to note is that the women in this group showed that they were active participants in this process. There may have been intervening factors such as existing contacts or assistance from family, relatives or friends, but women discussed their resourcefulness in the process of changing their life situations. During the interviews women talked about their role in trying to make ends meet in a challenging economic situation such as the one in Kenya.

This aspect of African women's agency has been extensively documented especially with regard to women's responses to the austerity measures posed by the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs or SAPs⁴⁶ (Chant, 1994; Elson, 1992; Kanji, 1995; Lingham, 2005; Nzomo, 1992; Tsikata, 2002). SAPs required governments to cut social spending which translated to withdrawal of funding for social services such as education, health and local infrastructure. The costs for these services were shifted to the local populations in a process commonly referred to as "cost-sharing." Local people had to take on the provision and maintenance of schools, hospitals, water supplies, sanitation and local infrastructure. Since many of these activities were traditionally women's responsibilities, their implementation implied that women had to work longer and harder hours to meet their family needs (Kanji, 1995).

⁴⁶ In the 1980s and 1990s Structural Adjustment Programs were implemented by governments to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty as part of conditionalities to qualify for financial assistance from the World Bank and IMF. Governments had to implement a set of macro-level requirements that included trade liberalization, fiscal and monetary policy reforms, public enterprise reforms, deregulation of investment, and labor and price controls. These policies were considered gender neutral but their drastic effects impacted men and women differently; with women bearing the major brunt of the policies.

Furthermore, privatization practices under SAPs led to governments subsidizing private investors to stimulate the economy. These practices led to loss of jobs in the public sector as state-owned enterprises were auctioned off to affluent or private foreign investors who were free to repatriate their profits instead of investing in local industries. In her study of women in Zimbabwe (Kanji, 1995) showed the extent to which women had to compensate for declining employment opportunities and wages and increasing food prices. The opening of more jobs in the urban areas, with more developed infrastructure, led to increased male migration leaving behind mostly women and children. The loss of labor implied increased responsibilities for women and in other instances a decline in cash crop production (Nzomo, 2002). While gender disparities existed before SAPs, these studies point out that their implementation further exacerbated the gender disparities.

These discussions by men and women reveal that immigration experience is not a product of resettlement at the point of destination only. The pre-migration histories of women influenced their immigration experiences mostly in how they maintained both kin and non-kin ties. Their women counterparts or friends had a better understanding of the challenges that women in Kenya experience, as such they were more willing to assist their friends if and when possible. Women's experiences also provide the context within which immigration occurs informing us that immigration experiences extend to the period prior to migration.

7.3 How men and women moved to the United States

When asked who assisted them in their move to the United States, men and women gave different responses as shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Sources of support for men and women (N=38)

<i>Support received from</i>	<i>Women N (%)</i>	<i>Men N (%)</i>	<i>Total N (%)</i>
Relative or family in U.S.	6 (33%)	9 (45%)	15 (39%)
Friends in the U.S.	5 (28%)	7 (35%)	12 (32%)
Boy/girlfriend or spouse/partner	4 (22%)	1 (5%)	5 (13%)
Business contacts	3 (17%)	1 (5%)	4 (11%)
No contacts		2 (10%)	2 (5%)
TOTAL	18	20	38

The data shows that men relied more on assistance from family or relatives to move to the United States; women reported a wider base of contacts. Women's contacts included friends, relatives, boyfriends, spouses and business while men's contacts comprised of mainly family and friends. Eighty percent of men's contacts were either family or friends while women's contacts were more diversified. It is interesting that women relied almost equally on kin and non-kin contacts. The closeness of their non-kin contacts was evidenced in their interviews whereby women discussed the close relationships they enjoyed with the contacts. Women also indicated that most of their contacts were women and joked that if they searched hard enough, they would find out that their friends were probably distant relatives. These sentiments suggest that the line between kin and non-kin for women was blurred and their non-kin contacts could easily

quality as quasi or fictive kin. It was as if the women wanted to have their friends as family too.

Women did not give specific reasons as to why they relied more on non-kin contacts to assist them to move to the United States. Their discussions showed that they felt just as obligated to reciprocate non-kin favors as favors by kin. It seemed that the non-kin and kin were parallel and not in competition. The interview with Kasichana stood out among the others as she gave her experiences and explained pointedly that her family was not very supportive of her decision to move and she relied on non-kin.

Everyone was blaming me for almost everything. My mother felt that the decision for me to go into politics was the reason for the troubles in my social life. You know my marriage was almost over, but apparently I was to blame for that too. I feel that as women we will not go far because even other women do not support you.

It is possible that for women, especially older women, the family may not have supported a decision to move and so they relied on friends who were more understanding and open-minded. Once the women settle in United States they too continue contact with other non-kin contacts and may in turn assist their friends to move to the United States. In this way, the women understood better each other's situation and constraints and supported each other. The decision to move with assistance from non-kin may also help to maintain family relations. In cases where not all members of the family support the decision for a woman to move, especially if she is moving without her husband or children, assistance from an outsider avoids conflict. Women create their own safety nets and thus maintain their friends and family. Women also maintain their social support networks, which have assisted them in their daily struggles in Kenya and continue them in the United States.

7.4 Initial experiences of men and women

Both men and women experienced some degree of frustration in their initial experiences; the most common was the disappointment. More men considered their initial experiences as positive compared to women. Eighty percent of men described their initial experiences as either “somewhat positive” or “very positive” while 61% of women felt the same way. Women expressed that their initial frustrations and tense relations with their hosts were related to high bill payments, lack of information on what to do and feelings of being taken advantage of by their hosts. Mwende pointed out that after working tirelessly, her host expected her to come back and help with the household chores and this strained their relationship. She said, “I would work overnight and come home and would prefer to rest during the day. She would be expecting me to help her but I have to go back to work. Then she would keep banging things in the house, making so much noise and I could not even rest.”

Men’s responses showed that their frustrations largely stemmed from excessive bills, inability to take the education courses of their choice, high tuition costs, low-paying jobs and little time for leisure. Chumba explained his frustrations:

Life was hard, very hard indeed. I was working three jobs and going to school at the same time, imagine that. The money I was being paid was not enough to pay for school, pay the bills, rent and other things. I was saying, this is crazy, I can’t go on like this. Is this really America? I had thought my problems will be gone but instead they seemed to have even increased. The people I lived with were nice, they allowed me to stay for some time but I had to try and survive on my own. I wanted money, a lot of money. I had calculated in my head that I will be in America only for short time and then go back with enough money to invest and live a good life. I was here to make the money and go build a business empire back in Kenya, have a beautiful home, spend evenings and weekends having fun, take my children to good schools, you know. I soon realized that was not happening, my dream was falling apart.

On to the list of frustrations about work and bills, Kariuki added, “I had no time to party, all I did was work, then go to school, then more school and work. When I was not in school I was working, no time for anything else. My car looked as if it was a caravan with everything I needed, from toothbrush to clothes to change.” Women did not complain about their earnings, instead they reported that it compared favorably to their income in Kenya and they appreciated it. One of the women informed me openly she does not mind the type of work she does because it still pays in dollars. In her words, “It is money, in dollars; green! When you go to the store, the money does not say, ‘oh I was earned this way or that way’, money is money.” The men expressed that the money was not much. The men constantly compared themselves with other Kenyan men who have been in the United States longer and with the men they left in Kenya. These comparisons set higher standards for the men to achieve.

The findings suggest that men’s frustrations stemmed largely from their higher expectations and desire to achieve more. In contrast, women’s frustrations focused on their struggles with making or maintaining relationships. There seems to be a connection between how women handled their initial experiences and their pre-migration context. Because women have been working hard to sustain their families, without as much recognition, they are better able to accept their situation working in United States and do not complain much. They expressed more positive understanding of their situation and what it demanded of them. Their greatest concern was recreating communal ties, which had assisted them greatly in Kenya and the idea of not having such cushioning in the United States worried them.

Besides the unmet expectations and sour relations with their hosts, women discussed the extent to which United States was different from Kenya. They talked about the many opportunities available in the United States and their initial shock at the over abundance of everything ranging from food to the size of the vehicles people drove. In Cherono's words, "there was so much of everything, things you would not dream of and it is available in extra large sizes [laughs] everything comes extra large!" Wanjiku said:

When I arrived I was amazed at the many things. You go to the store and it is rows and rows of things. Gosh, you go to look for bread and there are more than 25 different kinds of bread. What do you buy? Then they were choices, what do you like? What's your weight? What is your favorite food? What is your favorite color? These were things that I had never thought about myself. I always assessed myself in relation to others, when I cooked it was because it was something everybody could eat not because it was about me. Whatever I did I always had others in mind. Here everybody was asking me about me, me, me [sic]. Actually it was scary thing because I did not have the answers.

The women reported that they had to constantly remind themselves of the scarcity back in Kenya and not to be carried away by the abundance of things they see every day. In addition, the women reported having found out things about themselves that they were not aware of earlier. Many of them discussed how they 'discovered' things about themselves. Wanjiku expressed her surprise, "it was as if I had not existed before, now I know more about myself; my weight, height, what I like, but I am still not sure about my favorite food or even color." The things they considered as 'discoveries' were not really new, it was that they had defined themselves in different terms. As Wanjiku said, "before I knew myself as someone's daughter or wife or mother. Now I know myself in terms of my age, height and color." The women's discussions revealed the differences in how they defined themselves when they were in Kenya and in the United States. Women were now able to see themselves as separate from their relations because as they mentioned before they defined themselves in relation to other people. Notably, men did not discuss their

initial experiences along such perspectives and no man mentioned about finding out issues about themselves that they did not know previously. This was probably because the men had always defined themselves separate from other relations even in Kenya.

7.5 Men and Women maintaining ties with Kenya

It was more common for women to maintain ties through phone, 94% of women maintained regular ties through the phone compared to 70% of men. However, there was a difference when it came to use of the internet with more women (56%) reporting that they “never” or “rarely” used email, compared to 20% men. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that men preferred the use of internet to communicate to people in Kenya, while women preferred the phone. The data showed that both men and women maintained ties with Kenya through different forms; women preferred using the phone and men preferred internet communication.

In terms of sending money, both men and women stated that they sent money for various reasons. The difference was noticeable in terms of how frequently men and women said they sent money; women reported sending money more frequently than men. Seventy-two percent women reported that they sent money to Kenya more than six times in a year compared to 55% of men. It was not possible to collect the data on the actual amount of money sent because both men and women reported that the amount varied. The amount sent depended on the purpose for which it was being sent. More women reported sending goods back to Kenya; they said that they sent the goods through friends when they travel back to Kenya.

There were more women who said that they sent money to friends; 83% of women compared to 70% of men. Women also reported many other reasons for sending money compared to men. For women other reasons included lending money to someone in Kenya, repaying money to someone in Kenya, bank loan repayments in Kenya, participating in group/club fundraising activities, while only one man reported other reasons as payment of dowry. More men send money to Kenya for educational reasons, 85% compared to 72% of women.

The overall number of participants who reported reading Kenyan news was small. More men reported that they read the Kenyan news on a regular basis compared with women. In general most participants expressed disappointment with the situation in Kenya and hence their lack of interest in Kenyan news. Women were more vocal about this disappointment than men.

These responses show that women sent money back to Kenya for their family, relatives and friends, while men sent money only to family and relatives. It is possible that women continued their friendships with the people they left in Kenya on a reciprocal basis. These friends continue to be a source of support for women even when they are in the United States. Women discussed how they often called their friends and talked about their life situations in United States. In return for their sympathetic ear they receive some assistance in form of goods or money or most important information on how they too can move to the United States. The discussions by both men and women revealed the influence their families of origin exerted on their activities. Men and women always tried to assist the people from the villages they hailed from. There was no man or woman who mentioned that they assisted people who were not from their villages or communities.

The friends that the women spoke about were from their communities of origin. It is possible that the finding that more men than women sent money to Kenya was related to the gendered expectation of men as providers. As such, more men may have felt obliged to sent money to fulfill that role.

Women also maintained separate and distinct ties that men did not discuss. Elderly women discussed the ties they maintained with their children that they left behind. For many of them their goal was to bring their adult children to the United States or make plans to have them migrate to other countries. The mothers did not seem to discriminate between male or female children. They talked intently about the plans they have made so far and how closely they monitored such situations. Men discussed their adult children and how they supported them but women seemed more invested in these ties. These discussions with women about their children reveal their commitment to their families and their struggles to reunite with their children and showed the difficult choices they had to make. While to an outsider it may seem that these women put their economic interests before their families, the discussions showed that the two are very closely tied and difficult to separate.

7.6 Social organization of men and women

Men and women discussed group activities especially organized activities such as fundraising to assist with funerals, immigration issues, baby showers, weddings and church events. The funeral associations were headed by men and the majority of people who attended the association meetings were also men. All the association meetings and other events organized by the association that I attended or were discussed by the

participants were managed by men; this was further evidenced by the fact that there was no function where the emcee was a woman.

Most of the fundraising events were conducted in a similar format to Kenya, whereby the emcee calls out individuals by relation to the person for whom the function is organized, the person or persons come forward and gives their donation which is then announced to the entire group. After each donation is announced, the group cheers by clapping and voicing encouraging remarks to the individual or individuals. For example, at a fundraising to meet funeral expenses, the emcee starts by calling upon family members to line up to give their donations, followed by the extended family, then neighbors, then friends and everyone else. Men tended to be at the start of the lines and women usually stayed back and gave lesser amounts of money. While it seemed that women gave less money, women were also charged with bringing food and assisting to feed the crowds which sometimes were quite large. In this way, probably women would be considered as contributing similar to men but in different forms. On several occasions women sent their donations via male proxies.

Women organized social events such church meetings, weddings and baby showers. Baby showers were the only event dominated by women even in terms of leadership. Weddings attracted a greater mix of women compared to funerals. There was one “women-only” group whose members took great pride in their as evidenced by their talk about their activities. As Atieno amply summarized it, when asked what motivated her and her friends to form a women-only group, she said:

If we had ‘*Maendeleo ya Wanawake*’ in Kenya why not here in America. Women always had their own things and worked in their own groups. For example, the baby shower I was telling you about... do you think Kenyan men know what to buy for a baby? And after the baby is born and the life of America, the mother

will need someone to help her, our group helps women in such ways and we are happy because today is me tomorrow is you. The spirit of women need to stay together even in America. [settles down comfortably] You know America is very different for women; it can build or destroy women. So this group helps women to maintain the culture and maintain respect for their families and our culture. The work of culture is for women, it is women who make or destroy a home. If a woman loses her way then the whole family is lost so it is women who make the family. We talk about these things in the group and we tell each other, so if someone is not in these groups then chances are that they might not learn these things.

The responses from women showed that they considered women groups just as important in United States as they were in Kenya. They acknowledged that there were challenges in America and rather than face them alone, the group served as a social support for women. Cherono explained the importance of being in a group when she said, “if you or your child or someone in your family falls sick, who will come to help you? If someone in your family dies what will you do? You must be with people, you have to participate and join other people so they will also come to you.” This suggests that staying with “other people” was seen as some form of insurance. Of course, the downside to that is that such grouping tends to segregate the women within their own networks and they do not have ample opportunities to socialize with other groups. However, none of the women mentioned this as a concern.

As Akinyi explained, the social groups came together for purposes of helping each other during times of need. She said:

We have ‘merry-go-round’ financial assistance groups, groups such as *Cha Kwetu* [Swahili for our own] and the other one is called *Vakoko* [Luhya for women] which is a group for women only. It is a special group for Luhya women to address women’s issues and help each other with women’s problems.

The findings on women's social organization were not surprising since Kenyan women have a long history of social organizing in mutual or self-help groups and have used these groups as stepping stones to economic and political advancement. The finding shows that women immigrants from Kenya extended their practice of social organizing across borders. Women's collective organizing in Kenya has deep historical roots and reflects the long history of female sense of solidarity that has also been well documented (Mbote and Wambui, 1993; Nasimiyu, 1993; Nzomo, 1993; Stamp, 1991; Wipper, 1975).⁴⁷ Women have organized in groups variously referred to as *mwethya* among the Kamba, *ngwatio* among Kikuyu, *risanga* among Gusii and *saga* for Luo (Nzomo, 1993). These women groups are formed to achieve largely social and economic objectives of the women. The nature of women's co-operation and mobilization through mutual aid groups was based on friendship, kinship, networks and common need. Women were able to draw authority from collective action also exercised political power to varying degrees.

The women's groups were mainly engaged in activities considered women's work and also provided an outlet for women to share their concerns. Women talked about how they got together to help each other with child care. Child care costs are very high and since many women were in low income jobs, they had to rely on their friends or share baby-sitters to offset the high costs. The women's groups also provide some assistance especially when the baby is born before the mother makes definite baby-sitting arrangements. Women with children make arrangements among themselves to pick up or drop off their children at the baby-sitters on various days and times thus allowing them to

⁴⁷ Wipper (1975) explains that the origins of Kenyan women groups is attributed to the post world war II period when colonial European women began to organize women from the Kikuyu ethnic group into groups to teach them home economics skills like cooking, sewing and knitting. After independence these groups continued and were re-energized by the spirit of *harambee*.

free some days for other activities. Also noted was that the women mentioned that they preferred and mostly used baby-sitters who were Kenyan.

While men also agreed that associations were important, they focused more on the role of associations in assisting with fundraising to transport the dead back to Kenya. There was no explicit discussion a cultural association to promote or maintain cultural values and attachments, but some of the practices within the different groups suggest cultural attachments. The practice of returning the dead back to Kenya for burial and the preference for their final resting place to be in their homeland is indicative of the cultural attachment. At the same time both men and women engaged in discussions that brought to the fore culturally defined gender relations and how they transcend spatial borders. Onyango who is in his late thirties and has been in the United States for the last nine years described how he was always being called upon by his family to fulfill cultural responsibilities. He said:

Onyango: Then my father also calls me to discuss some family issues. He has to call me because I am the eldest. Yep! I am the eldest son and you know what that means. So if he wants to do something he has to consult me and then I have to say “yes we can do that” and then he asks me for the money to do it [laughs].

Researcher: So the responsibility of being the eldest does not change even if you leave Kenya?

Onyango: No, no, no in fact it kinda increases. I am still the overall boss, now my mother has to consult me to ok things to happen. She even asks me where I would want to see my younger brother’s house built! I think along with the fact that I am the eldest, now I also have the financial power, so I am more involved.

Researcher: What if you were a woman, would it be the same?

Onyango: I think my father would treat me the same if I were a woman. Well, he may not treat me almost the same but he is not very traditional, I mean, he is traditional but not very traditional. I mean he follows some traditions. Of course there will always be differences in how you treat men and women but my father has a few elements about that but he is not very traditional.

From this discussion Onyango said that had he been a woman, his father would have treated him the same. But he goes ahead to say that there are always differences in how men and women are treated. These comments revealed that men experienced ambiguity about gender relations as they shifted between gender expectations in Kenya and the United States. Men experienced a conflict between understanding and acknowledging women as equals as part of their immigration experiences, and their cultural awareness of the place of women maintained through the ties with Kenya. At the end of the discussion the responses from men were still not clear. Unlike men, women's task of maintaining their cultural values seemed to have more continuity with their immigration experiences.

7.7 Discussions of eventual return

For most of the participants the idea of an eventual return was always at the back of their minds. While a direct relationship between traveling back to Kenya and eventual return cannot be made based on this study, there were more men who reported having actual plans to return to Kenya than women as shown in the Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Men's and women's plans to return to Kenya (N=38)

<i>Plan to Return to Kenya</i>	<i>Women N (%)</i>	<i>Men N (%)</i>	<i>TOTAL N (%)</i>
Yes	10 (56%)	13 (65%)	23 (61%)
No	2 (11%)	1 (5%)	3 (8%)
Not sure	1 (6%)	1 (5%)	2 (5%)
No mention	5 (28%)	5 (25%)	10 (26%)
TOTAL	18	20	38

Sixty-five percent of the men discussed having plans to return to Kenya compared to 56% of women. More women said they did not have plans of returning to Kenya, 11% women vis-à-vis 5% of men. Men said they had travelled back to Kenya more frequently than women. Twenty percent of men reported having travelled to Kenya at least three times in the last five years compared to six percent of women. It could be possible that the travel is impacted greatly by income levels because men reported higher incomes than women.

The finding of more men reporting plans to return to Kenya was also supported by the number of men who reported making investments in Kenya, 70% compared to 44% of women. Men seemed more horrified than women about growing old in the United States and eventually going into nursing homes and having nobody to take care of you. Using vivid imageries, the men compared the treatment of the elderly in Kenya and the United States. According to them, the elderly in Kenya are treated with much more dignity and that is what they would wish for themselves.

These discussions by mostly men were probably because women work in the service sector and are involved in the direct care of the elderly women are less apprehensive about nursing homes. Women are the care-takers and probably have a better understanding of how the nursing homes operate compared to men. It is also possible that since women seemed to have stronger ties with each other, they are less fearful of being alone. Women feel confident about their ties and know that there will be people for them.

Men talked about the comfort of living in Kenya without all the restrictions. They expressed how when they went back to Kenya, they envied their male counterparts. As Saitoti put it:

When I was there, men, I felt jealous. People I went to school with have a life, they hand out in the evening, on the weekend they go to 'nyama choma' [roast beef] joints and spend time with their friends. I tell you there was no day I was back home before one o'clock in the wee hours. They have a life, they live life eehhh [sounds of amazement]. Try doing that here [grunts] your wife will send you to jail in a minute. Women here rule, they dictate who you talk to, what you say, pick up the children, drop them, come home, go to work, [makes sounds to indicate annoyance]. Women make the rules here and you can't do nothing!! That's why I will go back to Kenya.

Similar feelings were expressed by other men regarding how they felt that the United States favored women and they preferred Kenya. The findings reflect that as more men travelled back to Kenya there were able to reconnect with life in Kenya and better able to assess their life chances if they returned. They considered Kenya as more advantageous to men and thought there were more masculine privileges available to them than in the United States. Women expressed a desire to return to Kenya but since they did not travel as much as men, they may have viewed their return more as an illusion. Therefore, they did not make concrete plans to return.

7.8 Relations between immigrant men and women

Both men and women discussed in detail the challenges they face as immigrants; on several of the issues their perspectives tended to concur. Both agreed on the need to mobilize resources and assist the people in Kenya and they expressed the importance of maintaining ties with people in Kenya. There were no major discrepancies in the types and frequency of interpersonal ties men and women maintained as discussed in previous section.

Women and men also discussed the impact of immigrating to the United States and how it affected relations between them. On several occasions men and women

focused their discussions about how the move to the United States tended to increase marital conflicts. Men felt that the United States was not “friendly to men” and favored women; they blamed women and immigration for their marital problems. As Saitoti put it:

I come from a polygamous family, you know how our parents were, they had many wives and even more children. They were very lucky, [laughs] yes they could marry all they wanted. Nowadays, if you try that the women will kill you, the stress will kill you. If you try it here in US, it is even worse. Women in US are very crazy, something happens when they come here, their heads just go twick! [snaps fingers] And they lose it. I see people who were living together nicely in Kenya, they come here they divorce, I ask why? This is the place where they should be happy, they were together when they were suffering in Kenya, they come here they get some little money and the problems begin, before you know it everybody has packed their bags and gone. Let me get back, I will tell you all about women after the interview

However, Akinyi does not agree with that perspective and she stated that:

The divorce rate is not high in Kenya like here in U.S. When the women from Kenya come here in US they tend to behave the same as women who have been born here. This brings problems in their marriages because their husbands do not understand and so they end up divorcing. I think it is because it is very hard to get a divorce in Kenya that is why women don't divorce [laughs]. Here it is [snaps fingers] so if someone annoys you divorce them. In Kenya, you have to think twice or more than twice. What will my mother say? What will my neighbors think? Who will I be going to the market with? Or church? Even how will I do it? There are no people to advise women how to get divorce in Kenya. Here you can ask anyone or go to the courts and get help easily. So Kenyan women can also do that, information is power and when women get the information they have power to divorce.

Men's views were that United States provided women with more social openness and economic opportunities, which gave women autonomy. While they considered this as positive, they felt that women tended to abuse their new found autonomy and were vengeful. Women did not feel that way and explained that they tried to balance the new

freedom and their family's interests. As Mwende explained when she compared marital relations here in the United States and back in Kenya, she said that:

I am not sure [pause] but here in America women have more rights than in Kenya. In Kenya you cannot take your husband to court or call the police when you fight with your husband, so it is different here. But sometimes, even if it is different, you don't want to start behaving as other women who give their husbands problems all the time and then call the police. Even if you have problems with your husband it is only the two of you who can solve them especially if you have children. So even if we think there is more freedom here in America, still someone has to use their brains.

These debates between men and women were evident on several occasions with men arguing that they have lesser say and that United States favored women more. However, this is not to say that men did not acknowledge some positive aspects of liberated women. One man said, "I like it here because I have an opportunity to spend time with my children, something I may not have done in Kenya." Another man said, "I appreciate my wife more. I did not know she was so smart. She went to college, worked and took care of the kids. That was something. I helped but ..." At the same time women also said there were things they missed. "I wish to spend more time with my friends without the men. Here I spend all my time with my children and husband. I miss home, when I could leave the children with someone and my husband is out with his friends and I had time to myself and my friends."

The women also recognized the burden of employment and taking care of children as Mwende said, "If someone asked me if I want to be a housewife, I will jump at the opportunity. Someone to work and I sit home with the children, which will be heaven for me. I am tired of working and taking care of the children at the same time. In Kenya you can hire a maid. Here it is only you and your husband." For many of the

women in this group working hard to sustain their families was not new to them and they expressed an understanding of their situation. The notable aspect is that women felt overwhelmed by their employment and household responsibilities. Many household responsibilities in Kenya are conducted by multiple caregivers including grandparents, aunts, sisters, in-laws and other extended family members. The absence of this free or cheap communal support was noticeable for women.

These sentiments reveal that while women enjoy increased opportunities, there are also constraints and costs. And as shown by the discussions by both men and women, these constraints are also gendered. Women enjoyed some sense of liberalization because they had employment and income but they also expressed that they needed men more to help with household responsibilities and family finances. They felt that they needed a second source of income because the cost of living was very high and if they have to meet demands of the people back home. While they had freedom, they missed some aspects of their freedom, their personal space to socialize with their friends without their husbands or partners constant company.

7.9 The immigration experiences of men and women

While both men and women talked about how much they missed Kenya, it was not clear whether either group expressed more nostalgia for Kenya. Men and women acknowledged the struggles in Kenya and in the United States. They all seemed to agree that their ideal would be a mix of both places; they were also quick to acknowledge that was a fantasy. Both men and women were equally aware of the benefits and challenges of maintaining ties with Kenya. In most instances they discussed the financial stress of

supporting people back in Kenya, while trying to maintain their own lives here in the United States. They both complained about how unaware people in Kenya are of the stressful nature of life in the United States. They used statements such as “if only they knew how hard life was”, “they think it is easy here”, “you sent them money and they use it on other things” or “whenever you talk to them they need money.”

Men and women expressed their frustrations with sending money back to Kenya but they also stated that they understood how hard life was in Kenya. They voiced deep concern for the tough economic conditions and poor quality of life back in Kenya riddled with a lack of basic amenities. As they drew the comparisons they recognized that is why they were always willing to assist those they left behind. It was mostly women who discussed how their ties to Kenya affected their decisions in the United States.

Awour recalls one such incident:

I had an iron box [iron], but it was small and was hard to use, so I thought that I should get a bigger one and fancier one that was being advertised as ‘on sale’. I picked it up and as I was going to the check-out I thought about the people back in Kenya, they use charcoal iron boxes. I had used charcoal iron boxes and ironed clothes. The clothes were ironed it didn’t matter how fancy the iron box was, and so I returned the iron box. I still have the old iron box and it still works.

The women and men felt that their immigration experiences have made them better people and contributed to their growth. There was discussion about spirituality and while I had expected the women to be more open about their spirituality than men, I was surprised that men discussed the role of the supernatural in their immigration experiences just as much as the women. As Kamau mentioned:

[deep sigh] My God, I can only say that it made me grow up very fast. I have to think very hard and make good decisions. I think it has made me a better person. If I can survive here in States then I can survive anywhere. I know I can make it. I think it has given me self confidence and ability to believe in myself and be

innovative about situations. I thank God for many things, even if I suffer, I know there are people back home, men, they are in bad shape. Just being here in America is like God's will, men, even though I don't go to church and all that, I remember my mother used to sing a song about "*Mungu ni mwema*" [God is good] we sang it in Sunday school. Sometimes when I sit down and I am thinking things over, I hear the song in my head. Men, it's funny, but I thank God.

Women expressed very similar sentiments explaining how the initial difficulties and challenges had indeed helped their personal growth. Kasichana who had been an important figure in Kenya said:

When I came, I worked at a gas station pumping gas and I did not mind. I was housed by some church nuns and that helped me save a lot of money. Every month I sent money back to repay my loans because the banks had threatened to repossess my house and property. Within two years I had paid-off my loans and straightened my finances, which were in mess by the time I left. If I had stayed in Kenya, I would have perished. America humbled me in many ways and taught me so many things about myself, my resilience, my persistence, my abilities, things I had not thought very hard about. I believe I am actually a better person and can overcome more challenges. I think back and say if I survived those first days in America, I can survive anywhere.

These views were expressed over and over again by the various participants. They attributed their success to God's will and acknowledged God's guidance in their immigration experiences. They felt that they had the opportunity to make their lives better and were also obligated to improve the lives of the people they left behind in Kenya.

The analysis of men and women interviews and ties revealed the central role that gender played in organizing their immigrant lives. Women maintained and acknowledged receiving more assistance through both kin and non-kin ties unlike men who maintained ties mostly with kin (family or relatives). The women discussed how they supported other women through women groups and that they considered their friendship ties just as

important as their family ties. Women discussed their pre-migration experience and the decisions they had to make to sustain their families. Their discussions showed how they moved further away from their homes in their pursuit of household survival strategies. Men on the hand discussed how they made a deliberate and strategic decision to move to the United States. The women's discussions showed that their immigration decisions were embedded in the survival of their families. On the other hand, they also discussed the challenges they faced especially with child care responsibilities. Women continued to assist their friends and family to travel to United States or migrate to other countries. Men talked about their willingness to assist newly arrived immigrants. More men discussed about their plans to retire and return to Kenya than women.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Discussion

Overall the findings demonstrated that the participants did not subscribe fully to a linear form of assimilation as postulated by earlier assimilation theories nor were they focused only on ties with people in Kenya. Their responses showed that they adopted a combination of both. As they settled and become more involved with life in the United States, they continued to maintain or in some cases renew ties with the people from their places of origin. The findings showed length of stay and education were more important than age and gender differences. However, gender analysis showed that men and women experienced ties differently and ties influenced their immigration experiences in different ways. Participants played various roles simultaneously and their commitment to both United States and Kenya was demonstrated through their participation in activities in both locations. They were members of Kenyan organizations, Christian communities both in Kenya and the United States, attended rallies in the United States and participated in community and development issues in both locations.

Findings showed that the three most important factors for success in the United States were: a) having a college education to avoid being stuck in dead-end jobs and ensure a decent income; b) attaining legal residency in United States to enable one to explore broader range of opportunities; and c) creating and maintaining dependable social support networks. These three factors were discussed as the pillars to having a successful immigration experience in the United States and assist their family and friends back in Kenya.

Participants discussed various “pull” and “push” factors that led to their migration to the United States. The search for better opportunities was a major push factor given the deteriorating economy in Kenya at the time. These economic “push” factors reported by the participants affirm previous studies (Arthur, 2000; Gordon, 1998; Okome, 2002; Takougang, 2003). The participants explained that for many people in difficult economic conditions, the mention of United States conjures images of opulence and solutions to all their problems. And as long as these views are maintained, there will always be a stream of immigrants who move with the hope for finding the “cure-it-all” in United States.

The findings reported in this study are comparable to those reported by AfricaRecruit.⁴⁸ AfricaRecruit found that 60% of the Kenyans they surveyed reported their reasons for leaving Kenya as career/professional, while less than ten percent left based on family reasons. AfricaRecruit reported that less than ten percent of the Kenyans surveyed mentioned educational purposes as their reason for leaving Kenya. This study reported a higher number of participants who cited search for educational opportunities as their reason for leaving Kenya. The difference in numbers may be due to the fact that, the relative importance of education as a reason for leaving Kenya varies for different destinations and AfricaRecruit included participants from various destinations besides the United States.

The study showed that the search for educational opportunities was a major factor for leaving Kenya and the finding is supported by reports from the Institute for International Education (IIE). The 2002/2003 IIE report showed that there were 7,862

⁴⁸ In December 2006, in preparation for the Kenya Diaspora Investment Forum in London AfricaRecruit conducted an online and offline survey of an estimated 1,327 Kenyans in the diaspora, approximately 18% response rate. The respondents were from various countries including U.K., U.S., Thailand, Sweden, Italy, German, France, Denmark, Botswana, Australia and Belgium. The summary of findings can be accessed on their website www.AfricaRecruit.com

Kenyan students who were attending American colleges and universities representing 25 percent increase in the previous two years. This was one of the highest growth rates for any country in the world. Kenya ranked sixteenth as a source of international students on American campuses. The number of Kenyan students was 2,000 more than the second leading African country, Nigeria. Since then the numbers of Kenyan students enrolled in United States have declined. In 2003/2004 the number dropped by six percent to 7,381 and in the most recent IIE 2005/06 report the number further declined to 6,559. The decline has been experienced across countries but Kenya still holds the leading position among African countries. Generally, the high numbers of Kenyan students have been attributed to the close ties that Kenya has enjoyed with United States (Kaba, 2006), while other experts believe that the students have established a reputation as hard workers and hence many more colleges are willing to grant them admissions.

The education levels for this group of participants were much higher than those reported by Profiles of New Jersey (2006) for the city of Paterson and the state of New Jersey. While this group may not be representative of Kenyan immigrants in the United States, the finding compares favorably with data reported in the U.S. by the Census Bureau (2000a) and other scholars including Takyi (2002). These data show that African immigrants tend to have higher levels of education than other immigrant groups. Kusow (2007) reports similar findings, stating that over the last three decades the numbers of college graduates among Kenyan immigrants were 55% in 1980, 53% in 1990 and 51% in 2000. While not ignoring the selection effects (Kapur, 2003) ⁴⁹ the findings on

⁴⁹ Kapur, (2003) points out that higher levels of education among African immigrants could be attributed to selection effects. The fact that immigrants are not drawn randomly from the population and that in most cases it is those people who can afford the expenses associated with migration that succeed. For example,

education are still noteworthy. McKenzie and Rapoport (2007) also offer in depth analysis of self-selection migration.

Interestingly, many of the participants reported that they made it to the United States through divine intervention and expressed strong beliefs in a supreme being. Even though their discussions were not overtly religious their perspectives suggested that the participants looked to a supreme being to take the risk of migrating. Possibly this was a way of mitigating risks; they prepared themselves mentally for any challenges they might face and were able to take the risks involved in leaving their home. This combination of the practical situations of economic deterioration and the mentally preparedness provided them with the impetus to migrate.

There was evidence of “chain-migration” as participants emphasized the importance of having existing contacts in United States before embarking on the trip. These contacts served as important sources of information on employment, assistance with getting around, completing important initial paperwork and also providing a sense of familiarity. The participants acknowledged that having existing contacts in the United States saved them time and effort. They did not have to learn many of the things through trial-and-error as earlier immigrants had. Those with existing contacts reported that they received invaluable advice on college selection and as such were able to advance further in school while taking courses that offer a competitive advantage in the job market. The processes by which earlier immigrants assist new immigrants to settle in a new country have also been observed among other immigrant groups and reported by other studies including the earliest studies by the Chicago School (e.g. Park and Burgess, 1921), and

while Mexican immigrants are on average less educated than U.S. nationals, they are on average more educated than average person in Mexico (Chiquiar and Hanson (2002) as cited in Kapur (2003).

more recently transnational studies (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Massey, Pellegrino and Taylor, 1998; Meyer, 2001; Portes, 1995, 1997)

Besides the availability of social networks, transnational studies have also focused on the frequency of ties (Portes and Rumbaut, 1996; Menjivar, 2000). Participants indicated that they maintained ties with people in Kenya but the frequency of maintaining ties was not constant. They reported higher frequencies of ties soon after arrival in the United States with the ties declining as they became more engaged in life in the United States. After having been in the United States for some time, they renewed their ties with Kenya and the frequency of ties increased again. As such, the frequency of ties when plotted against length of stay in the United States took on a U-shaped curve. It seemed that the decline in frequency of ties was due more to economic hardships rather than social choice. From these findings it is possible to suggest that frequency of ties is related to length of stay but is not necessarily a function of only the number of years in United States. From the participants' discussions, it is based more on perceptions of achievement – that is, how other immigrants assess an individual's level of achievement. Achievement would be related to attaining college education, maintaining a professional job and purchase of a home in the United States. It is also related to the time needed to attain legal residency allowing for travel between Kenya and the United States thus enabling the renewal of ties.

The ties that participants maintained took various forms including contact with families and friends through internet communication, phone calls, letters, video and audio-tape messages and money transfers. The most frequent form of ties was phone calls, with the majority reporting that they made phone calls to Kenya at least twice a

week. The next most common form of ties was remittances, followed by email. While email communication was popular, participants mentioned that it was limited to ties with people living in places in Kenya where electricity is available. Ties were with both kin and non-kin with participants reporting that kin included their immediate and extended family. Some of the non-kinship ties were established when participants made visits to Kenya. The ties were bi-directional with the participants sending remittances to Kenya and the people in Kenya sending spices, tea, hair products, African clothes and art to family and friends in the United States. Ties were used to convey information to potential immigrants ranging from acquisition of visas, travel tips to offering a place to stay upon arrival in the United States. Upon arrival the new immigrants continue to maintain ties with people in Kenya who are potential immigrants and they in turn assist them to come to the United States.

Financial remittances were mainly sent to immediate family and other relatives. The main reasons participants gave for engaging in financial ties were meeting education costs for siblings and relatives, general household upkeep and payment of hospital bills. Seventy-nine percent of the participants sent money for educational expenses. The findings reflect a slightly higher proportion of remittances allocated to education compared with findings reported by studies of other groups of immigrants from Latin America (de la Garza and Cortina, 2004; Orozco, 2003a, Taylor, 1999).⁵⁰ Probably remittances to Kenya focus more on education to fill the gap in education expenditure that the government is not fulfilling. All participants mentioned that they sent remittances

⁵⁰ For example de la Garza and Cortina (2004) reported that remittances aim to satisfy a hierarchy of needs such food and basic consumption (almost 70%) followed by health (8 %) and education (4 %). Collective remittances were primarily spent on recreational or other purposes (62%). The rest is spent on community development projects (38%).

for household maintenance. These findings coincide with other research including Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pedersen (2002), who argue that a large percentage of remittances are mainly used for family maintenance, housing improvement and conspicuous consumption while a small percentage goes to productive activities. Unlike the AfricaRecruit (2006) survey that reported over thirty-five percent of the Kenyans in the diaspora remit over \$300 a month to Kenya, the findings from this study did not provide enough evidence to establish the amount of financial remittance sent on a monthly basis.

Participants reported that the amount and frequency of remittances fluctuated throughout the year. Substantial amounts of remittances were usually sent at the beginning of school year mostly for tuition payment and other education related expenses. Large financial remittances were sent in the event of illness to meet hospital bills or at the time one was making an investment. While establishing a regular monthly amount was not possible, participants reported that the minimum amount remitted on a monthly basis ranged between \$100 and \$200. The findings from this study compare closely with findings by Apraku (1991) who reported that on annual basis thirty-seven percent of the respondents in his study remitted between \$1,500 and \$3,000 and twenty percent remitted between \$3,000 to more than \$10,000. The findings on fluctuating remittances are consistent with those reported by Kabuccho, Sander and Mukwana (2003) showing that money-sending agencies reported highest transactions during the months of January, April, September and December.

Some participants engaged in investing in Kenya and the most common form of investment was real estate. Many of those who had invested in Kenya planned on retiring

to Kenya and as such were creating a financial and material base for their retirement. Others invested with the expectation that the proceeds from their investments would be ploughed into the households they support in Kenya and hence relieve them of the burden of sending remittances. The findings on participants' role in investing in Kenya compare to other findings reported by AfricaRecruit (2006). The survey reported that 56 percent of Kenyans in the diaspora remitted money for investment or business purposes. Seventy percent of the investment driven remittances were through personal savings and/or loans through family and friends. These findings do not compare with studies from other groups of immigrants. For example, in his testimony to the International Relations Committee in July 2006, Manuel Orozco reports that nearly two in ten migrants invest in their home country, and nearly three in ten build savings at home. Much of the remittances are spent on family sustenance and community activities.

The role of remittances in the development of a country is a hotly debated subject. Researchers disagree on whether remittances automatically contribute to national development. Even though the findings from this study showed that participants made contributions to their communities for various projects, it is not possible to conclude that it translated to national development. These findings show that participants identified and made efforts to ameliorate the living conditions of the people with whom they have ties. In their study of remitting behavior, de la Garza and Cortino (2004) point out, remittances often do not reach the poorest of the poor, who may be less likely to have connections to immigrant populations. They caution that remittances are beneficial for development when development is defined as income. If more robust definitions of development are

applied, those that include levels of education, health and income then the impact of remittances on development is less evident.

Ties at the community level were mainly with participants' own home town or village. The ties were mainly based on providing assistance ranging from building and repair of schools, supporting women's micro-enterprise projects, provision of basic medical supplies, contributions for building hospitals to caring of HIV/AIDS orphans. Participants reported that most of these initiatives were undertaken on an individual basis. In the few instances when pooled resources were involved, they were mainly from other members of the participants' own ethnic group. This finding is unlike findings from other immigrant communities, especially in Latin America, where much of the community based initiatives are conducted through home town associations (Orozco, 2003a). Participants did not engage in pooling resources as a community to assist another community in Kenya. Most efforts were based on individual attempts. Few participants mentioned that they had applied the concept of *harambee* or the ideology of communal self-help to pool resources to support community activities on a larger scale. In response, participants mentioned that such endeavors faced challenges especially to ethnic groupings. Overcoming ethnic boundaries for participants to pool resources on a national level was mentioned as the biggest challenge.

The participants mentioned that there were costs to maintaining ties. Participants expressed frustration with how people in Kenya spent the money sent to them. They felt that the people back in Kenya did not understand how difficult it was to make ends meet in the United States and still send some money back home. Furthermore, participants felt that ties can strain interpersonal relations within and outside an individual's family. Ties,

especially remittances, disproportionately burden them and make them responsible for functions that rightfully belong to the Kenyan government. Other scholars have discussed the issue, e.g. Okome (2002) who explains how family, friends and relatives, while providing network support, can also be a source of never ending obligations and much stress. Such demands can work against migrants' social mobility in the host country and also make accumulating capital for return or investing back home very difficult.

Besides the strain on finances and ties with people in Kenya, initial relations of host immigrants and new immigrants were sometimes problematic. The relationship between the host immigrants and new immigrants was not always based on kindness and generosity and there were reported instances of exploitation. The host immigrants did not provide for the new immigrants selflessly. They had expectations of reciprocity once the immigrant settles and the repayments were not necessarily monetary. Participants also discussed how relations among immigrants from Kenya sour and are permeated by jealousy and competition.

Upon reviewing men and women immigration experiences it was evident that gender played a role in their pre-migration histories and how it affected their ties with Kenya. Women reported that the economic conditions in Kenya pushed them to start moving away from their homes in search of sustenance for their families. Many women spoke of starting small business such as selling vegetables and handicrafts. They started by moving short distances away from their homes but as the markets got saturated they moved further and further away until they reached the U.S. For many of these women their arrival in the U.S. was not the first time they had left their homes and families. This

finding is in line with the profile of contemporary women migrants, that most women migrate as dependents of male immigrants (Zhou, 2003).

The discussions with men and women showed that immigration is not necessarily a product of the experiences at the point of resettlement rather it extends to the time before and after migration. Women's experiences brought clarity to this particular issue because they were able to connect their migration process to their continuing search for a better livelihood for their families. According to them, this was a task that they always did even before coming to America and will probably continue. For men, this was evident through their levels of education which were higher than those of women and enabled to get better paying jobs. Men had higher levels of education because of pre-migration advantage in Kenya where boys' education is privileged over girls' education. This finding is not surprising because similar trends in education are found in Kenya.⁵¹ Most of the women had a high school education, in line with some of the characteristics reported by the Fry (2006) that recent women migrants had at least high school or college education.

In addition, the immigration process is always on-going. This was demonstrated by the women as they spoke of their on-going activities even before coming to the United States. The discussions with men revealed a similar aspect of "never-ending immigration" albeit expressed differently. Men who have been in the United States longer were keener

⁵¹ The World Factbook reports that according to 2003 estimates, the percentage of women age 15 and over who can read and write was 79.7% compared to men at 90.6%. The disparities in men and women's education levels can be attributed to many factors including poverty levels, regional differences, social and cultural beliefs. Among many communities in Kenya, girls spend more time assisting with household chores, leaving them with very little time to study at home. This situation has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic which forces many girls to leave school to care for their ailing parents or their siblings if the mother dies. In case a family member falls sick, girls drop out of school to look after the sick relative. When families are faced with financial constraints they will opt to educate the boy-child compared to girls because the girls will one day get married and go and benefit another household. However, even though Kenya has low boy: girl ratio; it is seen as one of the better performing on the continent of Africa.

to sponsor and assist newer immigrants than were women. Maybe this was because men had the resources or perhaps they harbored a desire to relive their earlier immigrant lives. By teaching the ropes to newer immigrants, older immigrants secured their status generating a sense of indebtedness to them. It also provided them the opportunity to show others and themselves how far they had come. This way they re-energized their earlier immigrant experiences and also had an opportunity to do things differently. The incorporation of recently arrived immigrants with recent memories and knowledge of what was happening in Kenya, a “Kenyan core” is maintained. This is another probable explanation for why even though the group generally shows extended periods of stay in the United States they still portray a very Kenyan orientation.

While men relied mostly on family ties, women relied on both family and friendship ties. More women reported that they had received assistance from friends to come to the U.S. and they too were making plans to assist their friends. In this way, the women portrayed their group ties as transcending the family ties and yet when they discussed them, these ties were not in competition with their family ties. They actually used their friendship ties to advance and support their family. The women’s groups took care of their members’ family problems e.g. when a child or husband is ill they visit, they arrange for baby showers and set up meetings to support each other in times of need. The women revealed the existence of strong women ties that are not in competition with their family ties. It is possible that women maintained strong ties with other women because of the strong history and success of women groups in Kenya (Nasimiyu, 1993; Nzomo, 1993; Wipper, 1975). The discussions by the women indicated a unique characteristic

that they had transported these strong social networks of women organizing from Kenya to the United States.

Men discussed the challenges they faced based on the gender expectations especially as heads of households. They were often required to make certain decisions, which involved their families back in Kenya while they were here in the U.S. The men talked about their conflicted perspectives when at times the required responsibilities were in conflict with their lifestyles here in the U.S. for example, having to attend to specific marriage or death rituals. Therefore, while the factors that affect immigration experience affected men and women, they experienced them in distinctly different ways.

8.2 Conclusions

The findings showed that there is a relationship between participants' ties such as phone calls, internet, remittances and their daily lives in the United States. At the same time, it was clear that they also maintained ties within the immigrant community in Paterson and these ties were considered very important. The ties with Kenya provided them with thoughts and feelings that cushioned them from the various stresses of being in a new country and from real or perceived discrimination. They also maintained ties with people in Kenya for continuation of social support and as a way to maintain their identity in a new environment. The ties within the immigrant community also assisted with their immigrant lives and played a major role in times of need. These ties also enabled them to straddle a "Kenyan" and "American" lifestyles. In addition these ties served to validate the transnational ties with people in Kenya. For example, definition of a successful immigrant experience included an aspect of assisting people left behind. While those ties

were with the people in Kenya, they were evaluated by the other immigrants here in the United States, in other words, the local ties served to validate the transnational ties with people in Kenya.

Even though there was no noticeable ethnic settlement or ethnic enclave in Paterson such as the Latino and Arabs have, the participants showed that they were familiar with each other to a great extent. Unlike the visible ethnic enclave discussed in earlier immigration studies, the Kenyan settlement in Paterson was scattered among diverse multiethnic communities. However, while the Kenyan settlement in Paterson seemed more open and diffuse upon close examination it was a very close knit community. The participants demonstrated that they made deliberate efforts to create this kind of settlement. They knew their fellow Kenyan immigrants fairly well and seemed to share information constantly. They knew the street names or could describe where Kenyans lived and where they had met with them at one or another function. They seemed familiar with each other and were knowledgeable about their backgrounds in terms of their ethnic groups, educational levels, where they worked and lived. In other words, it functioned as an ethnic enclave without the visible physical or spatial characteristics of an ethnic enclave. The Kenyan immigrants connected with each other through common cultural and social activities and without necessarily living in close physical proximity or conducting business in a homogenous community.

It was noted that most of the participants linked their reasons for coming to United States to family members already in the United States. They discussed in detail the role family ties played in their decisions to migrate to the United States. Very few entered the U.S. based on a “family reunification” reasons as defined by the Department

of Homeland Security. For most of the participants, family members included kin extending beyond the nuclear family. Their obligations to maintain ties with the people in Kenya also transcended their immediate family members. These family ties were cited as very powerful ties especially among women and were presented as playing a central role in decisions about the migration process.

While length of stay and education differences were certainly considered more noteworthy when compared to age and gender differences, gender analysis revealed that these differences are experienced in distinct ways by men and women. More men had been in the U.S. longer than women but length of stay affected women's and men's quality of life in the U.S. in different ways. Women had lower levels of education and earned less income than men, which affected their immigration experiences. The discussions with women revealed that the immigration experience is not a product simply of the point of resettlement; it extends to the time before and after resettlement and includes opportunities that existed prior to migration that are responsible for certain advantages at the point of resettlement. Unlike other studies, the majority of women in this study migrated with assistance mostly from their women friends and did not migrate as dependents of male partners or spouses.

For this group of immigrants, migration is a never-ending process but men and women experienced it in different ways. Women continued their immigration through caring for their families especially in making plans to bring their children to the United States or assist them to migrate to other places. Men relived their immigration experiences through newly arrived immigrants. More men talked about their connections with recently arrived immigrants and they expressed their keenness to assist these new to

settle and avoid the pitfalls or mistakes they had experienced. In this way they relived their earlier immigrant experiences without their initial pitfalls. They also engage in assisting new immigrants to come to US because newer immigrants are more in touch with Kenya, they have more “Kenyaness”. In this way they re-energized their Kenyaness and also relived their earlier immigrant experiences, this process ensures that there is always an enduring “Kenya core” such that even though the group shows longer periods of stay in U.S. they still portray an entrenched “Kenyan Core”.

8.3 Suggestions for Future research

This study has raised questions about the Kenyan immigrants in the United States. One of the main areas of interest is in gender relations, the findings from this study highlighted the centrality of gender as an organizing principal in the structuring of migration processes. One possible area of research would be to examine in-depth the gendered ways in which men and women forge and maintain social networks and how gender works to reproduce, sustain and/or transform their “ethnic cultures.” Since both men and women were engaged in remitting money for household maintenance and other activities in Kenya, it would be interesting to find out whether providing for financial needs elevated women’s status in Kenya even while they were away. In this particular study, it was not possible to explore these issues; whether the ‘financier’ role of women translated to more decision-making power for women.

Secondly, the findings of this study showed that frequency of ties plotted against length of time had a U-shaped curve. This study was conducted at a point in time and therefore it would be interesting to find out if a longitudinal study would provide similar

findings. Such a study would allow further investigation of whether frequency of ties against length of stay reveals a truly U-Shaped curve or it may be waves showing ebbs and flows.

Thirdly, this study was exploratory in nature and it would be of interest to establish the numbers of Kenyans in the various states. There were arguments among participants about where most immigrants from Kenya settle and an exploration on the extent to which social networks play in the settlement patterns would provide more insight into the issue. Eyeball estimates suggest that the majority settle in the Washington D.C. area. There were others who challenged those perceptions and posed that the highest number are in Texas, New Jersey, or Massachusetts. Moreover, it would be of interest to find out whether these settlements form visible ethnic enclaves or they take on other settlement variations.

Fourthly, the conclusions from the study show that ethnic divisions still influence models of organizing especially with regard to development initiatives. The findings showed that many activities were organized along ethnic lines. As such, an area of research interest would be to find out if such trends exist among second and subsequent generation of immigrants. Other studies that would be of interest in this area would be a comparison of other models of organizing to establish whether they have had more success. In other words, to find out whether pooled resources translate to greater impact on the community development as opposed to individual based remittances. There are other emerging alternatives to organizing that include non-governmental organizations and alumni associations which may cross ethnic lines and have more diverse memberships.

The findings from this study revealed that participants made enormous contributions to activities in Kenya and the United States at the individual and collective levels and are an integral part of the lives of people in both locations. Maintaining ties means more than simply the act of making a phone call or sending money or goods. While participants maintained ties so as to provide financial assistance, the findings showed that ties took on various meanings including status, identity, maintenance positions within society, and influence. As such Kenyan immigrants living in the United States maintained their sense of home while living in another country.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

My name is Maria Mwikali Kioko and I am a student at Rutgers University. I am doing research on the experiences of first generation immigrants from Kenya specifically why and how they maintain ties with Kenya. I would like to get your consent to interview you on your experiences as a first generation immigrant. Before I conduct the interview I would like to let you know that there are no financial gains from this interview and also there are no foreseeable risks associated with this interview. Whatever you tell me or discuss with me will be treated as confidential and your name or any other identifier will not be used or revealed at any point. The findings will be reported on an aggregated level and the information will be treated as part of a larger group. I have a copy of the consent form would you like to sign it? I will also tape the interview for purposes of recording because I may not be able to write as fast as we talk. I would also like you to know that your participation is absolutely voluntary.

Date and time of interview:

Place of interview:

Researcher's observations of surroundings:

Demographic Information

I am going to ask you a few questions about yourself, the information will be used to describe the people I interviewed and will have no identifiable data. If you don't want to answer or are unable to answer you can let me know.

Gender:

Age: In terms of age, how old are you? You don't have to disclose your exact change if you do not wish to, you can give me an age range

Education: What is the highest level of education that you have attained?

Employment: What do you do to earn a living? Include all the jobs you have had had within the last six months?

Income: How much money do you make on an annual basis? You don't have to disclose the specific figure I will read out ranges and you can tell me which group you fall into

Marital status: Are you married? If you are married did you wed by customary law or you have a marriage certificate

Tribe: Which ethnic group do you identify with?

Religion: What is your religion?

When did you come to United States?

Where was the first place you lived in when you came to the United States?

Migration history

Describe your typical day in Kenya before you came to the United States

Why did you decide to come to the United States?

Why did you choose United States? Did you have other options?

Why or how did you come to live here? Are you still in same state, city?

If you did not come to Paterson first, how long have you lived here?

Who did you live with when you first came? How did you know them?

What was your life like when you arrived in United States?

Connections and immigration experience

Do you feel connected to Kenya? How?

Describe the connections to Kenya?

(Then based on the response follow up questions for each type of ties).

Do you write or correspond with people in Kenya? Who do you correspond with?

What forms of correspondence do you engage in to stay connected to Kenya? How often?

Do you send money to Kenya? If so to whom?

Do you send money to other people other than your immediate family?

How do you send the money?

For what purposes do you send money; for what activities?

How often do you send the funds?

How do you feel about people maintaining ties with Kenya?

Do you feel that there are benefits to maintaining ties to Kenya?

What are the disadvantages/challenges to maintaining ties?

What is the frequency of the ties you maintain with Kenya?

In general would you say your ties with Kenya have increased or decreased with your stay in United States?

Do you feel that the ties with Kenya affect your life here in the US?

Describe your best experiences of maintaining connections with Kenya?

Explain your worst experiences of maintaining connections with Kenya?

In future, do you think you will maintain the ties with Kenya?

Which Kenyan holidays do you celebrate?

Do you participate in Kenyan activities here in US? If so which ones?

How would you describe your relations with White Americans?

How would you describe your relations with African Americans?

How would you describe your relations with other immigrant groups?

Do you participate in activities or functions by these groups?

Other comments:

Follow up or clarification comments:

Any other comments that come up during interviews:

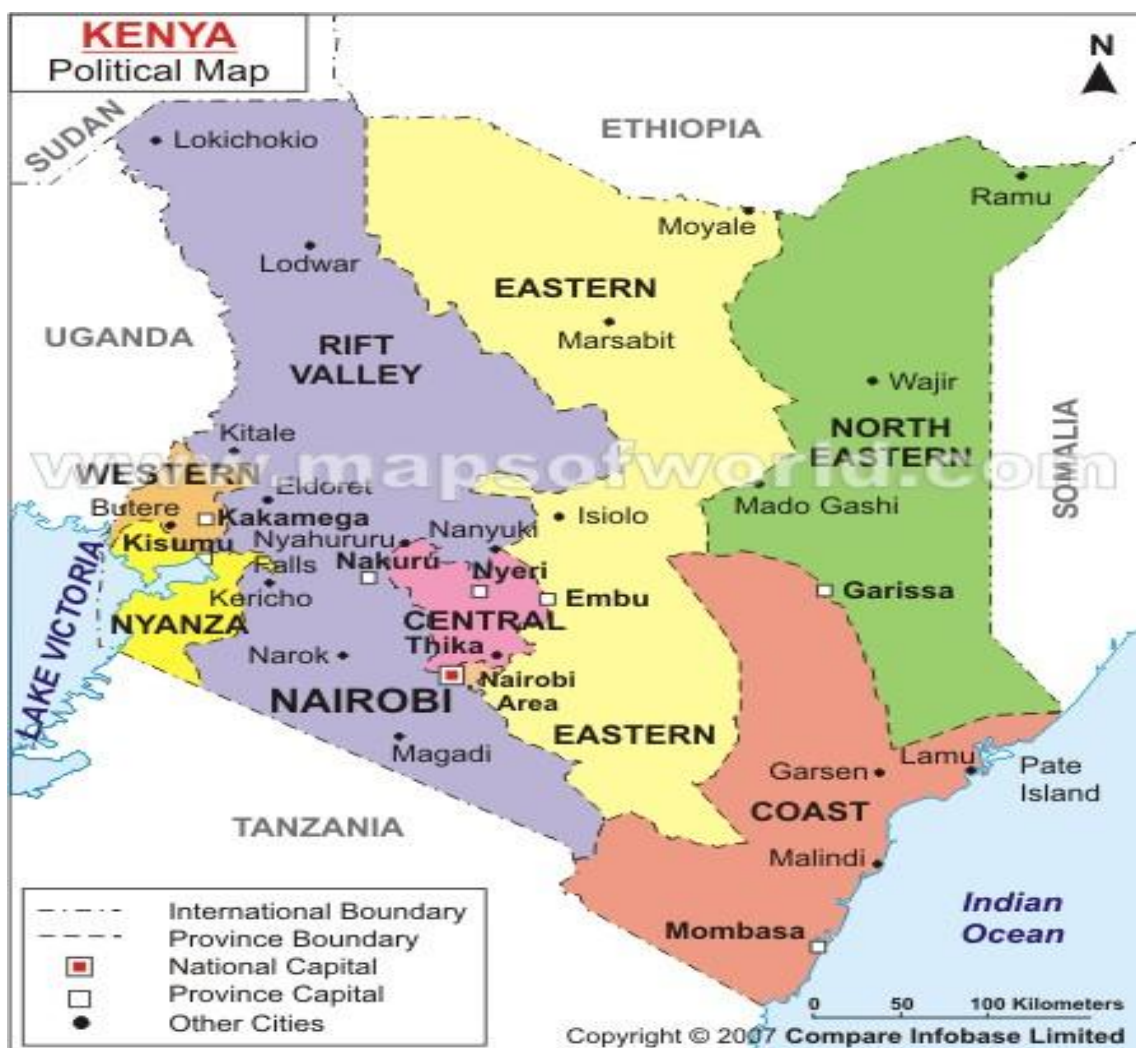
Request for contact for follow-up or clarification.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANTS

Pseudonym	Yr of entry U.S.	Gender	Age	Ethnic group	Education	Marital	Initial town of residence
Sanaipei	1999	F	35-40	Kamba	Primary	living with someone	Paterson
Cherono	1999	F	55-60	Kamba	Secondary	widowed	Atlanta
Atieno	1998	F	35-40	Luhya	Secondary	married - customary	Paterson
Mwende	1997	F	30-35	Kikuyu	Secondary	married - legal	Paterson
Mwajuma	1994	F	25-30	Kikuyu	Secondary	single	Florida
Moraa	1996	F	35-40	Kamba	Secondary	single	Paterson
Awour	1994	F	45-50	Kamba	Secondary	married - customary	Summit
Mueni	1987	F	42	Kamba	Secondary	married - legal	New York
Karimi	1989	F	39	Kamba	Secondary	married - legal	Paterson
Fauzia	1996	F	29	Kikuyu	some college	single	Kansas
Kasichana	1996	F	54	Kamba	some college	separated	Union
Njeri	1998	F	30-35	Luo	Bachelors	single	Jersey City
Nafula	1998	F	27	Kalenjin	Bachelors	single	Irvington
Achieng	1993	F	39	Kisii	Bachelors	living with someone	Jamestown
Khadija	1995	F	25-30	Luo	Graduate	married - legal	Paterson
Wanjiku	1994	F	35-40	Luo	Graduate	married - legal	Paterson
Akinyi	1999	F	38	Kamba	Graduate	single	Paterson
Mukami	1991	F	47	Kamba	Graduate	single	New York
Saitoti	1982	M	40-45	Kamba	Secondary	married - legal	Paterson
Koinange	1997	M	40-45	Kamba	Secondary	married - customary	Paterson
Mumia	1996	M	60	Luhya	Secondary	married - customary	Paterson
Chumba	1985	M	41	Kikuyu	Secondary	single	Paterson

Pseudonym	Yr of entry U.S.	Gender	Age	Ethnic group	Education	Marital	Initial town of residence
Barasa	1995	M	39	Kamba	Secondary	married - legal	Paterson
Kamau	1998	M	29	Luo	Bachelors	single	New York
Kariuki	1990	M	35-40	Kikuyu	Bachelors	married - legal	Philadelphia
Ochieng	1985	M	45-50	Kamba	Bachelors	married - legal	Elizabeth
Kipkirui	2000	M	25-30	Kisii	Bachelors	single	Paterson
Wafula	1998	M	25-30	Kikuyu	Bachelors	single	New Brunswick
Musa	1993	M	40-45	Luo	Bachelors	separated	Paterson
Kyalo	1985	M	43	Kikuyu	Bachelors	married - legal	Paterson
Ochieng	1986	M	43	Kamba	Bachelors	married - legal	Paterson
Mutua	1990	M	40-45	Kikuyu	Graduate	separated	Paterson
Onyango	1996	M	35-40	Kikuyu	Graduate	married - legal	Paterson
Mutuku	1985	M	50-55	Taita	Graduate	married - legal	Jersey City
Nyamweya	1996	M	55-60	Kikuyu	Graduate	single	Elizabeth
Ali	1998	M	28	Luo	Graduate	single	Paterson
Otieno	1992	M	42	Kikuyu	Graduate	married - legal	Maryland
Musembi	1990	M	40	Kikuyu	Graduate	married - legal	Paterson

APPENDIX C: MAP OF KENYA AND ITS PROVINCES



Map of Kenya accessed October 14, 2008 from
<http://www.mapsofworld.com/kenya/kenya-political-map.html>

Country:	Kenya
Capital city:	Nairobi
Major towns:	Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret and Kisumu
Estimated population:	
Religions:	90% Christian and 10% Muslim found mostly along the coast of Indian Ocean and traditional religions
Currency:	Kenya shillings, the exchange rate fluctuates between Kes. 70-80 for U.S. 1\$
Ethnic composition:	42 major tribes/ethnic groups with various smaller sub-groups
Languages:	English and Swahili are official languages and local dialects.
Population:	37.2 million; 51% women,

APPENDIX D: BACKGROUND TO KENYA

Kenya is a former British colony and gained its independence on 12 December 1963. The first president was Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. The second president Daniel Arap Moi came into power in 1978 after the death of the first president. From the time of independence through the death of the first president, and part of the second presidency, Kenya was under single party rule, Kenya African National Union (K.A.N.U). In August 1982 there was an attempted coup by a section of the Kenya Air Force Unit. Even though there was some political freedom before the coup, after the coup there were noticeable changes in levels of political repression. Following the restoration of the government, critics of the government were harassed and intimidated through arrests, interrogations and detentions without trial. By the mid-1980s, the regime had curtailed the freedoms of expressions and association. The constitution was amended to make Kenya a de jure one party state. The ruling party K.A.N.U. expressed intolerance for critics of party policies by suspending members indiscriminately. A culture of fear and silence settled in the country. As the repression increased, so did dissent for the government. The donor community pressured the government for democracy paving the way for multi-party politics. In December 1991 President Moi finally gave in to the pressure and repealed the section of the constitution on single-party state and introduced multi-party politics. The changes included legalization of many political parties, facilitation of free and fair elections and reviewing of the constitution.

After introduction of multiparty politics, various opposition parties mushroomed and this resulted in intense leadership and power struggles among the opposition parties. The parties became fragmented largely on the basis of ethnicity and this deepened their

exploitation by the government. When the first multi-party elections were held in December 1992, President Moi returned to power on a K.A.N.U. party ticket amidst allegations of electoral irregularities. K.A.N.U. won the general elections again in 1997 despite the government's history of rampant corruption and lack of commitment to improving the lives of citizens. It was not until the 2002 elections when opposition parties formed an alliance and fielded a single opposition candidate that Moi and K.A.N.U. were removed from power. K.A.N.U. had been in power for almost four decades. The third president Mwai Kibaki came to power in 2002 with promises of fighting corruption and revitalizing the economy.

The education system in Kenya follows the 8:4:4 pattern adopted in 1985 during Moi's regime. It represents eight years of primary school education (elementary), four years of secondary school (high school) and four years of college. This system was supposed to foster a shift from a focus on white-collar employment to more practical and applicable education. The system has come under a lot of criticism with some people calling for its abolition. The old education system of 7:4:2:3; represented seven years of primary (elementary), 4 years of ordinary secondary school commonly referred to as "O" level (equivalent of high school in U.S.) and 2 years of advanced high school commonly referred to as "A" level (equivalent of prep school in U.S.). This was followed by 3 years of college education. The general perception of the older generation is that the old education system was more rigorous compared to the new 8:4:4 which has an additional year of primary education and college and eliminated the two years of advanced secondary school.

Kenya has a very diverse population made up of more than 42 major tribes or ethnic groups. The larger ethnic groups include the Kikuyu who make up 22% of the total population, Luhya 14%, Luo 13%, Kalenjin 12%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 6%, other African 15%, non-African (Asian, European, and Arab) 1%. Other smaller ethnic groups include Kuria, Pokomo, Taita, Samburu, Masai and Somali. Because of this extensive diverse population, national identity is very weak since each of these ethnic groups have distinct values and customs. Kenyans decry tribalism and in the urban areas people from different ethnic groups live in same neighborhoods. As urbanization has expanded intermarriage among ethnic groups has also tended to increase. Politicians have been known to fan ethnic divisions to pursue their political ends. Political rivalry has existed among the two dominant tribes of Kikuyu and Luo since the time of independence. During the reign of the second president, Daniel Arap Moi, political rivalry extended to pit his tribe, the Kalenjin, against the Kikuyu. There were sporadic episodes of ethnic conflicts among the two groups in the 1990s largely framed as “land disputes.” There was latent dissent for the Kikuyu after the third president Mwai Kibaki was seen as favoring members of the Kikuyu tribe. The December 2007 general elections saw president Kibaki return to power. The elections were heavily disputed arguing there were election irregularities and the country was plunged into full scale ethnic violence especially in the Rift Valley; occupied by both Kalenjin and Kikuyu. A peace deal among the rival political parties was brokered and a coalition government was established and a new position of Prime Minister was created occupied by Raila Odinga from the Luo community.

In Kenya there are three marriage systems that are recognized; customary, religious and civil marriages. Customary marriage takes place within traditional customs and traditions and varies from one ethnic group to another. Most customary marriages allow for polygamy. No formal marriage certificate is issued. Religious marriages are conducted by a religious official according to an individual's religious beliefs and practices. It can take place at a church, mosque, temple, chapel or any other place of choice. Most religious marriages; Christians, Jews, Hindus and Sikhs are monogamous while Islamic law allows a man to marry up to four wives. A marriage certificate is issued. Civil marriages are conducted by government official usually a District commissioner (DC), provincial commissioner (PC) or a magistrate. Civil marriages do not permit polygamy.

APPENDIX E: KENYAN WORDS

Boma – literally the word means an enclosure for animals such as cattle, goats, sheep, donkeys and other domesticated animals. Other common usage includes reference to an individual's homestead. In many cases homestead usually have an enclosure to demarcate the home compound hence the usage of word boma.

Cha Kwetu – Swahili word meaning “Belonging to us”

Chapati – This is a flat bread made using wheat flour; it is served with vegetable dish.

Haki – Rights. It is also used as a swear word, used when someone wants to emphasize that what they are saying is indeed true.

Harambee – This word generally refers to the concept of self-help, that is, people pooling resources together to achieve a common objective. Historically, the word was popularized by the First President of Kenya after independence suggesting that it is up to the indigenous people to help build themselves.

Jamhuri Day - The independence day for Kenya marked on December 12 every year. Kenya got its independence from the British in 1968.

Je Uko wapi? – Where are you?

Jumuiya – Community, usually referring to small neighborhoods.

Kachumbari – Salad made with onions, tomatoes, coriander, and it can also be made spicy when hot pepper is used. It is commonly served with nyama choma or fried rice at celebrations.

Kamba – Bantu tribe in Kenya found in the Eastern part of Kenya

Ketepa – Acronym for Kenya Tea Packers association, a popular brand of Kenyan tea

Kichinichini – Swahili word for undermining

Kikuyu – The largest tribe in Kenya found around the Central part of Kenya. This group of people is also known for its tenacity and business acumen. It is rumored that in part of the country you will always find a kikuyu shopkeeper.

Kisii – Town in Kenya, usually used also to refer to the people who hail from this area, the Gusii people.

Kitenge – African fabric used to make traditional outfits or used as wraps. They are used as wraps across waists, head dress or as scarves. Usually come in various patterns and are very distinctive.

Lingala – Lingala is bantu language mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Kenya, the word has been used to refer to the music with Lingala lyrics. It has been extended to refer in general to music from West Africa. The lingala music beat was popularized by musicians such as Tabu Ley, Franco, Koffi Olomide, Papa Wemba, Soukous and many others.

Luhya - One of the tribes in Kenya mainly found in the Western part of Kenya.

Luo, - Second largest tribe in Kenya, this group of people is mainly found along the Lake Victoria region in what is considered as Western Province of Kenya.

Makumbusho – Memorial service usually performed at different times by different ethnic groups.

Mandazi – sometimes referred to as mahambri. This is a deep-fried pastry similar to doughnuts. They are popularly eaten with tea or coffee. In some instances coconut cream is used to make them.

Mgeni siku ya kwanza – This is a famous Swahili poem alerting people not to overstay their welcome. The saying goes that a guest is a guest only on the first day after that they are no longer guest and you can give them a hoe to go and help in the farm.

Mitumba – Refers to second-hand clothes which arrive in Kenya from different parts of the world mostly from the developed. The second-hand clothes arrive packed in bales and are a major component of the clothes or textile industry.

Mombasa – Second largest town in Kenya along the coast of Indian Ocean; in 2002 it was elevated to City status. It is known for its sunny beaches and a very rich history of trade with Arabs and Portuguese. In its earlier times it changed rulers between the Portuguese and the Arabs. The Portuguese built Fort Jesus.

Mungu ni mwema – God is good.

Mwacha mila ni mtumwa – A Swahili proverb “anyone who abandons their culture is a slave”

Mzungu – white person.

Nakuru – One of the main towns in Kenya, it is the headquarters for the Rift Valley Province.

Ndombolo – Style of dance that was very popular in the 1990s, it originated from Congolese music. The dance involved vigorous movement of the mid section of the body.

Nyama choma – Barbecued steak, this is a popular Kenyan dish that is served at many functions.

Nyumbani ni nyumbani _ Swahili saying literally translated it means “home is home” suggesting that home is best.

Roiko – Brand of cooking spices popular in Kenya, the brand name is Roiko mchuzi mix but it is popularly referred to by the first name Roiko..

Siasa ya pesa nane – phrase used to refer to petty politics.

Twana Twitu – Word from the Kamba tribe meaning “Our Children”

Ugali – This is one of the staple foods across many ethnic groups in Kenya. It is cooked cornmeal. It is a mixture of water and cornmeal, the water is boiled and corn flour added and made into a thick heavy paste. It is served with a vegetable, stew or barbecued meat commonly referred to as nyama choma. Corn is a staple food in Kenya.

Ukabila - Tribalism

Ukishazoea basi – Swahili meaning “once you get used that’s it” simply suggesting addiction.

Umoja – Unity, Oneness

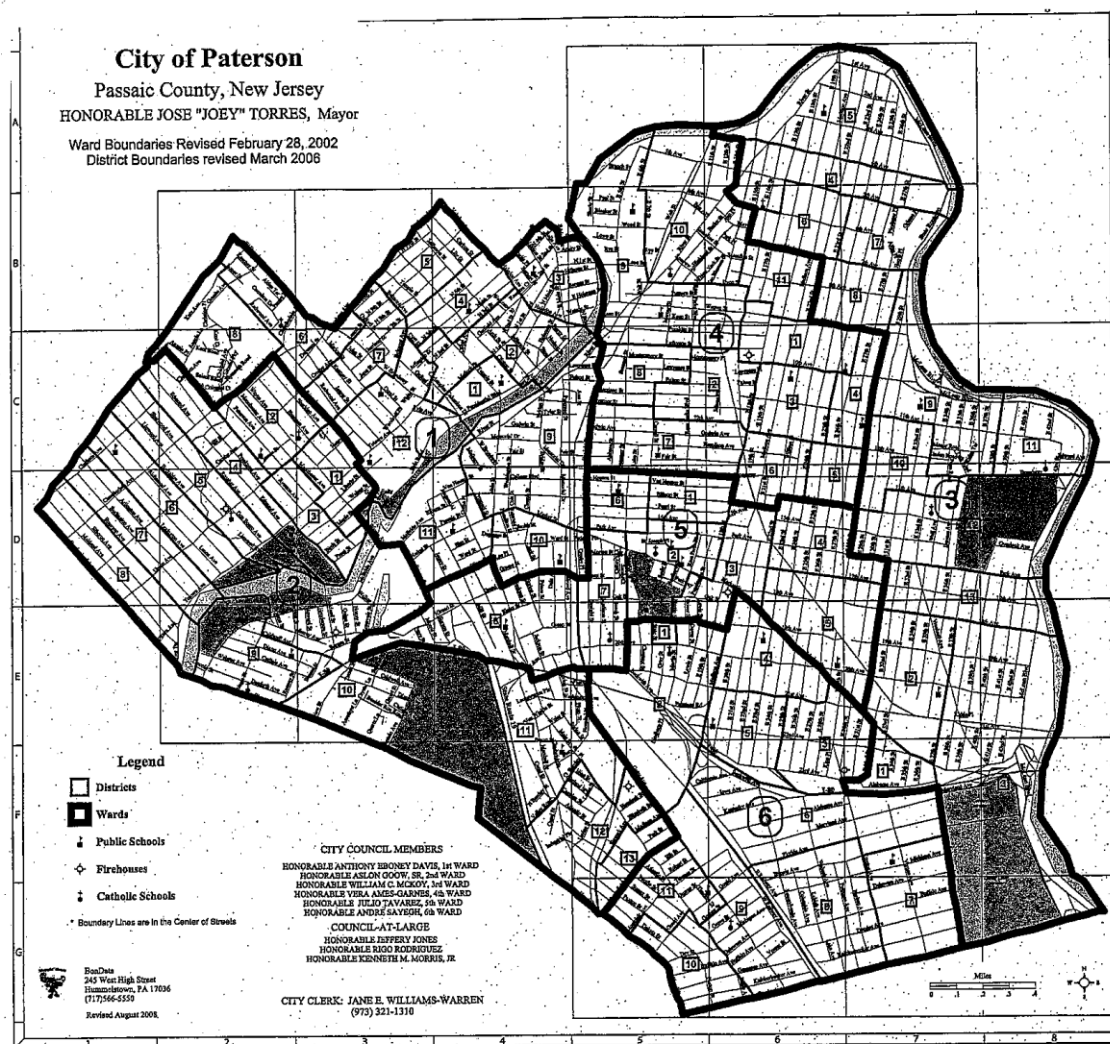
Wananchi- Swahili word for citizen. The word has been become mainstreamed into local usage such that newspapers use the word even when the stories are in English.

Wanataka pesa – They want money

Yaani – Used very commonly in conversations, its literal translation is “meaning.”

Zilizopendwa – Old favorite songs.

APPENDIX F: MAP OF PATERSON



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