

WHY DO AFRICAN WOMEN IMMIGRATE?
THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN WOMEN IMMIGRANTS
IN ST. JOHN'S NEWFOUNDLAND

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Why Do African Women Migrate? The Experiences of African Women Immigrants in St.
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By

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of African women before and after they migrate. It asks the question "why do African women migrate," examines the conditions in Africa particularly those related to gender issues and shows how they contribute to the marginalization of women, limiting their access to resources, thereby creating poverty for women much greater than that suffered by their male counterparts. The thesis asks how the African woman got into this state of poverty and violence and explores colonialism and globalization as the two main forces that have driven the marginalization of African women. It explores the construction of masculinity as an engine of violence and how violence intersects with poverty to marginalize African women. It also examines how racism and sexism in immigration policies of host countries can hinder the full participation of African women when they migrate.

This study is based on case studies of women in Kenya and a group of Kenyan women in Massachusetts and other parts of the United States of America who told their stories. It also involves African women from various African countries and now living in St. John's who participated in open-ended interviews. A comparison was done on the perceived expectations of migration of the women in Kenya and the actual lived experiences of the women in the United States and those in St. John's. It was found that the two can be very different. Whereas the expectations of those women in Kenya who would consider migration as a survival strategy are colored by television and other images of life in the West and by material things that their relatives and other migrants bring back on their brief visits home, the actual lives of African women immigrants can be difficult, with experiences of double-duty syndrome, isolation and

loneliness, long-working hours and deskilling of some professional women and immigrants, racism and sexism. But it can also be a liberating process, particularly for those women who are seeking refuge either from political or personal violence.

This thesis also explores issues of development from a gendered perspective and argues that for development issues to be effective, women and their relationship with nature have to be taken into account and that when local knowledge is ignored, development projects risk failure because of resentment by women on whose labor and goodwill such projects must ultimately rely. On theoretical framework I argue that feminists should work on what unites them instead of dwelling on differences in order for issues of gender inequalities to be effectively addressed and solutions found. I also examine African feminism and draw out the age-long debate between theory and activism.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is the ceaseless toil of the African woman that produces most of the food on the continent and yet she's the poorest in the world. It is her backbreaking work that provides fees for schooling, yet she remains illiterate. It is she who scrapes and saves to keep the home fires burning, yet her reward is often to be beaten and brutalized. In times of need, it is she who will starve herself to feed her family, yet her share in the smallest in times of plenty. It was on her back that the colonizer's whiplashes fell, yet there was no freedom for her when independence came. She is the peacemaker yet it is on her that warriors unleash their fury. Such has been the fate of the African woman. But it is not her destiny. (Versi 2005:1)

My earliest recollections of gender awareness are of being terrified for being a girl and of growing up to become a woman. I once walked a long way to a Mugumo (fig) tree because tradition had it that if a boy walked seven times around the biggest fig tree, he would change from a boy to a girl and I saw no reason why it could not work the other way round. The life of a woman is not one that I wanted to live. My observations as a girl, growing up in the patriarchal countryside of central Kenya, often made me wonder why the majority of Gikuyu women's lot seemed to be so hopelessly miserable, yet they worked so hard and gave so much of themselves not only to their families but also to the communities in which they lived. The women were always working, yet they had no

money, except for my grandmother who used to tell my grandfather that the money she made from the sale of surplus food from the farm was hers because that was the way of the Agikuyu, my tribe. I wondered why the younger women did not keep any money but gave it all to their husbands and my grandmother said that was because they had gone to school and become "foolish". As a little girl, I remember inquiring from my grandfather why my mother did not have her own land and he laughingly told me that women did not inherit land, that was the way of the Agikuyu people, was the way it had always been and will always be. My grandfather was my major source of information because he seemed to have nothing to do and was always glad to entertain prattle from a little girl. He spent most of his time reading the Bible, old newspapers in the local language and listening to a radio that had more crackle than actual information. He also seemed to have an answer for everything, and if he was lost for one, he had the rejoinder: "That's the way of the Agikuyu". I inquired from him why I could not get circumcised like a friend of mine did and he said because we were good Christians and had discarded such "heathen" practices. When I inquired why he drank "muratina" the local beer, and the priest said that was also a heathen practice, he said that what the priest did not know could not hurt him and that he (my grandfather) would not allow the white man to take everything from him. When I inquired why he did nothing, he said that his old age gave him the right to a life of leisure. When I asked why old age had not bestowed the same privilege on my grandmother, he said that it was because she was a woman. To me, it seemed women's woes started after marriage so when I asked him why women got married he said that it was the way of the Agikuyu and that we all had to repay a debt that we owed our community. What debt?

The debt, he explained, came from the fact that because one was born, then one had to have children to name after one's parents. What happened to a woman who did not want to get married? According to him, all women had to get married because there was no place for one who was not. My confusion was complete, as was my terror. But he also came to my rescue by telling me that if I wanted to be free of marriage, I had to succeed in school and go and live in the big city where he heard women who did not want to get married lived. From that day, this became my goal.

What I did not comprehend at that time and for a long time afterwards was that behind all the growing pains that I went through as a girl terrified of growing up and getting married were issues of gender and marginalization of women that neither my grandfather nor most men wanted to address. Whenever my questions got too complicated he would hide behind tradition "that is the way of the Agikuyu," as if tradition was this colossus that never changed and could not be questioned. These are the issues that I explore in this thesis. I examine the issues that make life so miserable for African women that many would want to migrate in order to change or at least lighten the burden of their existence. Although I did not understand it at the time, my grandfather had sowed the seed of emigration in my mind when he told me to succeed in school and go and live in the big city if I did not want to get married. It was only later that I would understand that moving to the big city did not have all the solutions to my problems. At the time I was growing up, colonial edicts had imposed a taxation on all single women living in urban areas in what came to be known as "Prostitute Taxation" or "Kondi ya Malaya," thus equating all

single, urban African women to prostitutes. By the time I got to live and work in Nairobi, Kenya had been independent for some time, but this colonial legacy remained. Like most women, I occasionally became a victim of sporadic police swoops which were, at least in theory if not in practice, intended for netting prostitutes but were used by an increasingly corrupt police force to harass women and demand bribes. Then I would ask myself whether my grandfather's advice to go to the big city where I would find freedom was really true. Was my emigration from the countryside to the big city a guarantee of independence? Similarly, I have asked myself whether those African women who migrate from the continent of their birth to the West find whatever they are looking for. In this thesis I explore what I believe to be the main causes for the marginalization of women in Africa, their perceptions of life in the West and the actual experiences of some African women in St. John's, Newfoundland and also in Massachusetts and other parts of the United States of America.

In the following chapter I examine literature dealing with what I consider to be the main causes of marginalization of African women, namely, colonization and globalization. I present a synopsis of the Gikuyu woman in her traditional setting to illustrate how colonization destroyed those structures that protected her and gave her a voice in her community by installing those that silenced her and made her a second class citizen. I seek to show how colonialism exploited an already gendered platform to marginalize African women by instituting a parasitical type of patriarchy in order to harness the African women's productive and reproduction capacities for the main focus of the

colonial project: the economy. I demonstrate how colonialism disinherited African women of their entitlement to usufruct rights to land by introducing individual land ownership and bestowing this ownership only on males, as "heads of family." I use dualism epistemology to illustrate how binaries embedded in western thought systems were utilized to install a very virulent type of patriarchy, top-heavy with racism and sexism. I argue that colonialism, through a long history of slavery, racism and exploitation of western women, had already situated African women at the bottom rung of the social ladder. I draw my arguments from African feminists who endeavor to discredit the colonial theory that colonial education liberated African women from the yoke of the African men's tyranny. I show that colonial education actually became a tool of domination through which colonialists tried to transform her into a caricature of her Western mistress in order to control her. As well, in the literature chapter, I demonstrate how globalization is a continuing process of domination and exploitation, and that although it possesses some qualities that liberate, these qualities have not been liberating for African women who have been thrown into mass poverty by systems that continue to destroy or transform the women's economic bases in Africa in particular and the third world in general. I explain how the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s have undermined African women's economic, political and cultural bases. I strive to show how globalization is gendered in character, and how feminization of labor in the global market has continued to relegate women into reproductive labor. In the migration and immigration section of the literature chapter I give an overview of migration in general and draw out important characteristics of African migrations. I explore how migration is

gendered in character. Because traditional theories of immigration tend to treat women as minor players, both sending and receiving countries have failed to establish conditions that are conducive to female migration and immigration.

In the next section of the chapter, I investigate how gender inequalities translate into poverty which in turn becomes a major impetus for migration of African women. I seek to show how poverty impacts on various aspects of women's lives such as health, education, employment, exclusion from decision-making, and lack of access and control of resources. Secondly, since violence is one of the reasons my research unearthed as a major impetus for migration by African women, I trace this violence to colonialism whose major characteristic was violence, founded by and maintained on violence, and how its legacy has been maintained by respective governments and continues to be felt in Kenya to date. In doing so, I demonstrate how extreme violence was visited on the Gikuyu people in particular and how women were singled out for "special" treatment. I outline the relationship between gender, poverty, and armed conflict on the one hand and migration on the other. In tying gender and violence together, I endeavor to show how society's production of masculinity and femininity has had extremely violent consequences for women. I expound on how cultural tools such as language can be utilized to perpetrate violence against women. I also explore how armed conflict affects women in peculiar ways. Finally, I examine other reasons why women migrate such as family reunification, education and asylum.

In Chapter 3 I explore feminist theory within the context of African women's development issues, and draw out the age-old contestation between theorists and activists. I demonstrate that good intentions in development agendas can be undermined by a lack or disregard of local knowledge and how the latter has to play a major role in all development projects targeting women's issues. Because of women's symbiotic relationship with nature, particularly in the rural areas where the majority of African women live, and the dependence on their labor of any major development project, success depends heavily on their goodwill, local knowledge and involvement. In the theoretical framework part of this chapter, I discuss the development of African feminist theories, drawing heavily on the work of Obiema Nnaemeka and Oyeronke Oyewumi, two of Africa's most prolific feminists, to argue that African feminism was not a reaction to Western feminism but rather goes back through the ages, for African women have always drawn strength from each other to negotiate through patriarchal structures that sought to marginalize them. I argue that it is African feminist scholarship that has been shaped by western domination of feminist thought. African feminists' major bone of contention, I point out, stems from the notion that they have been ignored as producers of knowledge by Western feminists. The next section of this chapter deals with my own experiences of feminist methods in data collection, using interviews as my main technique. I point out how monetary and familial considerations as well as the reluctance of potential participants to be interviewed or taped hampered the progress in the research for this thesis. I demonstrate how language can be a barrier in interviewing and how this affected me in my attempts to interview Maasai women, whose language I do not speak. I also

address how violence visited upon my person during the interviewing process interfered in data collection. I finally give a justification for this study and trace my interest in doing this research.

Chapter 4 contains case studies of women's experiences in Kenya and anecdotal evidence from a group of Kenyan women in Massachusetts and other parts of the United States of America. I outline four case studies of women in Kenya and their lived experiences, drawing on their experiences of violence and marginalization, particularly economic marginalization which had forced some of them to engage in dangerous businesses such as prostitution and even to consider illegal immigration as a solution to getting to what they imagine to be a better life in the West. I show how domestic violence has shaped some of their lives. In the second part of this chapter I deal with a Kenyan group that lives in Massachusetts and show how immigration has shaped their lives. I also give a personal biography.

In Chapter 5 I explore African women's experiences in St. John's. By conducting open-ended interviews with six women, I endeavor to listen to the women tell their stories in their own words. I investigate their expectations in the West and their lived experiences in the migration process. I examine the problems encountered by these immigrant women such as the double-duty syndrome, child discipline, non-recognition of foreign credentials and accent, sexual division of labor, racism and sexism, isolation and loneliness. I scrutinize the issues of racism and sexism and the inequalities contained in Canadian

immigration policies. I then draw my conclusions on how immigrant women have to contend with new roles and the need for host countries to address the gendered perspectives in the migration and integration processes.

In Chapter 6 I give examples from my research in which poverty and gender inequalities correspond to the literature review. I also illustrate that the opinions of feminists, particularly third world feminists, on the generation of knowledge have to be considered so that feminism is not seen as monolithic and intolerant of differences. Women, including those who profess to be feminists, have to draw from what unites them rather than what sets them apart. I show that development issues have to take gender issues into account, or development will not be achieved. I look into African women's determination to succeed in the immigration process in spite of the odds, to become somebody and to build better lives for themselves and their children. I conclude this study by suggesting that further research needs to be done by feminists on issues of the African brain drain. Additionally, African governments need to look into the issues of gender inequalities, poverty and violence. I suggest that both sending and receiving countries need to seriously examine immigration policies that hinder the full participation of women in the immigration and integration processes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

I need to mention at the outset of this chapter that there is not much literature written by African women since much of the research done is mostly andocentric and represents mainly Eurocentric values and perceptions (see Bradford, 1996:351-370; Chanock, 1991:65-88; Gocking, 1993:93-113). However, more research is being done by African feminists (see Allman, Geiger & Musisi, 2002). If some of the books and articles that I refer to are dated, it is because they are mostly historical in nature. Secondly, most of the books and articles dealing with women in colonial Kenya are dated since not much new research seems to have been done on the subject (Ahlberg, 1991; Chanock, 1991:65-88; Due&Gladwin, 1991:1431-1439; Green, 1999; Gocking, 1993:93-113; Hunt, 1991:471-494; Jere-Mwiindilila, 1994:1-9; Konodu-Agyemeng, 1999:400-414; Mackenzie, 1991:226-256; Presley, 1992; Sudarkassa, 1986:91-103).

In this chapter I will examine what I consider to be the three most important historical factors that led to the situation that is fuelling migration of African women from the continent of their birth. I will explore colonialism as the system that laid the foundation for the marginalization of African women by destroying the traditional structures that guaranteed her security and instituted those that continue to oppress her to this day. I will inspect her retrogression into a commodity of production (of labor) and reproduction (of laborers) within the strictures of capitalist accumulation fuelled by colonial patriarchy. I

will lay the foundation of the next phase of her absorption into the global assembly line of globalization. Finally, I will explore migration and immigration and their effects on African women.

In the first section of this chapter, much emphasis will be on Gikuyu women of central Kenya in their traditional setting prior to colonialism and during the colonial era.

Although there are approximately forty-two tribes in Kenya, I am more familiar with the Gikuyu community because as one of them, I am more knowledgeable about their political, cultural and social history during the period under review. I was born in the colonial era and weaned on stories of the atrocities visited by colonial agents upon the Gikuyu people in general and the women in particular. Although their experiences are not representative of all Kenyan women or even of each other, they bear more similarities than differences. Gikuyu women were a special target of colonial brutality because of their aggressive resistance to colonial occupation, particularly within the Mau Mau movement of liberation and political activism in the 1950s (Elkins, 2000; Kanogo, 2005; Otieno, 1998; Robertson, 1999). Secondly, missionary activity was highly concentrated in Gikuyu country, so the onslaught on their culture was deeply felt, perhaps more so than in other communities where the same activity was not as highly concentrated (Ahlberg, 1991; Waciuma, 1969). At times the term Gikuyu woman will be used synonymously with Kenya and/or African women. This is explained by the fact that sometimes it is difficult to draw a clear line between the effects of colonialism on one tribe and another because, although some of the effects were geographically specific, much of colonial

policies affected all Kenyan women and other African women in similar ways. For example, British colonial policies in Kenya were hardly different to those applied in Ghana, Uganda or any other British colony. Although my main focus will be on Gikuyu women, I will draw examples from other communities both within and beyond Kenya.

2.2. Gikuyu women in pre-colonial Kenya

To be able to demonstrate the effects of colonialism on Gikuyu women, it is important to briefly exemplify her situation in the traditional life of her community. Musisi (Allman et al., 2002) asserts that autonomous and influential queen mothers are the most obvious evidence that women in pre-colonial Africa had significant political power (see Thornton 1991:25-40; Sudarkasa, 1986). Hanson (Allman, et al., 2002) explains "in many African societies in the past, ruling involved maintaining a balance among competing interest groups, and political structures allowed multiple participants to work out their relative strengths and develop working compromises. Gendered forms of political power were often part of these systems" (p.220). In the Gikuyu community, the family was the fundamental basis of the Gikuyu social structure (Muriuki, 1974; Presley, 1993). Gikuyu women's most important role was the production and distribution of food (Mackenzie 1991). Ahlberg (1991) further states that because food was the basis on which wealth, status and influence were acquired by male elders they depended not only on the ability of women to produce such food but also on their generosity. This provided women with a negotiable position thus integrating them into the Gikuyu political economy over which they exerted some authority. Mackenzie(1991) concurs: "the degree of authority that

women were able to exercise over the production of their labor, seasonal crops and their distribution was of political significance in the extra-household Gikuyu economy" (p.229). Mackenzie (1991) further informs us that security of tenure for women was achieved through a balancing of individual and corporate rights within the clan. Muriuki, (1974) avers that as producers of food, a woman was assured usufruct rights by her husband's clan. According to Mackenzie(1991) in practice, she was given land to cultivate on marriage by her mother-in-law which demonstrated women's influence at structural positions as head of each "matricentric unit" in what were frequently polygamous family units. Mackenzie (1991) avers that it was through the mother that inheritable cultivation rights to land passed on to a son. Presley (1992) contends that because men's work was largely seasonal and periodical while work performed by women required a daily routine, the latter, was therefore, highly visible. According to Sudarkassa (1986) the complex division of labor between women and men implied a complementary, mutually dependent relationship rather than a hierarchical one. Sudarkassa (1986) contends that this does not mean that women and men did not play separate roles in pre-colonial society but that these roles were complementary rather than exclusionary and competitive. For instance, Gikuyu women were responsible for tilling the land, harvesting and distribution of food, pottery making, trade and childcare while the men were responsible for clearing virgin land, growing of bananas and sugarcane, brewing beer, and defending the community. Women's work was therefore, repetitive and very visible while men's work was periodic and, therefore, not so visible (Kenyatta, 1968; Muriuki, 1978; Presley, 1992). According to Sudarkassa (1986) misrepresentations of

gender relations within traditional African societies were put forward when western scholars and colonial administrators tried to interpret these relations within western paradigms. While writing on colonial women in Belgian Congo, Mianda (Allman et al., 2002) contends that the changes that occurred during colonization and capitalism introduced hierarchical relations between the sexes, altering distribution of tasks within the communities that were disadvantageous to African women. For instance, Mackenzie (1991) contends because of the different natures of women's and men's work, and the high visibility of women in pre-colonial Gikuyu society, women's work was misconstrued by westerners as being close to slave labor while men's periodic activities were construed to mean that Gikuyu men were lazy and slave drivers. Colonialists then went ahead to construct a Gikuyu society to conform to these misconceptions (see Sontaru, 1996). Further, racial stereotypes played a major part into the shaping of the colonial state and in the next section of this chapter I demonstrate how racism intersected with a major socio-metaphysical European ideology to create racism and sexism as major determinants of the colonial state.

2.3.i. Colonial Racism and Dualism Epistemology

Falola (2005) states that the "colonial state was shaped by racism" (p.10). Colonial racism hinges on the fact that, as Vickers (2002) argues, it presumes to impose "civilization" and "development" onto a "savage" and "primitive" culture. Colonialists viewed themselves as developed and civilized, justifying the imposition of colonialism on the colonized as a mission to civilize savages out of a primitive culture(s). According to

Buckman (1994) a colonial relationship is one of domination and subordination among participatory groups and is constructed mainly on notions of difference and to serve the interests of the dominant group, fortifying its position and eroding choice of the non-elite through force, authority, influence and dominance. Vickers (2002) perceives colonialism as a culture of manipulation and oppression, in which the actions and attitudes of the colonizer towards the colonized are conscious, intentional and trans-generational.

Vickers (2002) argues that colonialism operates from a superior/inferior dichotomy in which the "superior" seeks to dominate the "inferior." Signe (2005) in what he terms as dangerous dichotomies, states that such discourses construct knowledge in terms of hierarchical binaries where one is not only separate/different, but also above/better than the other. Falola(2005) agrees that: "to 'self-righteous' colonial officers, the agenda of colonialism was about change, from evil to good," the opposite of the Other (p.10; see Elkins, 2005). According to Mies (1988) reducing the complicity of existence into simplicities of opposing spheres of "either/or" dualism depicts the mind (male) as the seat of intelligence which is completely divorced from the body (female) which in turn operates within the unintelligent sphere of emotion. The body is perceived to be inferior to the mind, from which, as Oyewumi (2005) avers, "any rational person had to escape...women, primitives, Jews, Africans, the poor, and all those who qualified for the label "different" in varying historical epochs have been considered to be the embodied, dominated therefore by instinct and effect, reason being beyond them"(p.5). Oyewumi (2005), therefore, contends that those in positions of power find it imperative to establish their superior biology as a way of affirming their privilege and dominance over "Others."

Those who are different are seen as genetically inferior, and this, in turn, is used to account for their disadvantaged social positions (see Elkins & Pedersen, 2005). Carried into colonialism, binary differences such as civilized/savage, progress/backward, good/bad, white/black were applied to conquered peoples of the colonies and their effects particularly on colonized women were and continue to be devastating. But in colonialism, difference was not only racial but hierarchical in its application since the African man was accorded a superior position vis-à-vis African women. Because dualistic dichotomies promote patriarchy in one of its most virulent forms, colonial male agents recruited African males for the successful subjugation of African women.

2.3.ii. Patriarchy and Colonialism

Although the Gikuyu community was patriarchal in its social structure, it was patriarchy in its literal sense, 'the rule of fathers' (Presley, 1992). Thus, whereas fathers had total control of their offspring, their wives and other female relatives did not necessarily come under the same degree of control. Junior men had no authority over senior women as social status lay in age rather than sex. Senior wives wielded a lot of authority over their junior co-wives and junior men in the family. Presley (1992) maintains that a Gikuyu man only gained prominence when he got married and begot children, and not simply because he was born male. Additionally, since women's power lay in the vital part they played in food production and distribution, surplus products could be used to create accumulation of wealth in the form of cattle, which were owned by men. Therefore, a woman's work contributed greatly to her husband's accumulation capacity and women

used this as leverage for a voice in the community and to control any excesses by their men folk (see Kenyatta, 1963; Muriuki, 1974; Leakey, 1977; Presley, 1992). Mies (1988) contends that with its misconceptions about the place of African women in their traditional setting, colonialism introduced a predatory kind of patriarchy based on one-sided relationship of exploitation and appropriation of women's bodies and production. Henceforth, patriarchy would assume a new dimension, one that would be reinforced by colonialism for the exploitation of women's labor for colonial capitalist accumulation. African feminists (Ahlberg, 1991; Kanogo, 2005; Mama, 1995; Nnaemeka, 2005; Sudarkasa, 1986) have struggled to unravel the myth advanced by colonial agents that colonialism improved the condition of the African women by freeing them from the yoke imposed upon them by African men. They strive to show that, on the contrary, colonialism exploited an already gendered platform, sealing traditional loopholes that afforded African women social redress and upward mobility by introducing a system that was highly flawed with deep racist and sexist ideologies.

2.3. iii. Colonial Control of Women

Falola (2005) contends that colonialism was a cultural project, bent on forcefully reshaping the values and ideas of colonial subjects. Because of the central role that women play in passing on a people's culture to progeny, colonial policy concentrated much more on them in the replacement of old belief systems and cultural products with new ones, hinging on Christianity and the superiority of Western culture, with values more supportive of colonial and capitalist objectives. Elbourne (Woodward, Hayes &

Minkley, 2002) professes that colonialism gave African men new powers over their women that tradition had denied them. Elbourne (Woodward et al., 2002) gives a comprehensive account of how domesticity led to dispossession of women in certain South African tribes. Manda (Allman et al., 2002) asserts that while it was necessary to accept Western values and reject all the customs and traditions perceived to be "primitive", the newly "civilized" African men were clearly selective with regard to gender relations. With few exceptions, and approval of their colonial masters, they preserved those "traditions" which accorded them privileges as men, vis-à-vis women, and adopted those of white "civilization" which favored their indisputable role as heads of the nuclear family.

Mies (1988) explains that capitalism cannot function without patriarchy and capital accumulation cannot be achieved unless patriarchal relations between men and women are maintained or newly created. Secondly, Mies (1988) contends that patriarchy heavily depends on a division of labor, for inherent in this division is subordination of women. Sadaawi (Nnaemeka, 2005) concurs and argues that imperialism, of which colonialism has been a driving force, is itself a patriarchal class system and cannot survive without sexual and economic exploitation of women and the poor. A long history of slavery and the subordination of the western woman informed colonialism. The western imagery of African women was, therefore, already situated in the slavery ideology symbolizing and emphasizing her utility as a tool of production, that of physical labor and other laborers. But since pre-colonial African women did not conform to this stereotype, colonial agents

began to reconstruct her by transforming the domestic economy, and indigenous political and social structures. Western education became a tool for this transformation. Ahlberg (1991) refers to western education in colonial Kenya as a tool of domination, used for the dismantling of values and customs upon which the colonized people's social systems depended (See Davis & Nwivu, 2001). Although this destabilized the social order for all people of the communities affected by colonialism, the implications of western education for the colonized women would not only devalue her worth in her community but also her work. According to Ahlberg (1991), colonial education fostered concepts of marital and household relationships that mirrored western nuclear family ideas of the "civilized" wife and mother (see Allman et al, 2002). Similarly while writing on British colonialism in India, Bannerji (2002), states that in seeking to legitimize itself through self-characterization as rule of law and social reform, significant colonial reform sought to penetrate deep into the everyday life and culture of Indians. This legislation involved such intimate and private aspects of life as marriage, motherhood, women's relationship to their bodies, sex and sexuality. Ahlberg (1991) agrees with such sentiments and contends that initially women lost whatever control over their own identities that tradition afforded them as they were reduced to dependent wives and mothers (see Mann, 1983). Colonial education was practical and indoctrinating, only meant to train the girls into being "good" wives and mothers to the African males who were being trained and groomed for life in the colonial economy and administration. Because the African way of life was viewed as immoral and granting women too much freedom, according to Mianda (2002), colonial education of girls was mainly conducted under a controlled environment,

such as boarding schools since they would ensure young girls' moral training and preserve their "nature". As Kanogo (2005) explains, these schools became sites for the negotiation of diverse cultural practices. Their wards discarded the traditional way of life, and were required to abandon rituals, habits and ways of dress and adornment that the missionaries regarded as heathen, and adopt different ways of thinking, doing and being. Kanogo (2005) contends that these girls were caught between two contesting world views, abandoning a familiar one and wooed into a new one with different notions and practices and one that would change their place in society, relegating them to an inferior one for generations to come. Kanogo (2005), therefore, concludes that it was through Western education that the African women's relationship with her natal family and the support that her clan guaranteed her was ruptured and she became sorely dependent on and controlled by her husband as dictated by her newly acquired "civilization". While discussing the transformation of the Buganda kingdom in Uganda for the colonial project, Musisi (Allman et al, 2002) contends that the reconstruction of the Ugandan woman became a central theme of the colonial agents. "Civilization" thus required their emancipation in every realm from hygiene and home management to the bearing of children. Within this framework, Musisi (2002) continues, womanhood was equated with motherhood and motherhood was equated with wifehood.

2.3.iv. Colonial economy

With the assumption of formal colonial rule in Kenya, the British government and its agents began to restructure the domestic economy and transform indigenous political,

economic and social structure under colonial control. Large tracts of land had been appropriated by colonial forces for the settlement of white settlers, occasioning internally displaced populations on a large scale, and taxation had been introduced to induce native labor into settler plantations (Robertson, 1997; Odhiambo & Lonsdale, 2003). Initially, although women were not allowed into administrative centers, the period following the 1st World War witnessed a large movement of Gikuyu women traders to Nairobi and other urban centers in search of work and also to escape forced labor on white plantations. Traditionally, Gikuyu women had been traders (see Muriuki, 1978; Robertson, 1997) and many took up that role in Nairobi. In time they would lose this role to men as wholesale business became lucrative, as Kenya's capital assumed regional importance. Furthermore, Robertson (1997) argues that control of women's mobility became paramount to colonial chiefs and older men since losing women to the urban centers would undermine their authority and economic base in the countryside. Robertson (1997) reports that from the 1920s the urge to control women by colonized men, particularly men living in urban centers, took a nationalistic turn. Grievances expressed in the Gikuyu male controlled press in the 1920s and 1930s were consistently vehement on the subject of loss of control over both married and single women. Galvanized by colonial dictates, Robertson (1997) continues, control over women's bodies, reproductive and economic activities became an essential part of the construction of the Gikuyu male identity. Kenyatta, a leading voice in the struggle for Kenya's political independence, who would become Kenya's first president, perceived trading as the most important aspect of leading women into prostitution and insubordination by Gikuyu women. On

another front, once single women in urban centers had been equated with prostitutes, harassment of single women would become official colonial policy, which more often than not, translated into health checks for venereal diseases (Allman et al., 2002), a regulatory measure of female bodies' potential to contaminate male bodies, both black and white (see Hunt 1991; Davis(undated). With the introduction of private male ownership of land and commercialization of agriculture in colonial Kenya, food production was transformed into a surplus market where men could get both political and economic clout. Since women had been declared juror minors (see Shadle, 1999), they could neither own property nor access credit for commercial agriculture, would be denied usufruct rights that tradition guaranteed and henceforth be tied to and worked on land that they did not own. They did not have recourse to challenge such violations since they could not appear in court as a direct result of colonial misrepresentation of African women and girls as properly subordinate to men, all men, who would represent them in court (see Kimeri-Mbote, 2001). Post-colonial governments, made up mostly of colonial loyalists, did not change these colonial edicts since these edicts had installed them into positions of power, financial clout and control over women. For much of independent Africa, women continue fighting an uphill battle to overturn these misogynistic colonial laws and regulations.

2.4. Globalization and African Women

2.4. i. Defining globalization

Various scholars (Katz, 2001); Harrison, 2007; Herman, 1999; Mazrui, 2002; Oloka-Onyango 2005) have divergent views on globalization. Encapsulating these views, Moghadam (1999) contends that globalization is a complex economic, political, cultural and geographic process in which the mobility of capital, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken on an increasingly global or transnational form. Mwase (Lukas, 2007) contends that while it has innovative and dynamic attributes, excessive market and profit-driven globalization harbors negative, disruptive and marginalizing effects. In its African context, Donkor (2005) sees globalization and colonization as the two sides of the same coin which only time has modified, intensifying the basic block that undergirded colonization (see Ike, 2004). Referring to globalization as the pinnacle of imperialism, Edozien (Ike, 2004) states, "Hence from an African perspective, globalization is not new, but a continuation of over five hundred years of domination, colonization and commercialization" (p.138); see Bond, 2006). I will stay with Byoga (2001) who defines globalization as "the alliance of business and government as the pillar of the strategy to strengthen the political and economic power centers in Western capitals for global exploitation" (p.286) and Oloka-Onyango (2005) who perceives globalization as "possessed of qualities that both liberate and empower, as much as qualities that marginalize and exclude individuals, communities, and whole countries from the benefits of global bounty" (p.1248); see Prempeh, 2006). It is the negative effects of this

domination and commercialization that globalization has had on African women that I wish to explore in the next part of this chapter.

2.4. ii. Gendered Dimensions of Globalization

Most theories of globalization dwell on global exchange of goods, easy and fast transfer of information through technology, and disengagement of governments from commerce. According to Freeman (2001), Western capitalists and other vessels of globalization expound on the faceless, unengendered and fast transnational flow of capital, labor and the reconfiguration of global markets, and the dissemination of a global culture. What is ignored is how these grandiose theories neglect to explore the lived experiences of women, particularly poor women. For within these discourses, and centered in Western thought systems of dualism dichotomy, globalization is gendered in the duality of masculine/feminine, producer/consumer, international/national, urban/rural, etc. Hawkesworth (2006) contends that globalization is a gendered phenomenon because it positions and affects men and women differently, and it produces new modes of gender power and disadvantages. Freeman (2001) concurs, stating that "in the recruitment of labor along the global assembly line, in modes of disciplining and controlling that labor, in the marketing of goods and the creation of consumers, and in the patterns of migration within and across national borders, there are embedded (and sometimes quite explicit) expectations that rely deeply upon ideologies and practices of gender" (p.1011). Moghadam (1999) avers that through institutions such as the transnational corporations and the state, the global economy generates capital largely through the exploitation of

labor, but it is not indifferent to the gender and ethnicity of that labor. Moghadam (1999) concludes that gender and racial ideologies have been deployed to favor white male workers and exclude others, but they have also been used to integrate and exploit the labor power of women and of members of disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups in the interest of profit making.

- Feminization of labor

According to Moghadam (1999), in what has been termed the feminization of labor, the open current global environment of open economies, new trade regimes, and competitive export industries, global accumulation relies heavily on the work of women, both waged and unwaged, informal sectors and in the home, in manufacturing, and in public and private services. Meyer (2003) concurs: "as nations liberalize their economies and transnational corporations set up operations in developing countries to reduce costs, women (especially young unmarried women) in these nations are increasingly drawn into the manufacturing sector" (p.353). Meyer (2003) avers that in a global economy organized around services and flexible production processes, women in the developing world have become the preferred labor force for certain kinds of jobs (see Willis & Yeoh, 2000). Meyer (2003) explains this is because women remain associated with unremunerated and services-suited reproductive labor and are often seen as both physically and mentally better suited to perform tedious repetitive tasks as well as more docile than men (see Dolan, 2004). Hawkesworth (2006) maintains that in export processing zones across the global South (developing countries), women constitute 70-90

per cent of the factory workers producing textiles, leather goods, toys, electronic goods, and pharmaceuticals. During her study of the multinational farming and manufacturing sectors in Kenya, Karega (2002) found out these can be bastions of abuse and intimidation for women workers. Sexual abuse and harassment and other types of violations of women in the third world multinational workplace is well documented (Mason, 2004; Coryndon, 2004; Hernandez & Rosalva, 2001; Philips & Xaba, 2000; Thanh-Dam et al, 2006). Moghadam (1999) states that in the new labor markets, women are still disadvantaged in terms of wages, training and occupational segregation. Hawkesworth (2006) avers that they are also disproportionately involved in forms of employment increasingly used to maximize profits: temporary, part-time, casual, and home-based work, low wages and no benefits. Herzig (2006) recounts the reproduction of the construction of the female immigrant domestic work in cultural discourses. Hawkesworth (2006) contends that domestic-care work has become a highly lucrative transnational business, generating billions of dollars annually and recruiting 60 million women from poor nations to overseas contract work each year. Hawkesworth (2006) also perceives globalization as being responsible for the transformation of sexuality into a commodity of global exchange. Hawkesworth (2006) informs us that with the assistance of the Internet, lonely men cruise cyber-cafes in a quest for foreign brides who conform to nostalgic fantasies of traditional that is, submissive, wives, making sex tourism the site of global adventure as pimps and brothel owners in the guise of disinterested capitalist business entrepreneurs procure sex workers from the third world to meet the ever increasing global demand, particularly in the developed world.

- Cutbacks in social services

One of the tenets of globalization is the disengagement of governments from business and social services. Richards and Gelleny (2007) argue that as governments reduce their role in their economies in order to promote global competitiveness, they relinquish their responsibilities regarding the provision of education, health, water, and social services. The ramifications of government cutbacks on social services have been dire for women both in developing and developed countries (see Ghosh & Guven, 2006). However, according to Moghadam (1999) the effects have had different levels of hardship on women, depending on the type of state and the strength of the economy, with those in welfare states of northern Europe faring the best, followed by women in other strong Western economies. Moghadam (1999) informs us that although women in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have fared badly particularly after the collapse of the communist state, the women of the third world have been the worst affected. Wood (Kuiper & Barker, 2006) asserts that women compensated for falling income by working longer hours producing what they could once buy (see Bond, 2006). They bought food that was less processed, which required that more processing be done at home, and spent more time gathering firewood and water. Decreased public expenditure on water, sanitation and sewage made the search for potable water and disposal of waste more difficult (Kuiper & Barker, 2006) As a result, illness became more common and women spent more time caring for the sick in the home or taking food to those in hospitals. To help with the ever increasing domestic burden, more girls are kept at home instead of going to school (Kuiper & Barker, 2006).

- Structural Adjustment Programs in Sub-Saharan Africa

Globalization in Sub-Saharan Africa is closely linked to the structural adjustment programs under the tutelage of Bretton Woods Institutions. Konodu-Agyemang (2000) asserts that these structural adjustment programs were imposed on African countries as remedies to obstacles to development such as unwarranted state interference in the workings of the price mechanisms, over-bloated public service, exchange controls, state ownership of commercial enterprises, and investment in social welfare (see Moghadam, 1999). The path to the elimination of these economic bottlenecks was to let the hands of market forces determine activities unfettered (Bond, 2006). Weisbrot (2000) asserts that the period following these structural adjustment programs, between the 1980s and the early part of 1990s marks the beginning of economic stagnation in many Sub-Saharan African countries (Weisbrot, 2002; see Bigsten & Durevall, 2003). Bond (2006) blames the poverty that followed on neo-liberalism (globalization) greed and compliance of African elitist classes in the looting of the continent. On the effects of the structural adjustment programs on Africa, (Olurode 2003 citing Gibbon & Olukoshi, 1996) summarizes the effects of the structural adjustment programs thus:

All over Africa, the hallmark of structural adjustments entailed massive currency devaluation, price interest rate payments and trade liberalization; the imposition of credit ceilings and control over money supply, a freeze on wages and salaries, public enterprise privatization/commercialization/liquidation, public expenditure reduction, the withdrawal of subsidies (real and imagined) and the introduction of cost recovery measures on a range of (mainly social)

services, the reduction of the size of the civil service through staff retrenchment and the stepping up of efforts at revenue mobilization through inter alia, the introduction /enforcement of a range of direct and indirect taxation (Gibbon & Olukoshi 1996).

The adverse effects of the SAPS on women in Africa have been widely published (Jere-Mwiindilila, 1994; Due & Gladwin, 1991; Ali, 1995; Dolan, 2004; Mentan, 2007; Harrison, 2007). At the same time, there was a massive export drive to encourage the production and export of both traditional and non-traditional exports and opening up of Export Processing Zones (EPZ) and multinational agricultural plantations (see Due & Gladwin, 1991; Dolan, 2001; Manda, 2002). Olurode (2003) concludes that although there had been some successes recorded, overall, the SAPS failed to deliver the promised dividends, particularly to women. Some of these failures have been:

- Political Reform: The liberalization of political parties particularly those under one-party systems have failed to open up more opportunities for political leverage and participation for women.
- Information Technology: presumably the most visible and perhaps the most powerful and indomitable component of globalization was through Cable News Network, as the BBC and CNN drown out the voices of national radios in Africa through which women could be heard and hear each other. The Internet is of no use to the majority of rural women who, hampered by low education fuelled by poverty and social

discrimination, cannot participate in large numbers in the process of information technology.

- Local Knowledge: it is being pushed further to the background as this is not included or made part of the global culture and education.
- Cuts in agricultural subsidies: because women make up the bulk of peasant agriculture, any effects on agriculture are felt more acutely by women, as was the cut of agriculture subsidies by governments, making inputs expensive. (See Mbilinyi, 1991; World Bank, 2003),
- Because farming is the last resort for men who have lost out in the reform of the civil service, women are pushed further to the fringes of the agricultural food sub-sector. Furthermore, for those men involved in cash crop agriculture, women's labor is required in this segment, which could in turn undermine food security in the domestic domain as women's labor becomes withdrawn from subsistence farming.
- Education and health care became expensive as governments were forced to cut education and healthcare subsidies affecting women-headed households very negatively as many were forced to withdraw children from school. If education becomes expensive, an average family would likely decide that the girl child's education has to be forgone in preference for education of male children.
- Importation of cheap consumer goods has led to many local and cottage industries closing down, many of which were run by women.

Richards & Gelleny (2007) contend that the elimination of tariffs has meant a shift of burden of taxation from business owners to workers, consequently shifting the burden of taxation from men to women, since women's financial assets are generally less mobile than men's. (For a comprehensive analysis of Africa's economic underdevelopment in the 20th century, see Konodu-Agyemang & Panford, 2006). Olorode (2003) avers that more and more households are becoming female-headed as men are deserting homes to escape financial responsibilities and women have to double the number of hours they work in order to cope. Olorode (2003) concludes that although structural adjustment may be a technical term, its consequences are social in ways that negatively impact women in Africa more than any other category. With the foregoing factors, the increasing levels of poverty of African women are apparent as are the reasons they are leaving the continent of their birth in increasingly large numbers for greener pastures in Europe, America, and other more developed third world countries. The next section of this chapter explores the immigration process and African women.

2.5. Migration and Immigration

2.5.i. An Overview of Migration in History

Marcella and Ring (Adler & Gielen, 2003) contend that migration is an impulse inborn in human nature to wander in search of new opportunities. History has been characterized by humanity in various stages of motion. Marcella and Ring (Adler & Gielen, 2003) conclude that people go where there are opportunities and leave places that offer fewer opportunities. Mobasher and Sadri (2004) argue that at the moment there is no single

coherent theory of international migration, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries (see ; Borjas, 1989; Brettell & Hollifield 2000; Massey et al., 1993; Meilander, 2001; Meyers, 2000; Pedraza, 1991; Rodriguez & Grafton 2007; Toro-Morn & Alicea, 2004;). Bakewell and Haas (2007) aver that in pre-colonial Africa conquest and conflicts between tribal groups over natural resources and the control over trade routes were associated with regular movements and resettlements of people. According to the World Bank (2007) pre-colonial migrations in Africa were basically oriented towards trade, labor, and religion and occurred without legal restrictions and barriers. Secondly, since agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was associated with slash-and-burn systems there was promotion of shifting migration systems. However, WB continues, the arrival of colonialism and its requirement of a steady supply of human power, brought about concerted efforts to contain such a fluid situation which highly interfered with old systems of migrations.

Currently, according to Sandler and Maimbo (2003) when dealing with African migrations, paucity of information on African migrations as a result of the porosity of African borders and lack of research makes it difficult to measure intra-African migration volumes, much less to engender the numbers. However, as Bakewell and Haas (2007) assert, it is important to note that only a small fraction of international migration originating in Africa results in journeys to the industrialized world. Presently Africa has a high rate of internal migration. The World Bank (2007) explains that much of this

internal migration is chain migration emanating from the fact that migrants rely on the network of social relations that provide accommodation on arrival and assist in securing employment. Because tribal, ethnic and cultural boundaries often transcend those of nation states, the boundaries of internal and inter-regional migration are often of little consequence. The World Bank (2007) asserts that recent studies in SSA have concluded that economic motivations are the primary determinant of the quality and direction of voluntary migration flows. The report (WB, 2007) continues to inform us that unlike voluntary migration, which derives mainly from economic factors, the reasons for mass or group migration within and across borders in Sub-Sahara countries are non-economic and are related to political and religious factors, and sometimes, natural disasters. The report continues to say that armed conflicts, political discord, famine, and other natural disasters have dislodged many thousands of people, including women and children, giving a rise to the number of landless poor. The issue of poverty as a migration motivation is examined in a later section of this thesis.

2.5. ii. Migration and Gender

Moussa (1993) asserts that existing theories of migration have tended to represent the phenomenon as essentially a male activity ignoring the gendered factors involved in migration and emigration. Kelson and DeLaet (1992) state that this tendency is part of international relations and traditional assumptions that women mainly migrate to join husbands abroad and that economic factors are the underlying impetus for most migration flows. Martin (2004) maintains that increasing numbers of women are migrating as the

sole supporters of themselves and their families (see Yinger 2006). According to Kelson and DeLaet (1992) women migrate internationally at nearly the same rate as men, a perspective that is supported by global statistics (see Zlotnik, 2003). For instance, an United Nations report in 2005 contends that about 90 million women currently reside outside their countries of origin, adding that at no time in human history have as many women been on the move as today. Jolly and Reeves (2005) aver that in general, women have constituted a majority of migration flows to countries that favor migration for permanent resettlement whereas men have predominated in immigration flows to those that emphasize migrant labor.

The WB (WB, 2007) avers that as far as migration of African women was concerned, traditional notions that perceive women as minor players were a reflection of widespread traditional views of the status and role of women within the family and society. The report explains this bias as based on the fact that a typical African woman is probably underprivileged and illiterate, and has limited access to resources. It continues to argue that she not only faces discrimination and segregation, both in the organized labor markets and in the informal sector employment, but also has different legal rights in such matters as inheritance, land and credit. There are, therefore, it concludes, a wide range of structural constraints and inequalities that prevent African women from participating more fully in the migration process (see Waddington & Sabates-Wheeler, 2003). An UN Report (2005) avers that: "when policies and practices that discriminate against women are in place- in relation, for example to access of resources, educational opportunities and

political participation- women's capacities to participate and contribute fully to society are diminished" (p.16) Waddington and Sabates-Wheeler (2003) inform us that such conditions affect the opportunities for women to migrate and whether they migrate autonomously or with other family members. But the WB (WB 2007) argues that this situation is now rapidly changing, as dependence on foreign workers to undertake childcare, elder care, housekeeping and other services traditionally performed by housewives increases in developed countries. According to Lukas (2006) African women's migration patterns seem to follow international trends with African women becoming major players. For instance, while in 1960 less than 41% of the emigrant stock in Africa was female, by 2000 women accounted for more than 47% (Lukas 2006). Adepoju (2004) concurs: "Migration in Africa is dynamic and extremely complex. This is reflected in the feminization of migration, diversification of migrant destinations, transformations of labor flows into commercial migration, and brain drain from the region" (p.1).

Yet despite this overwhelming evidence, Pedraza (1991) contends that studies in international relations continue to treat women as minor players in the migration process.

When gender and its ramifications are ignored, bias that is highly lopsided against women in emigration and immigration is bound to occur, and women become excluded from major social dynamics of migration, and immigration policies tend to have a masculine outlook. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo (2003) "gender permeates a variety of practices, identities and institutions implicated in immigration and is, therefore, a

constitutive element of immigration" (p.4). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2003) further argues that because gender is fundamentally about power, it informs different sets of social relations which organize immigration and social institutions (e.g. family, labor markets, etc.) in both immigrants' place of origin and place of destination (see UN Report 2004).

Therefore, Yinger (2006) contends: "It is imperative that we examine international migrations through a gendered perspective. Such a focus begins with the principle that gender is a core organizing principle of social relations, including hierarchical relations in all societies. Gender views migration of women and men as influenced by beliefs and expectations about appropriate behaviors of women and men and between women and men, which are reinforced in economic, political and social institutions" (p.2). Thus, immigration does not happen in a vacuum but is influenced by the roles that women and men play in society (gender roles) which are in turn replicated in the institutions that govern the societies in which we live. Therefore, the World Bank (WB, 2006) asserts that a gender analysis of migration looks beyond simple differences in migration behavior between men and women and examines the inequalities underlying those differences (see Jolly & Reeves, 2002; Donato et al., 2006).

As demonstrated in the foregoing section, African women are becoming major players in the migration process. In the next section of this chapter, I will examine the main reasons behind this phenomenon.

2.5.iii. Causes of Migration for African Women

- **Poverty and Gender Inequalities**

All the Kenyan women who participated in my research and many others whom I have talked to site poverty as the single most important reason they would or have considered migration. The UN defines poverty as a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights (UNHCR, 1996). The WB (2000) states:

Poverty goes beyond lack of income. It encompasses economic, social, and governance dimensions. Economically, the poor are not only deprived of income and resources but of opportunities. Markets and jobs are often difficult to access because of low capabilities and geographical and social exclusion. Limited access to education affects the ability of the poor to get jobs and obtain information that could improve the quality of their lives. Poor health due to inadequate nutrition, hygiene and health services further limits their prospects for work and from realizing their mental and physical potential. This fragile position is exacerbated by insecurity. Living in marginal conditions with no resources to fall back on, shocks become hard or impossible to offset. The situation is made worse by the structure of societies and institutions that tend to exclude the poor from participating in decision-making over the direction of social and economic development (WB, 2000:i).

WB (2008) concedes to these sentiments adding that these factors serve to seriously constrain women's ability to effectively participate in and benefit from economic development. The magnitude of poverty of Kenyan women can be perceived since they fall behind men in virtually every indicator of socio-economic status and constitute the largest group of the poor in Kenya (UNESCO, 2005; Zuckerman, 2002; Kenya Government (GK) 2000-2003; International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2005). According to Hay and Sticher (1995) chronic diseases that affect Kenyan women are diseases of poverty such as leprosy, malaria, diarrhoea, cholera and bilharzia as a result of lack of basic amenities. The WB report (2001) contends that poverty feeds off gender inequalities and the latter promotes the former, the consequences of which are that gender inequalities tend to be greater among the poor. Lack of access to and control of resources by African women have been identified as the most important cause of gender inequality on the continent. The most important resource in African is land. But according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), in Kenya, as in many other parts of Africa, "women's rights to property and particularly land are unequal to those of men. Their rights to own, inherit, manage and dispose of land are under constant attack from customs, laws, and individuals including government officials" (p.1).

Gender inequalities have serious ramifications on education for the girl child in Kenya. An examination of Kenyan statistics (WB, 2008) on education enrolment reveals that even in areas such as Central Provinces where education parity between girls and boys has been reached in primary schools, and, in some cases even passed, education of girls in

technical and university education is still low at 49% and 39% respectively. Furthermore, (WB, 2008) sees considerable disparities among universities depending on programs, with arts-based courses consistently having high female students' representation. This translates into absorption into low cadre levels in the job market for women since it is the technical and scientific fields which attract better enumeration thus dramatically reducing the potential of education as a tool of advancement. According to Muyanga, Ayieko and Bundi (2007), poverty components decrease with the highest level of education attained by household heads. Additionally, employment is a major avenue for increasing incomes and consequently economic wellbeing. Accordingly, since most Kenyan women do not access adequate education, such avenues are closed to them, explaining, in part, why households with women are included as forming a group among the poorest in Kenya's poverty indexes (UNESCO 2005; GK 2000-2003). Additionally, paid employment is not a guarantee of economic wellbeing. My experience in the Kenyan civil service is replete with examples of employees engaging in self-employment to earn more money just to exist. I know of no civil servant who could have survived, much less supported a family, on a government salary during the time that I worked in the civil service.

The WB, (2008) avers that it is in national decision making roles that women's absence is most glaring. The report (WB 2008) attributes the gender disparities in major decision making institutions to various factors including: i) negative stereotypes and socio-cultural attitudes reinforced with strong patriarchal family systems that work against women, ii) lack of societal capacity to accommodate and appreciate women in leadership positions,

iii) women's limited financial base to sustain competitive political campaigns; physical and emotional intimidation threatening personal security of women, iv) low education levels among majority of women, v) lack of interest in political issues among most women. The result is that in a parliament of 222 seats only 22 (16 elected and 6 nominated) are held by women.

Finally, inequality slows down growth for a number of other reasons, including lack of adequate reward for differences in individual talent and effort. High levels of inequality can create personal insecurity and instability. Insecurity, both national and personal creates a very dangerous situation for women, exposing them to all kinds of violence. According to Justino (2006), researchers have found a grave connection between violent conflict and chronic poverty. Justino (2006); see Woolhouse, 2004) maintains that violent conflict will affect levels of poverty in any given economy, as well as the dynamics of poverty throughout the lifetime of the conflict and in post-conflict contexts. This sentiment has been borne out by the political insecurity in Kenya after the disputed elections in 2007. For instance, women in poor neighborhoods suffered disproportionately from terrible rape and other violent ordeals as reported in the daily news of both local and international press. The Associated Press of February 13, 2008 reported that a doctor who runs a clinic in Mathare, a huge slum in Nairobi, was not only overwhelmed by the number of women and girls who came in for treatment for rape but was profoundly shocked by the brutality of these attacks.

- Violence

I trace violence against women that is witnessed in Kenya today largely as a legacy of her colonial past. Colonialism was not only a masculine state but also a violent one. Socio-political and economic factors have built on this colonial foundation to escalate into what has become a very dangerous situation for women in Kenya.

- The colonial state and violence

Colonialism was a state of violence, born out of and maintained by violence, and violence has been one of the most virulent of its legacies. Simatei (2005) asserts that colonialism was conceived in violence that involved not only military subjugation but also constructions of territory as empty and hostile jungle that had to be conquered and tamed for “human” settlement. The imperial concept that space is empty unless it is European or “white” space, occupied by European or white people, gave credence to colonial expansion and led to upheaval of great magnitude for local inhabitants of the so-called empty space. While discussing the appropriation of Gikuyu land by colonialists, Simatei (2005) contends: “What a colonizing topography...maps out as untamed, depopulated wilderness is acknowledged by the indigenous perspective as a scenic landscape of valleys, ridges, and hills that constitute the heart and soul of the (Gikuyu) land” (p.87). Elkins (2005) gives an account of the meaning of land to the Gikuyu people when she avers that “to be a man or woman – to move from childhood to adulthood- a Kikuyu (Gikuyu) had to have access to land...without land a man would remain socially a

boy...without it in the eyes of the Kikuyu...a woman was not an adult. A Kikuyu could not be a Kikuyu without land" (p.14). The appropriation of Gikuyu land was therefore, a cultural, political as well as a military act of violence. Mama (2005) concludes that colonial penetration was both a violent and gendered process, which exploited social divisions within African cultures and saw increased vulnerability of African women to various forms of violence. The European "civilizing" mission in Africa is marked by its misogynistic nature emanating as it did from a history of abuse of its own women, most dramatically illustrated by the witch-hunts and inquisition of the Middle Ages where several million women were systematically dismembered, mutilated and tortured before being drowned or burnt at the stake (Mama, 2005). Later, the Industrial Revolution would witness heartless exploitation of women and children in evil ways that would subsequently be perfected on African slaves and forced laborers in the colonies (Mama 2005). Mama (2005), therefore, concludes that sexual violence was an integral part of colonization: "The harsh reality of conquest in Africa included widespread violation and degradation of African women" (p.256). In order to humiliate and force confessions from men involved in resistance movements, their female relatives were raped as a matter of course. This is a sentiment collaborated by Elkins (2005) in her in-depth research on the Mau Mau movement and the colonial response in Kenya in which she has found many very disturbing parallels with the Third Reich of Hitler's Germany (p.153). Many of the settlers "called for the total extermination of the Kikuyu population" (p.43). While most of the men were put in detention (concentration) camps, women and children were concentrated into some 800 emergency villages which in effect put the whole Gikuyu

population of about 1.5 million under detention. Torture, sexual violence, forced labor, beatings, starvation led to the death of many Gikuyu men, women and children. Elkins (2005) avers that most Gikuyu people regard the whole of Gikuyuland as a massive graveyard emanating from the deaths of their tribes-folk during this period. Many of the records of those who were killed by the colonial authorities or died of malnutrition and accompanying ailments were destroyed just before independence so we probably will never know the exact numbers but some people have put the numbers between 100,000 and 300,000 (Elkins 2005). My grandmother told me that what happened to the Gikuyu people under colonial rule has no words in our language, a sentiment that Elkins (2005) expresses while talking of a woman she interviewed about life in the emergency villages. In the words of that woman "I cannot begin to tell you what we experienced in those villages" (p.234). My grandfather who was never lost for words had only this to say of that period of colonial terror: "*kwahanaga kwa ngoma*" (it was the devil's abode).

Elkins' book is a hard read which has left me traumatized but it also is the only book I have so far come across which seems to fully corroborate the stories I have heard in bits and pieces throughout my life, since nobody I know of who went through the detention camps or the emergency villages wants to talk about their experiences. All the people went through severe suffering but women seem to have fared far worse than the men. Rape was used on a massive scale particularly by young British soldiers referred to as "Johnnies" and some seemingly sociopathic settlers whose motto as Elkins (2005) puts it was "the only good Kuke is a dead Kuke," (p.49). Kuke was a derogatory form for Kikuyu

(Gikuyu). As a little girl, I remember following my adolescent aunts into the maize fields to hide whenever they heard a car approach because it might be the Johnnies. I thought we were playing at hide and seek but I later understood that the colonial army was equated with rape and particularly of adolescent girls, whom they referred to as "un-plucked chicken" hence my aunts' flight of refuge into the maize fields. Secondly, the commodification of the African women by colonial regimes is well documented. Mama (2005) contends that it was not uncommon for the colonizers to organize prostitution services for their troops, so that their desires for local women could be satiated in ways which did not undermine the racial status quo. The legal status of African women was steadily degraded as imperialism advanced, consolidating patriarchal and racist gender values which commodified African women by encouraging prostitution but outlawing the contract of marriage between white men and black women (Mama, 2005).

The colonial legacy of violence against women continues to be felt in post- colonial African countries. According to Elkins (2005) in Kenya, the post-independence government under Jommo Kenyatta gave a broad amnesty to all colonial agents which meant that nobody has ever been brought to account for the violence that was visited upon the Gikuyu community and others during the colonial rule. But more disturbing is the fact that many of the most brutal colonial agents, both white and local loyalists, continue to live with their ill-gotten gains among those they either maimed or relatives of those they killed, without fear of ever accounting for their deeds. Many of the loyalists took over the reigns of government in the Kenyatta and subsequent eras, becoming

provincial administrators, and continued to use many of the tactics they had learnt during the emergency period on political and other prisoners and the general public. Some of the colonial dictates that promoted the control of women are still in place. Subsequently, sexual and coercive controls over women continue to be exercised in Kenya on a large scale (Elkins, 2005).

- Construction of masculinities and violence against women

In a study on violence against women, in which she equates gender inequality with patriarchy, Yodanis (2004) avers that the more unequal women are compared to men, the more likely men are to be violent towards women.

First, when men dominate family, political, economic, and other social institutions both in numbers and in power, the policies and practices of these institutions are likely to embody, reproduce, and legitimate male power over women. Men's power will be considered right and "natural" not only in these institutions but also throughout society in general. Second, in male-dominated institutions, violence is a tool that men can use to keep women out or subordinate, and thereby maintain male power and control...such violence is not likely to be punished or stopped. On the contrary, it may be subtly or overtly condoned and encouraged (p.657).

In order to understand violence against women in any given society, it is necessary to understand how the notions of masculinity and femininity are constructed in such

societies. Writing on the construction of masculinities in Africa, Barker and Ricardo (WB, 2005) aver that although any construction of masculinities must take into account versions of manhood, they are generally socially constructed, fluid over time and in different settings and plural: "there are numerous masculinities, urban and rural and changing historically, including versions of masculinities associated with war, or being warriors and others associated with farming and cattle-herding" (WB, 2005:v). Similarly, I would argue that there is no typical Kenyan man and that masculinities in Kenya have been shaped by various tribal and ethnic group practices, outside influences such as colonization, religion (mainly Christian and Islam), and western education. The socialization of boys and girls as to what constitutes masculinity and femininity is largely to blame for the violence that stalks women in Kenya, other parts of Africa and the world.

The use of cultural tools such as language as a tool of socialization cannot be overemphasized. For instance, Wanjeri (2006) and Kangara (undated) assert that the use of language in the Gikuyu tribe contributes a whole lot to what constitutes masculinity and femininity in that particular community. The word for man is *mundu murume* (Italics are the author's) which translates into a person of great courage and that for woman is *mutumia* which means the one who keeps quiet (Wanjeri 2006) or the one to be used (Kangara, undated) or *mundu wa wanja* which means the one who comes from outside (the home), the stranger who should not be trusted with matters pertaining to the welfare of those within (the husband's natal family). *Mundu muka*, another Gikuyu word for woman also means the one who comes from without, a person who does not belong. It is

also telling that although there is only one word for man, there are several for woman, none of which is positive. Further, within the Gikuyu tribe and other Kenyan tribes, the meaning of bride wealth has been corrupted, starting with colonialists and their Christian cohorts to mean paying for or buying a wife. Many Kenyan men have bought into this concept because it gives them a justification for and an escape route from the consequences of their brutality in domestic disputes. As Lowako (2008) reports, although domestic violence justification for wife abuse occurs in every society, gender-role control seems significant in attitudes towards it. In developing countries, significant proportions of both men and women justify domestic violence as a punishment for a woman's transgression from her "normative" role in society (Lowako 2008). Women's "normative role" is, therefore, socially constructed and promoted through socialization of both men and women, for women to accept "their" place and men to see that they do, or else.

Barker and Ricardo (WB, 2005) contend that during initiation processes, boys are taught about control of women and children as part of growing up. They (WB, 2005) argue that during these initiations, there is much segregation of the initiates and it is during such segregations that strict sex segregation and gender inequalities are reinforced. Rude behavior towards all women and children is encouraged as a badge of manhood. Women, even mothers, are socialized to accept such behavior and hence raise no objection when confronted with it from their sons and other males. After initiation young men are also taught to expect sex as their right. Armed with this sense of entitlement, violence and coercion, including verbal threats and forced sex, become common features of

relationships with women (WB, 2005). While discussing initiation rites in Kenya, Kangara (undated), notes that among some tribes in Kenya, the circumcised penis is perceived as being forged and fashioned not only against men in the battlefield, but against women in sexual combat. Kangara (undated) cites the Kisii where sexual intercourse is viewed as an act of aggression and is traditionally played out as rape to the extent where a married woman is expected to resist her husband's sexual advances. Consummation, therefore, becomes a triumph for masculinity. Within this perspective, and as late as 2006, during parliamentary debate on the Sexual Offences Bill, a cabinet minister asserted that women always said "no" to sexual advances even when they meant "yes", hence confusing a suitor and giving him the right to make the final decision, in whichever way, even if it meant rape. Women's rights advocates rose up in arms, seeking his sacking from the cabinet, all to no avail. Issues that concern women's rights are not taken seriously by Kenyan politicians. Kimmel and Messner (2007) furnish accounts on how masculinities are constructed in different societies and within communities, giving rise to violence in accordance to appropriate behavior of the measure of a man (see Herbert, 2002 on construction of masculinity in the USA). Thus, the scale of violence against women is determined by a community's notion and construction of masculinity. In the same vein, Kameri-Mbote (2000) argues that in its definition of sexuality and its capacity for control and aggressiveness, an essential element of masculinity becomes the need to control women and their reproductive capacity and calls for aggression should sexual desire be frustrated. Hence, in periods of armed conflicts, when social and government systems break down extreme forms of masculinities are expressed in extreme

forms of violence against women.

- o Armed conflict and violence against women

Crisp (UNHCR, 2006) on forced displacement in Africa alleges that large scale displacement of people has become a defining characteristic of Sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, while Africans constitute only 12% of the global population, at the beginning of 2005, more than a third (i.e. 2.7 million) of the world's 9.5 million refugees and around half of the world's 25 million internally displaced persons are to be found in Africa (UNHCR, 2006). This is hardly surprising when considering that, according to Humphrey and Schwartz-Barcott (2003), since 1960 there has been more than one hundred and twenty areas of armed conflicts in Africa including: wars of independence (Tunisia, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia), coup d'etat (Egypt, Congo, Dahomey, Togo, Nigeria, Libya, Sudan, Lesotho, Uganda), civil wars (Sudan, Zaire, Ethiopia, Chad, Zimbabwe), border wars (Egypt, Tunisia/Morocco, Kenya/Somalia, Ethiopia/Somalia, Egypt/Israel, Chad/Libya, Mali/ Burkina Faso), military revolts, ethnic conflicts (Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Benin,) bush wars (Uganda), guerilla movements (Somalia, Mozambique, Angola) political and ethnic violence (Nigeria, Kenya), riots (Egypt) race riots (South Africa), genocide (Burundi, Rwanda), rebellions (Nigeria, Uganda, Zanzibar, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Ethiopia) and revolutions (Rwanda, Ethiopia). The list goes on. Although armed conflict has negative effects on both women and men, the experiences of war on women could be and are often more drastic than on men (see Holst-Roness 2006; Ahluwalia et al., 2007).

El Jack (2003) traces the connection between masculinity, militarization and armed conflict, and asserts that in traditional as well as modern times, military service has been regarded as an initiation to, and the supreme assertion of, masculinity. Military structures are essentially patriarchal institutions, constructed for and run by men, based on cultural construction of manliness (see van Creveld, 2000; Moser & Clark, 2001). Writing on the relationship between militarization and gender relations in Israel, Golan (1997) sees this vast patriarchal institution as central in socializing and perpetrating the stereotypical role of women as subordinate, subservient and superfluous, in need of control. In times of war, the military machinery puts these stereotypes to extreme use. O'Toole, Schiffman and Edwards (2007) perceive violence, whether in times of war or not, as the extreme application of social control. Kaufman (O'Toole et al., 2007) concurs: "The field in which ...men's violence is situated is a society, or societies, grounded in structures of domination and control...the structures of domination and control form not simply the background to ...violence but are nurtured by, this violence" (p.37)

UNIFEM's (UN Reports 2008) report on crimes against women in situations of armed conflict avers that most of the 70% victims of armed conflict around the globe are women and children. "Women's bodies have become part of the battlefield of those who use terror as a tactic of war (p.1)." In a world where rape is increasingly being used as a weapon of war, armed conflict can have serious repercussions of women and girls (see Brock-Due, 2005). Giles and Hyndman (2004) concur:

Where it was once the purview of male soldiers who fought enemy forces on battlefields quite separate from people's homes, war is increasingly waged on bodies of unarmed civilians, rendering civilian women, men and children its main casualties (p.3).

The different cultural meanings ascribed to female and male bodies result in different violations of these bodies in times of war. Violence against women in conflict zones is well documented. Ernst (2005) has done an in-depth analysis of various violations against women including those in armed conflict zones (also see El Jack, 2003; Moser & Clerk 2001; O'Toole et al., 2007; Green, 1999). Furthermore, while researching on gender and war Plumber and Neumeyer (2006) assert that armed conflicts affect all aspects of life, including the economy. They often lead to destruction of agricultural systems causing food shortages...which may cause famine. Damages are done to the infrastructure and medical and health care, making life very difficult to civilian populations, affecting women disproportionately because of their roles as primary caregivers and for physiological reasons (Plumber & Neumeyer, 2006; see Justino, 2002; McKay, 1998; Moser & Clerk, 2001). Addressing a conference hosted by the International Committee of the Red Cross Holst- Roness (2006) had this to say about the vulnerability of girls in conflict zones in Africa: "At a very young age, they often have to fulfill expectations and obligations incumbent upon them as big sisters, daughters and even mothers, since they may have children of their own" (p.6). Watch List in conjunction with the UN carries regular reports of children in areas of armed conflicts and exposes sexual abuse, forced

prostitution in IDP camps and even murder of children in times of civil war. Presently reports exist of Angola (April 2002), Burundi (May 2002) DR Congo (April 2006, Liberia (June 2004), Sudan, among other conflict zones.

Atieno as well as most of the African women that I know in St. John's arrived here as refugees because of political turmoil in their countries of origin. They come, through the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, from the Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Congo, Mozambique and Liberia. The consequences for women in conflict zones are all reasons why African women seek asylum.

- Family Reunification

For many countries of immigration, family reunification is a key criterion for the selection of new immigrants. For example, Morris and Sinnott (2003) contend that in 2001, 15,000 more women than men immigrated under family class to Canada. Family reunification occurs in internal and international migrations and is supported by international human rights law (UN, 2004) and governments often permit close family members of those already in the country to enter through legal channels although this policy is found more frequently in the traditional migration countries than in those authorizing contract laborers only. The UN (2004) also contends that host countries value family reunification because it is generally an effective mechanism for helping immigrants adapt to their new society. Kaminsky and Harvey (2006) in their thesis infer

that since family unification is strongly emphasized in US immigration policy-(it is much easier to immigrate to the US as a dependent than as an independent person, and whole families migrate together with permanent resettlement in mind), women proportionally migrate to the US at a higher rate than men. Kelson and DeLaet (1999) explain these flows of women dependents as being reinforced "by the greater propensity of American males to marry foreigners, which likely results from the thriving mail-order bride industry in this country" (p.35).

- Education

From the interviews that I conducted with African immigrant women in St. John's, one of the reasons that some of the women (Patience and Mary) migrated was to seek further education. Both Patience and Mary had personal reasons to stay. I do not have the statistics, but it is my belief that many African immigrant women who come to Canada for further education stay on. I have based my conclusion on the surprise I elicit, both within the immigrant community and among Canadians whenever I mention the fact that I intend to go back home after the conclusion of my studies. Some of the immigrant women stay because of economic reasons, i.e. the potential for better paying job is higher than in Africa. Others get married to local men or to immigrant men who have settled in Canada and decide to stay as is the case with Patience, Atieno and Abiola. From the women in the USA, many of them, such as Florence and her children, use education as a stepping stone to migrate particularly in the face of difficulties experienced by those applying for visitor visas in western countries' embassies.

Canada has become a favorite destination for African students because of various factors. Toomey (2001) informs us that Canada funds several scholarship programs for foreign students wishing to study in Canada. In addition, the Organization of American States, of which Canada is a member, operates a fellowship program. Students from Commonwealth countries wishing to pursue their Masters and PhD programs in Canadian universities can also receive funding through the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Program. There are other programs which make Canada a choice destination for those wishing to pursue further education. Judging from the new faces from Africa that I see around campus, the numbers seem to be increasing every year. This could be explained by the low fees charged by MUN in comparison to other Canadian universities, resulting both in high transfer numbers from other universities and an increase in new applications to MUN. When I first came to MUN in 2003, the small number of African students was astonishing. From information that I have received from Kenya, many students seeking education abroad are increasingly looking towards Canada because of the difficulties being experienced in acquiring American and British student visas. In my case, although I had considered USA as my first choice for further studies, American school fees proved prohibitive and I am sure this is a reason that could also affect other students who choose to come to Canada.

2.6. Consequences of Migration for Women

The UN report on gender in migration (UN 2006) and Forbes (2004) contend that migration has positive and negative consequences for migrant women. Because gender is a basic organizing principle in the societies to which women migrate, gender relations, hierarchies and practices and policies found in social, economic, legal, economic and political institutions in destination countries all condition the impact of migration for women. The UN Report (2006) asserts that in international migration of women, gender relations and hierarchies in both origin and destination countries determine the gender-specific impacts. Immigration can, therefore, challenge traditional gender roles according to Jolly and Reeves (2005). Jolly and Reeves (2005) argue that migration can provide new opportunities to improve women's lives and change oppressive gender relations—even displacement- as a result of conflict can lead to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities to women's benefit (see Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005). Migration, whether internal or international, can bring gains and losses. For example, whereas Hondagneu-Sotelo (1999) gives an account of Philippine nurses whose status is enhanced in the US due to the demand for their labor in American hospitals, Raghuram (2004; Raghuram & Kofman 2004) recount the deskilling of Asian female immigrants in the United Kingdom. Slade, (2003) reports on similar deskilling in Canada of immigrant female engineers, and Man (2004) reveals the same phenomenon among Chinese immigrant workers in Canada (see Boyd, 1984). Morris and Sinnott (2003) criticize the Canadian immigration policy on several points when dealing with its immigration policies. Since Canada joined the developed countries' bandwagon of outsourcing qualified manpower, there has been an

increase of what Morris and Sinnott (2003) refer to as the commodification of immigrants, with profound resultant implications for women. Arat-Koc (1999) concurs:

One of the implications of this commodification is that it leads to an evaluation of people's potential contribution and value to the country solely on the basis of their expected place in the labor market. Those whose skills are considered useless, less useful or irrelevant to the labor market are either excluded from, or get differential treatment through immigration. This process has a particular gendered dimension, as some of the skills of women have and the contribution that most women make, such as through "women's work" has little or no value in the market place (p.3).

According to the United Nations, immigration policies that restrict the movement of women increase their vulnerability to violence and other kinds of abuse (UN, 2000).

While researching on the refugee situation in Africa, UN, (2006) states that African states have become less committed to asylum and routinely reject refugees at the frontier or return them to their countries of origin. Those who manage to enter do not have their physical security, dignity or material safety guaranteed (UN 2006; see Campbell, 2006).

Arnett (2005) is critical of Canadian and USA immigration policies that fail to recognize domestic violence and other violations, termed as "personal violations" against women as a basis for asylum claims.

2.7. Conclusion

While researching on this thesis, I have found that poverty and a wide range of violence against women are the main causes of migration among African women. They strive to escape poverty for themselves and their children. Studies on poverty in Kenya (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2000-2003; UNESCO Background Report on Kenya 2005; International Environment Law Research 2001; Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Gender2002; AIDS in Kenya: Trends, Interventions and Impact 2005) all agree that women constitute the majority of the poor. Nasong'o (Boko et al, 2005) contends that in Kenya as elsewhere in Africa, women are more vulnerable to poverty than men on account of inequitable access to the means of production including land and capital, the distribution of wealth, reduced access to economic goods and services, and remunerative employment. The Kenya government asserts that 69% of the active female population work as subsistence farmers PRSP 2000-2003 (GK, 2000). When one considers that subsistence farming is one of the categories mentioned by the PRSP 2000-2003 as one of the clusters where the poor are concentrated, the number of women affected by poverty is significant. The other categories in this class are pastoralists in semi-arid areas, agricultural laborers, unskilled and semi-skilled workers, female-headed households, the physically disabled, HIV/AIDS orphans and street children. Considering that in all these categories women and girls are numerous, the number of women affected by poverty in Kenya rises significantly. Why are women in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa so poor? The answer to this question has gender implications that scholars have attributed to the calamity that stalks Africa. Yet gender issues are not a priority for many governments in

Africa and are persistently and consistently ignored in development and policy agendas. Mbilinyi (1997) argues that the different roles, activities, responsibilities and authorities that societies allocate to men and women determine their levels of power and values. The lower value associated with women in many African communities leads to diminished power and lack of access and control of resources by African women that have been identified as the single most important cause of gender inequality on the continent. Gender inequalities lead to high rates of poverty among African women and provide an impetus for out-migration. However, Kathori (2002) asserts that in focusing on migration as primarily an economic survival strategy, theories of migration fail to consider the complex and diverse reasons which motivate or impel people to migrate, and obscure understandings of those who experience chronic poverty *because* of migration. Furthermore, people adopt migration as a livelihood strategy for a variety of material and non-material reasons (Kathori, 2002).

Chapter 3: Theory and Method

3.1 Introduction

When I first came to Canada for graduate work in Women's Studies, I was driven by a need to do "something" about the dire situation of the women in my country, Kenya. Like the African woman sitting impatiently at a women's conference referred to by Nnaemeka (2003) I wanted to be "told/shown what has to be done to ameliorate the situation in her part of the world rather than be bombarded with irrelevant discourses and empty theorizing" (p.358). I was appalled by the amount of time I was required to "waste" on theories that did not seem to connect with the lived experiences of the women of Kenya or my own. Like that woman, I wanted a clear roadmap to action. Although I still consider myself a hands-on person, an activist, I have come to regard feminist theory as a basis to formulating and organizing thoughts pertaining to the situation of women and also as leverage in interpretation and negotiation of policy, particularly in the face of patriarchal institutions and power bases.

According to Nnaemeka (2005), theory involves the construction of knowledge. The pertinent question would be whose knowledge? To be relevant, social theory should draw first and primarily on local knowledge and situations and thereafter on diversity for inspiration in what Nnaemeka (2003) refers to as allowing a localized construct to impose a universal validity and application. Supporting the idea that to be beneficial to the lived experiences of African women, feminist theory should be locally situated, Pala (1977)

asserts that "African scholars, especially women, must bring their knowledge to bear on presenting an African perspective on prospects and problems for women in local societies" (p.13). Pala (Oyewumi 2005) also points to the fact that development issues affecting women have not always worked to the advantage of African women because of the fact that they are conceived in metropolitan centers in Europe and of little relevance to the situation of African rural women. Pala (Oyewumi, 2005) concludes: "In essence, research efforts which seek to enhance the participation of women in contemporary Africa, whether or not they emanate from the continent, should be formulated in relation to the socioeconomic realities which African women confront today" (p.300). While acknowledging that an "African perspective" would be impossible to give finite properties to because of the vastness of the continent and the diversity of her people, there are shared values and experiences, from which to draw in organizing principles for discussion of African women's problems and in seeking solutions. Pala (Oyewumi 2005) argues that by locating theory in the lived experiences of African women, African feminist scholarship seeks to give a face to ideology, and an edge to formulation and negotiation of policy with decision-makers for positive social change, particularly in the face of challenges wrought by patriarchal structures. Pala (Oyewumi 2005) contends that "the problems facing African women today, irrespective of their national and social class affiliations, are inextricably bound up in the wider struggle by African people to free themselves from poverty and ideological domination of both intra- and international spheres" (p.299)

3.2. African Feminism

Nnaemeka (1998) avers that African feminism scholarship has grown out of the necessity for African women to define themselves in their own terms without drowning in the strong tide of acculturation brought about by experiences of colonization and domination of western thought systems. But this is a difficult path to tread. Nnaemeka (1998) asserts that African feminists, particularly educated women, face a delicate balancing act of negotiating with male-oriented power centers without being accused of being mere pawns in the hands of western feminist manipulations while facing derision from their rural, illiterate sisters of not "being African woman enough". Speaking of Nigerian women living in Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city, Iweriebor (Nnaemeka, 1998) puts it aptly: "as formally educated women, they were subject to accusations of being ignorant of culture. As elites, they were accused of being incapable of relating to the masses. As urbanites, they were supposedly living in the lap of luxury at the expense of rural women. As Lagosians, they were considered too far removed from the realities of the rest of Nigeria" (p.304). So by engaging in discourses on feminism, African feminists, similar to feminists elsewhere, have to learn to negotiate on different and many fronts. Here, I have to state that most of the middle and lower classes women I talked to seemed to be more interested in activism than theory. They consider theory as being very much part of the academy and irrelevant to their lives. As Nnaemeka (1998) puts it "the majority of African women are not hung up on 'articulating' their feminist; they just do it." (p.5). The tension between feminist activism and academics is general across the world and a constant struggle in Women's Studies.

3.2.i. African Women, Gender Issues and Development

- **Gender Issues**

The UN report (2004) acquiesces that discrimination that is based on gender creates barriers of access to resources, law and other human capital that enable opportunity, which in turn create gender inequalities. The WB (2004) infers that gender inequalities detract from a country's economic performance, impedes its ability to draw on its best talents, and ultimately undermines economic growth and productivity leading to grinding poverty, which, as Kevane (2004) infers..."falls heavily on the shoulders of women" (p.29). The marginalization of African women has been heavily influenced by historical events such as colonization and globalization. The resultant changes in the social structures have had devastating implications on the socio-economic welfare of women of the continent by determining what resources and how much of these resources are available to them. As far as James and Etim (1999) are concerned, colonialism created state structures that hindered women's progress. Community attitudes, some derived from tradition and honed into fine tools of oppression by colonialism, and accepted without changes by male-dominated post-colonial governments, have played into socio-political structures that relegate women and girls into a lower status compared to their male counterparts. It was not until the 1970s that United Nations and other international development bodies put a concerted effort to reversing some of the negative results visited on African and third world women by historical, economic and political events. Jaquette and Summerfield (2006) contend that change in focus to gender was influenced

by challenges raised by Western feminists on the male bias in foreign assistance in the 1970s and the rise of postcolonial feminism and the impressive growth of third world women's movements of the 1980s. However, Pala (Nnaemeka, 2005) avers that focus on women development issues arose as early as the colonial period when colonial powers commissioned a number of studies specifically to investigate the role of women in African societies in order to formulate policies which would "integrate" women more effectively into the colonial project. To me, the two points of view are not necessarily contradictory, but pointers to a process. In 1970, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was successful in getting the General Assembly to pass a resolution encouraging the full integration of women in the total development effort. Such efforts resulted in the declaration of 1975 as the Year of Women followed by UN sponsored conferences geared towards issues dealing with those affecting women in 1975 in Mexico City and 1987 in Nairobi. Correspondingly, according to Jaquette & Summerfield (2006), donor agents and private philanthropic institutions like the Ford Foundation joined Rockefeller Foundation as significant players in the emerging development community issues. European and Canadian bilateral donors began to give serious attention to poverty and to the status of women as related to development (Jaquette & Summerfield, 2006). Recently, as Chant (2007) recounts, the issue of "feminization of poverty has become common currency in the development lexicon in recent years" particularly since the adoption of the eradication of poverty on women by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 (p.1). In what has come to be known as "gender mainstreaming" the process of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was

clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality. In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) declared that mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of accessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men can benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is, therefore, to achieve gender equality. Numerous feminist researchers and international organizations have increasingly pointed at the connection between gender inequalities affecting women and poverty and how development programs have to interrogate the two in order to be effective in addressing the problem of poverty in the third world. Kabeer, Stark and Magnus (2008) point out that one of the major challenges of gender mainstreaming in many countries in the South, is the failure of political leaders to follow through with action what they ratify on paper and speeches. Furthermore, many of these countries have embedded gender inequalities that are re-enforced by traditional biases as in the caste system in India, strong ethno-linguistic differences and religious sectarianism in Pakistan, colonial legacies and apartheid in South Africa.

- Development

According to Snyder and Tadesse (1995) although development theories affecting Africa and the rest of the third world have been modified throughout the 20th century, one of

their common features was the ill effect they have had on the women of the continent. Partly to blame for this state of affairs is the failure to take into account the particular situations of the communities these development projects are supposed to address and because of the exclusion of women in development issues. Mohanty, Russo and Torres (1991) argue that the failure to consider specific situations has led to constructions based on colonial misconceptions of a homogenous third world woman: ignorant, irrational, and uneducated. As such she can neither save herself from the forces that oppress her nor is it necessary to consult her when the Western experts come to deliver her from herself. The homogenization of the third world woman has made her interchangeable and identical to every other third world woman (Mohanty et al., 1991). Development programs are then perceived to be suited for every third world woman, in spite of their very different lived experiences and are implemented as such. Such misconceptions perceive the third world woman as being a recipient of development rather than an active participant in the development process. According to Snyder & Tadesse (1995) the notion of the third world woman as a recipient of development is grounded on the theory of a woman's major role as reproductive rather than productive. Snyder & Tadesse(1995) accuse such a theory of failure to "consider women's productive activities and their economic responsibilities (p.10)." Additionally, I see the idea of recipients of development as having intrinsic qualities that breed notions of dependency, an inability to believe in self-determination and actualization. In one of the women's development projects that I was involved in, in Kenya, I was flabbergasted and frustrated when my own compatriots told me that that they would rather deal with Western women, than with me. The western

women were perceived not only to have more money they could dish out to the local women, but also as being more effective in carrying out the requirements of the programs, for whatever reason. Younger women with a commitment to community leadership and more focus on local knowledge and experiences of local problems would challenge such sentiments. They accused the older women of suffering from a “colonial hangover” and self-hatred. The stance exhibited by the younger women, conscious or not, revolves towards the human resource development theory which takes into account the productive role that women play in their communities. Snyder and Tadesse (1995) concur:

“...development at the highest level, cannot be achieved without women. (p.10).”

However, those involved in development projects have to guard against the wholesale transplantation of foreign grown ideology into cultural settings. Nasongo (Boko et al., 2005) argues that in the late part of the 1970s in Kenya, and maybe in the whole of Africa, when the concept of women in development (WID) was introduced, it not only threatened the status quo but also left a trail of hostility that made WID concept offensive to every male who heard it.

The concept which originated in the Global North was launched aggressively in Kenya mainly by trainers from the North, with good intentions of uplifting the status of women in the Global South. With little or no cultural orientation, the trainers introduced loaded key words such as empowerment, equality, power-sharing, and equal opportunities, words that openly challenged the superior status of men in society (p.36).

In a society where women have little access to modes of production and rely heavily on

male dominated social structures, be they family or state, this type of "development" however well meaning, could be more hindrance than help to women's rights. I perceive the solution to be women and men being sensitized as to meanings of foreign words and the importance of working together for the good of the whole community. Whether we like it or not, in Africa men own the most important means of production, land, and without their involvement, development will remain an empty slogan.

- Women, local knowledge and the environment

Similar to feminist theorists, James (James & Etim, 1999) asserts that whatever form they assume, development agendas have to take into account cultural, historical, economic and environmental differences in communities. To successfully negotiate the development process, it is necessary to listen to the hitherto silenced voices of third world women by engaging in methods that encourage dialogue. Wood (2001) concurs: "the most obvious is to ask women what they think and to allow their answers to dominate the creation and implementation of policy" (p.432). To ignore female indigenous bases of knowledge is to continue on a development platform that has promoted poverty for third world women. The assumption from aid agencies, conveyed by colonial misinformation, that poor third world women were ecologically naïve, even harmful, and had nothing to offer the world of development led these agencies to ignore local knowledge with the results that have been disastrous to the African continent and the whole third world. Wood (2001) argues that in recognition of the vital role of giving a voice to hitherto silenced women, post-modern and postcolonial feminist theories have opposed universalizing and essentializing

notions in a homogenous 'third world woman' assumed to need saving by first world experts. Acknowledgement of this earlier misconception has led to a proliferation of initiatives from major donor agencies to incorporate gender into the mainstream of development. Writing on women's knowledge in development, Gururani (2002) asserts that "the claim that rural poor women have a know-how or savoir faire of their livelihood, their bodies, and their natural environments and possess sophisticated knowledge about seed varieties, crops, animal husbandry, and herbal cures, seems like a truism but it has come as a revelation to the development and information industry (p.313)". This is knowledge that differs from that of men and is vital for sustainable development. Gururani (2002) argues that in the third world, where most of the women live in rural areas, the relationship between the women and the environment is symbiotic; the women derive sustenance from it and they, in turn, protect it. Proponents of this point of view argue that women's knowledge is considered to be local and traditional, subsistence oriented, contextual, communal, and passed on informally (Gururani 2002). Shiva (1994) argues that women from third world societies are often able to offer ecological insights that are deeper and richer than the technocratic recipes of international experts. The reason for this is that to these women, the environment is the place where they live and means everything that affects their lives. Environment problems become people's health problems because there is continuity between the earth body and the human body through the processes that maintain life (Shiva, 1994). From this awareness has grown a movement currently known as "ecofeminism" which advocates the interconnectedness between the domination of nature, that of women and other subjugated groups. Warren

(2001) concurs:

Ecological feminists (ecofeminists) claim that there are important connections between the unjustified domination of women, people of color, children, and the poor and the unjustified domination of nature (p.1).

Because of the intimate relation between the two, abuse of nature leads to hardships peculiar to women. According to Warren (2000) this is more apparent in the South since women are typically more dependent than men on trees and forest products, and they are the primary sufferers of forest resource depletion.

Bond, Holmes, Byrne, Babchuck and Kirton-Robbins (2008) argue that although women have largely been absent from many formal, public, and civic arenas, they have been more visible in informal local leadership roles as evidenced in grassroots neighborhood and community movements. Women's informal community leadership is, therefore, vital in uplifting the most vulnerable members of the community (Bond et al., 2008; see Shiva, 1994). Women's role in community development is becoming increasingly documented and recognized particularly in the attempts of governments and donor agencies to include gender in many issues of development including education and youth, housing, local policy and planning and toxic waste (Bond et al., 2008). James (1999), therefore, argues that in all phases of development, gender should be an integral part of evaluation of how inclusive the system of development is. Women's community engagement and leadership contribute to women's own development and uplift the less fortunate in the community and, therefore, the role they play has to be central in any community development agenda

(James & Etim, 1999).

3.3. Feminism and Theoretical framework

Fonow and Cook (2005) assert that when they embarked on feminist research, their goal was to “reveal what had previously been hidden about women's lives, experiences, and contributions, and in the process, to produce the kind of knowledge that would liberate them (p.212)”. This was as a result of the tendency both within the academy and the general society to perceive women as intermediate and subordinate and to observe life through the male gaze, making women's lives invisible and negating their capacity as producers of knowledge. Fonow and Cook (2005) aver that there was need to divert from endocentric research methods with a focus on objectivity, the separation of the researcher from the ‘subject’ and the assumption of personal experiences as unscientific. They (Fanow &Cook, 2005) sought to change traditional research methods by recognizing women as generators of knowledge based on their experiences, and emphasize on the connectedness between the researcher and research participants. They also sought “emphasis of the empowerment of women and transformation of patriarchal social institutions” (p.2213). This is a colossal undertaking and there has been need to work across epistemological and methodological boundaries. According to Fonow and Cook (2005) as feminist research has developed, qualitative methods have increasingly been utilized in order to hear women stories in their own voices; narratives, biographies, case studies, interviews, deconstruction, ethnography, content analysis, focus groups, action/participatory methods have gained prominence.

Oyewumi (2003) contends that scholars differentiate between White feminism, Black feminism, Western feminism, Third world feminism and African feminism. I think that it is correct to infer that there are other feminism(s) that are not included in these categories for there will be as many feminisms as there are different points of view that profess to be feminist. These distinctions reflect the contestations that have become a part of the history and worldwide development of feminist ideas and study. As for African feminism, Mikell (1997) avers that it owes its origins to different dynamics than those that generated Western feminism. "It has largely been shaped by African women's resistance to Western hegemony and its legacy within African culture...it is feminism that is distinctly heterosexual, pro-natal, and concerned with many 'bread, butter, culture and power' issues" (p.4). I do not wholly agree with such sentiment because of the implication that African feminism was basically a reaction to Western feminism. I believe that **scholarship** (emphasis mine) in African feminism is what emanated from resistance to Western feminism imposition, the views of universality of feminism, in what Oyewumi (2003) refers to as "an imperial march across the globe" (p.1). Taiwo (Oyewumi 2003) concurs: "at the worst of times, feminism is an aspect of imperialism of culture" (p.53). Ajayi-Soyinka (Nnaemeka 2005) perceives systematic erasure of African capability to production of knowledge as part of this cultural imperialism which refuses to accommodate different forms of construction and production of knowledge outside the Western canon and experience. This is what African feminist scholars have raised their voices against, the notion of being silenced by disregarding their experiences and of not being recognized as producers of knowledge. Feminism in Africa is as old as African women, and did not come about from the academy. I am convinced that African women,

even in their traditional setting, have been feminist, since feminism to me means a belief in equality of all humankind and the struggle towards the liberation of women, when their rights are denied. This description is simplistic because to achieve total equality in all aspects might be impossible but the need to fight and agitate towards the removal of political, social and cultural barriers that are used as tools of women's subjugation is not. Traditional oral history in my community is replete with stories of women's communal agitation for their rights. Mikell (1997) avers that because of such tradition of communal way of negotiation and agitation to be found in many African communities, emphasis on individual female autonomy would run counter to female forms of public participation. Nnaemeka (1998) concurs: "The language of African feminism lies in collaboration, negotiation and compromise which runs counter to much of the language of Western feminist scholarship and engagement (challenge, disrupt, deconstruct, blow apart, etc.)" (p.6). Growing up in cultures where a woman's strength of negotiation within patriarchal structures, is grounded in her interconnections with other females, the path of individualism does not hold much attraction, particularly for those women in rural areas, where 80% of African women live (UN 2004). Nnaemeka (1998) further argues that "African feminism is not reactive, but proactive. It has a life of its own that is rooted in the African environment" (p.9)

African women have borne the brunt of colonialism, male dominated political systems in the aftermath of de-colonization, neo-colonialism, military and autocratic governments, collapsed national economies, western mediated structural-adjustment programs and currently some democratically elected governments. Ngate and Kokole (1997) contend

that although colonialism and neo-colonialism brought severe changes within the socio-economic structures of African communities, it would be a fallacy to assume that Western capitalism completely altered the dynamics of African societies. On discussing the translocation of cultural products, they (Ngate & Kokole, 1997) aver that cultural products are not simply replaced but are refashioned and given new meanings. Similarly, while writing on women in Kenya, McAdoo and Were (Terbog-Penn & Rushing 1996) concur, stating that in spite of the rapid urbanization and the influence of Westernization, the traditional character of the men and women of Kenya has not changed, for they still continue to maintain a high level of contact with their families, and marriage, as well as motherhood, are still highly valued. On this topic Rushing (Terbog-Penn & Rushing, 1996) found out that "African women expect their closest emotional bonds to be with their natal family, the women they come of age with, and the children that they bear (p.124). For this and other reasons stated earlier in this thesis, any strategies on theory and development bearing on African women have to focus on the family and locally generated knowledge.

3.4. My own experience of methods

My initial thesis topic was domestic violence in Kenya, but I was constrained by the fact that it would not have been tenable to interview women in Kenya while I was living in St. John's. furthermore, conducting research in Kenya would not have been feasible since my daughter had already joined me in Canada and I did not want to disrupt her studies once again by taking her back to Kenya in order for me to carry out research work. I, therefore,

changed my research focus to domestic violence in Canada. To this end I visited the Iris Kirby House. After a while, I decided that carrying out research on victims of domestic violence in Canada would not be possible for me because of the cultural differences between my potential research participants and myself. I just did not think that I had been exposed enough to their situation to be able to give the support that such a situation required. I also found out that emotionally, I was just not prepared for such work. I found it too stressful, and I already had enough struggle for survival for my daughter and myself. I then became interested in working within the immigrant community, particularly after being involved in working as a research assistant with the Immigrant Women Research Domain Research Group on Gender, Migration and Diversity under the leadership of Dr. Marilyn Porter and Dr. Peruvemba Jaya. I was intrigued by the problems that faced immigrant women around St. John's, Newfoundland and decided to conduct further research by comparing their experiences as immigrants and the expectations of those Kenyan women who wanted to migrate to the West. Coming from Kenya and having a lot of friends and relatives who have migrated for one reason or another, I was interested to research on what women expect of migration to the West and what they actually experienced once they get there.

3.5. Reason for This Study

Whenever I go back home, many women seek advice from me on how to come to the West in general and Canada in particular. I thought that they would provide me with the information that I needed for the first part of my thesis, i.e. the reasons that motivate

some African women to migrate to the West. I found that most of them wanted to escape a life of poverty while others wished for a life free from domestic and other kinds of violence visited on Kenyan women in their every day lives. Many of them felt threatened by a security system that had broken down, exposing them to personal risks brought about by marauding youths without jobs who preyed mercilessly on rural and urban folk alike and security agents who looked on because many of them had been compromised by the gangs. All the women who wanted to migrate also did so because they thought that in the West their children would find a better life and could realize their full potential. I was intrigued that most of them expressed the wish to have the daughters migrate. In a community that traditionally places higher value on boys I found this change of attitude very interesting. In many casual conversations with Kenyan women, the prevailing attitude is that when girls go abroad they send more money back home to help their parents and other family members than sons and other male relatives do. They also make more frequent trips home which maintains family ties. Various studies have confirmed the first observation, while I have to depend on word of mouth from many women that I talked to in the East African region for the second observation. For instance, it is not in doubt that remittances to Africa of those in the Diaspora is so significant that the UN (UN Report 2007:2) has urged Africa governments to explore fiscal and other incentives to potentially direct migrant worker remittances towards investment in employment generation. The World Bank estimates that remittance flows to developing countries in 2007 was US\$251 billion, with Kenya receiving US\$1.3 billion. Considering that "about 50% (Sander & Maimbo, 2003) of remittances are done through informal channels such

as through returning friends, relatives, and trusted agents, this amount is estimated to be much higher" (p.20). I have not been successful in finding statistics to support the view that Kenyan women migrants send more money home, but the UN (UN, 2004) contends that, "in general, migrant women remit more of their income to their families than male migrants" (p.21).

As an international student I knew that life away from home is difficult but had not delved into the details. Although there were other studies that had been conducted on immigrant women living around St. John's (Koiney & Quaicoe, 2004) there were none specifically on African women immigrants. While attending meetings and in social gatherings with them, it also struck me that most of the women complained about lack of well-paying jobs in the metropolitan area of St. John's and were looking to out-migration as a solution. Many of the African students could hardly wait to finish their degree courses and go to other parts of Canada or the United States. As Bayo told me "This place is the end of the world. I need to find a life, I can't live on books" as she left for University of Victoria. Another student who was moving to University of Toronto despite the high school fees charged there told me that she is tired of being stared at by the locals as if she came from another planet, so she was moving to be in a place where people were used to seeing more Blacks. I started wondering how much such feelings were replicated among the African women immigrant population in St. John's. I thought it would be interesting to compare the expectations of women in Kenya with the lived experiences of African immigrant women both around St. John's and a Kenyan group I had met in

Massachusetts, USA. Many of the women I know in Kenya, particularly those from the lower economic stratum in society, have the idea that all their problems would be solved by migration, either to South Africa, Botswana and Namibia where salaries are much higher than those offered in Kenya or to the Western world, either USA, Britain, or Canada. These are destinations of choice because there would be no language barriers but I have also talked to women who would go anywhere where they think life would be easier.

Apart from my own personal curiosity, I thought that it would be informative to anyone in the community or elsewhere who would be interested in hearing the voices of another marginalized section of the society. I joined Women's Studies at MUN at a time when there was growing need to retain immigrants in the province and in Canada, and became involved in numerous formal and informal discussions held both among immigrant groups and with provincial service providers. Only one had targeted African women and only as an offshoot of another. It was almost taken for granted that their problems were generally the problems of all immigrants and nobody really cared to address the issue of whether they had peculiar problems of gender, race, culture, religion or any other. This thesis seeks to bridge some of that gap, for working with African women is not only fascinating but also shows the limitlessness of women's potential. Finally and from a totally personal point of view, I enjoy working and talking with African women, for we have a lot in common and get to laugh a lot, an aspect that I so dearly miss when away from Africa. African women and women from the third world in general have a capacity

to laugh at themselves that I have not found with any other community. As a wise Indian woman friend told me "... if we do not laugh, we shall cry all the time."

3.6. Difficulties Encountered in the Research Process

Monetary considerations

I had few problems conducting interviews with the women in Kenya and in fact found most of them very enthusiastic to have their views heard. But some of them would only do so if I offered them money. Women's projects are in vogue in Kenya today and there are all sorts of researchers going there to interview women and many offer money particularly those sponsored by Western donor agencies. Since I was limited in this capacity, I decided to interview only those women whom I had already established rapport with or those I had business dealings with, such as my tailor and hairdresser and those I bought jewelry from.

Language barriers

At the open air market is a group of some of the most marginalized women in Kenya, the Maasai, whom I was really keen to interview but my efforts were not successful because of language barriers. The only woman whom I could find among them who spoke Swahili and English and who could have assisted me in translation wanted to be paid and I could not do this. Practicing my little knowledge of Kimaasai, I inquired from them if any of them wanted to be interviewed and one of them replied that many people had gone to their villages for research work and nothing had changed so they did not want any

more interviews. One of them, Naatai, the one who wanted money to translate, laughed out loud when I asked her whether she thought Maasai women would want to migrate to the West. She told me that most of them had no education, could hardly negotiate within the traffic madness in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, so how could they get to the West?

Experience of violence

Violence is a way of life for many women in Kenya and during my visit I had firsthand experience with it. I had finished purchasing some jewelry and had put it in my rucksack and had placed my tape-recorder and tapes in a large envelope, which I was carrying in my hands since there was no space in the bag. As I walked out of the market, a street boy snatched the envelope containing my interviewing tools. I had only a few days of my holiday left and had no time to go back to repeat the interviews. In Nairobi, snatching of purses is rampant and some women resort to carrying money in envelopes and the street boy who snatched the one I was carrying probably thought it had money in it. So I had to remember the stories of the women since I had no tapes. Insecurity in Kenya is rife, and targeting women and girls is, sadly, an accepted part of Kenyan life. For example, my efforts to have the police investigate my case met with the view that the loss of my property had no significance to a force that was stretched to its limits. The only advice they could give me was to go around the city and if I found the street boy who snatched my things, and brought him to the police station, then they would deal with him. I counted my losses and continued with my business.

Participants' reluctance to be taped and/or interviewed

In 2004, I had visited a friend of mine in Massachusetts where I found a group of Kenya immigrant women who had formed a cohesive community, had carved meaningful lives for themselves and their families and I drew a lot of inspiration from them. My encounters with the Kenyan community women in Massachusetts brought a problem of another kind. Many would talk enthusiastically about their experiences at home and how they had managed to migrate to the US but on condition that I did not tape their interviews. Most were illegal immigrants and were afraid of the consequences should any of what I taped come to the notice of authorities. Some were suspicious about my intentions and they told me that because of their situation, they lived with the constant fear of deportation, and so could not afford to trust anyone. I had, therefore, to remember their narratives from memory. Like the women in Massachusetts, many of the women in Kenya did not want to be taped. I had to persuade some of them but I soon found out that just when I thought that the interview was over and turned it off, some of them, like Mwikali and Achieng, would then willingly talk about issues that they were reluctant to talk about while being taped. I found this to be the case particularly with the less educated women who were not too sure what the tape-recorder was exactly for, and how the material would be used. Mwikali and the Maasai women I talked to suspected that the recorder was a camera and they did not want to be filmed and would not be convinced that it was not.

For the African immigrant women in St. John's, some were just not willing to participate in interviews. Because the African immigrant community is small, many of its members have been interviewed in several research programs. One of my friends declined to participate in my research because she said she "had been interviewed to death" and was sick of it. She told me that while educated women got a lot of money conducting studies, they did not bother about the situation of their less fortunate sisters and went to exploit them for their own benefits. This is similar to the information I had received from one of the Kenyan women in Nairobi. Research participants can become deadened to interviews if exposed to over-research, which can happen particularly when it involves a small group of people as the African women immigrant group in St. John's. Many, like the friend mentioned earlier, had been interviewed in focus groups and individually in research involving immigrants in general, women immigrants, African immigrants, women's health, mothering issues, etc. Similarly the Maasai women group in Kenya told me that they had been involved in interviews on topics such as herding, water collection points, domestic violence, female circumcision, and elections but nothing in their lives changed so they did not want to be interviewed anymore. Too much interviewing can lead to interview fatigue for groups that have interviewed too much due to their small size (St. John's group) or too many researchers concentrating on a particular group (Maasai group).

3.7. Research Methods

Interviewing

Much of my research is based on qualitative interviews, which is one of the most widely used methods in qualitative research. It is a method that enables the researcher to listen to women's stories told from their own perspectives. Writing on conducting research on depression in women, Jack (1999) avers that interviewing and analysis allow the researcher to hear how social factors are structured in thought and how such factors affect depressive conflict. "The story that a woman tells and retells others about the sources of her depression create its coherence within the context of her life" (p.1). This analysis is important in my research because I get to hear what the women thought of their own lives and how poverty and violence impacted those lives and instigated their desire to migrate. Interviewing also requires focused awareness as opposed to lazy listening that tends to color the participants' words with the researcher's own interpretations, ideas and theories. I found this harder to do particularly when some of the participants talked to me about their experiences of domestic violence. It is easy for me to get impatient with a woman who puts up with this kind of abuse and my immediate instinct would be to ask, "So why do you stay?" But I do not because I remember Wanja, the one whose ear was cut off by her husband. She told me that she does not like being interviewed and asked about her dismembered ear because women "like you do not understand why women like me stay even in the face of such extreme violence." She feels judged by "women like you" who think that she was just plain stupid to have stayed, but stated that apart from having nowhere else to go, she stayed for the sake of her children. She would say no more on the

subject. While I conducted semi-structured interviews but let the women tell me anything that they felt I might have left out in my questions, I did not want to delve too deeply in their experiences of violence and let them tell me only if they wanted to. Wanja obliged, but Mwikali would only tell me that life is violent and difficult for a prostitute. She said that her life as a prostitute was not something she wanted to talk about and figured out that the less she talked about it, the faster she would forget. In any case, sex is not something that most African women want to discuss because in many societies it is taboo. Some of the women also seemed to be embarrassed talking about experiences of violence in their lives. One of the participants among the immigrant women in St. John's would only talk about her life after arrival in Canada and said that she did not want to be interviewed about her life in her home country or life in the refugee camps in a neighboring country where she lived for four years before coming to Canada. None of the immigrant women in St. John's wanted me to identify their countries of origin. They said that because of the small size of the immigrant community, it would be possible to identify them if their countries were known.

I found out that many of the women would have long pauses when I asked questions but words flowed more smoothly when they told their own stories without prompting. Although I had certain questions that were supposed to guide me, I found that it was easier just to let the women talk and tell me their own stories in any way they wanted. It was only when they used words or expressions that I did not understand that I would stop them to ask for clarifications. Most of the interviews in Nairobi were conducted in

Swahili. Many of the women at the market lived in the slums where Swahili is a very fluid language. I found that many of the words were not familiar to me and I had to keep on asking for meanings of words in a language I thought I was fluent in. In Massachusetts, mostly the women talked to me in our mother tongue, Gikuyu, and our conversations flowed easily. There was also a lot of humor when I talked to Rose since Florence and a few other women were in her house for a party given in my honor. Rose has been nicknamed "Distant Waters" by these women because that is the reason her husband gave for remarrying. He said he could not have a relationship across distant waters. There was a lot of laughter as Rose recounted those words and dwelt on it at length. On the other hand, for those women that I interviewed at the market, they seemed to be anxious to have the interviews conducted as fast as possible because they were more interested in dealing with potential customers, and there were many interruptions. One of the women rudely informed me that she had no time to be interviewed by someone like me who would go on to my rich and comfortable life in Canada and forget all about women like her. "She has no clue," I mused as I walked away.

Finally, I do not want to create the idea that all women in Kenya would like to migrate to the West. There are many among my friends and relatives and their friends that I talked to who declined to be interviewed because they felt that they were not included in my thesis focus since they did not want to migrate. Some had good jobs and/or businesses and had various levels of education. For instance, Ida, with a high school education, told me that she was quite comfortable living in Kenya, conducting her business and even

asked me "what would I do in the West? I don't want to work cleaning butts which I understand is the only job available to Africans there." Joyce, another businesswoman with a university degree, said that she was an unapologetic racist and had no intention of living among white people but would rather live where everyone was black, "from the thief to the president" she laughed. The considerable number of non-black population in Kenya does not seem to dent her conviction that she lives in nation where everyone is black. My own sister says that she would not want to migrate because "it's too cold out there" since I am always complaining to her about the brutal Newfoundland winters. She has a good job with an airline and a comfortable life in a neighboring African country. Other women feel that they are content in Kenya and would not want to disrupt their lives for an uncertain future in the West.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1. Introduction

In a country of approximately 32 million people, 51% of whom are women, Kenya illustrates a perspective of “development” that continues to promote gender inequality against women. Lack of access to resources by Kenyan women has been identified as the single most important cause of gender inequality (King & Mason, 2001; Driscoll & Clerk, 2003; GK Report, 2000-2003; HRW, 2003). Lack of access to resources can be traced to colonialism, which fostered a system of land ownership that was male focused, instituting and formalizing power and politics into the male domain. By submerging African traditions that focused on the collective and instituting Western systems of capitalism and economic ideologies, colonialism sealed the African woman's traditional loopholes that afforded her access to resources. Post-colonial governments in Kenya have continued to condone this anomaly through claims of cultural authenticity and the need to hold onto so-called ‘traditions’. The rallying cry to go back to cultural authenticity and traditions is justification for maintaining practices and value systems that privilege men and continue to marginalize women. Here are some of their stories:

4.2. Case Studies from Kenya

4.2.i. Mwikali (28)

Mwikali lives in one of the many informal settlements (slums) in Kenya. She has neither running water nor electricity. But her one room shack, which she shares with her two

children, is spotlessly clean. She laughingly tells me that is because she has nothing to put in it except a bed, and a mattress which is laid on the floor and is shared by her two daughters at night, a small table, and a few utensils. Mwikali chatters easily to me while she makes the evening meal but warns me that I have to leave before I can join them for the meal because after dark, it is dangerous to venture outside. This is her story.

She was born to peasant farmers in the semi-arid part of eastern Kenya. With four children and no steady income, her parents found it difficult to educate all of them. She and her sister had dropped from school after primary education because their father decided that it was wiser to educate her brothers, since girls would leave home to work for their husbands' families while sons were responsible for providing for their parents in old age. Mwikali had passed her primary examinations with high grades but her father's word was final and without relatives willing or able to pay for her secondary school education, Mwikali had to find a way to support herself. Her aunt took her to the city and employed her as a domestic servant. She worked long hours with very little pay so she left her aunt's house after a few months and found another place to work, also as domestic help. After a while she became pregnant, the man denied that he was responsible and also revealed that he was already married. She could not go back to her parents and asked her church for help. The pastor's wife was running a program training unwed mothers in jewelry making. After learning whatever she could, she left the program and joined a woman's group, which was making jewelry and selling it to tourists. The group had been allocated a piece of land in Nairobi's city center and used to hold an open-air

market once a week. It was unreliable income and highly depended on the tourism seasons. For a while, Mwikali complemented her income by working as a prostitute. But after the death of several of her friends from the AIDS/HIV scourge, she decided to change her life. She had gotten another child and she says that this helped her make her decision because if she died, her children would have nobody to take care of them. Mwikali went back to her church program and the pastor's wife decided to teach her tailoring.

She still goes to the jewelry market once a week and has a small shop in a market in the slums where she is a tailor and combines that with braiding hair. I met her while I was buying jewelry and she introduced me to her hair business and also makes my clothes. She is really good at all her businesses but says even the combination of all three hardly brings her enough money to move out of the slum area or send her two daughters to a good school. She is worried that she will not be able to pay school fees when her younger daughter joins high school and sees migration to the West as the only answer to her economic problems. Several of her former prostitute friends have married their customers from Germany and Italy, moved to the West and she is convinced that they are doing well. She believes that if she could do the same, she would be able to live a better life and give her daughters a chance that was denied to her. The last time I heard from Mwikali, one of her friends who had married a German client was trying to organize for her to marry one of her husband's friends.

4.2.ii. Margaret (55)

The first born child of a civil servant single-mother of six, Margaret was born and grew up in Nairobi. Her mother also ran a meat business, which was also, a meat eatery, commonly known as “chama choma”(roast meat) in Kenya. She also had several rental houses in Nairobi, and a bar, which meant that she managed to educate all her children with relative ease. Margaret graduated from the University of Nairobi with a degree in French and was absorbed by a semi-government agency. Since the children often helped their mother in running her business particularly the eatery and the bar, Margaret had been introduced to alcohol at an early age and developed a drinking problem in her teens. By the time she graduated from the university, the problem had started to consume her life. She lost her first job within a few years and proceeded into a life of hopping from job to job. While in her early forties, she lost her two youngest sisters to the AIDS pandemic sweeping through the country (see chapter on globalization). The sisters had been single mothers and Margaret took over the care of the two children left behind by their deaths.

Henceforth, life became complicated because she had two young children (four and five years old) to take care of and she was still losing one job after another. When she had a job, they lived well until she lost it and then she would be forced to move back to her mother's house. Eventually, her mother decided to take the children and leave Margaret to her own devices but the children missed her, and the mother was forced to allow Margaret back. She joined a church organization and tried to stay sober but the issue is

that while everyone else saw her problem as such, Margaret was not convinced that it was and therefore, refused to seek professional help. In the meantime she had risen rapidly in the church hierarchy, while successfully managing to keep her drinking problem well hidden. After a couple of years, the church decided to sponsor her to own a business selling Christian books and gift items. Although she did quite well in the first year, she started drinking up the profits, the church discovered her drinking problem, tried in vain to get her into Alcohol Anonymous for counseling and finally forced her to withdraw from the church. She went back to live with her mother. Getting a job was becoming more and more difficult since her alcohol problem had worsened. In desperation, she finally went to her church and told them of her desire to go for further studies and try to change her life. By the time I talked to Margaret she had been advised to go for counseling so that she could be helped with her alcohol problem. If she got sober, then the church would help her to attend a college in the United States run by the same church organization to study for a higher degree in divinity. She told me that going abroad is the only answer she can see since she would be able to take the children whom she has since officially adopted and who are about to finish high school. She is still struggling with her alcohol problem but she is determined to do whatever it takes to migrate. But she tells me that once she gets to the US, she will leave school and work as an illegal immigrant and hope to get lucky one day and regularize her status.

4.2.iii. Wanja (35)

Wanja is a victim of a marriage gone badly wrong. She got married at an early age to a man who turned out to be really brutal. From the beginning she was brutalized and she says she was beaten, burnt with cigarette butts, scalded with hot water and, her ear cut off by her husband in a drunken rage. It was at this juncture that she realized that if she stayed in the relationship, he would, one day, kill her. The marriage had produced five children and without any skills since she had left school before she graduated from high school, she relied completely on her husband for economic support. Her mother who had also endured marriage at the hands of a brutal man, had advised her daughters that a woman took whatever treatment she received in silence and tried not to aggravate her husband.

Since she was not sure how she was going to support herself, she did not take the children with her, but went to live with a distant relative whom her husband did not know, in another city. She was sure that if he found out where she was living he would come and kill her because he had threatened to do so if she ever attempted to leave him. Her brother gave her some money to start a business selling second hand clothes. She worked hard always with the intention that one day, she would go for her children. As fate would have it, her husband was killed while driving under the influence. Wanja went for her children but had to fight for custody with her in-laws, who accused her of deserting her children to go and become a prostitute. She had to prove to the court that she had not deserted her children but had escaped an abusive relationship – she laughingly says that she had never appreciated her

dismembered ear until then. Although she managed to get custody of her children, her in-laws would not let her take any of her husband's property.

Wanja lives with her children, all of whom are in high school. Her business has enabled her to take care of them although she says they lack many of the things that her husband had been able to provide. But she worries that university education for them will be beyond her capability to provide because of the expenses involved. She says that the only solution to that problem is to migrate to the West and work so that all her children can have higher education. The cousin whom she lived with when she left her marriage now lives in Britain and works as a nurse, one of the thousands of health care workers who are leaving the third world for better working conditions and pay in industrialized countries. She is working towards getting Wanja to join her in Britain.

4.2.iv. Achieng (32)

Achieng is not sure when she was born but only of the fact that her life has been one of misery and deprivation. Her father died when she was in her fourth year of primary education, and she considers the day he died as the day her life ended. He was a locomotive driver and Achieng says that her happiest times were when the whole family would leave the coastal town of Mombasa and ride in "my father's train" to her parents' rural home in western Kenya. She remembers her mother as a happy woman whose main joy was taking care of her family. Her father was always laughing and would bring the children treats, which he would hide around the house for them to find. He was happy to

live far away from home, because he was under a lot of pressure to marry another wife, since he had a good job. His father used to tell him that according to their tribe's tradition, the number of wives and children that he had counted a man's worth. But he did not want many wives since he was contented with his "small" family of one wife and seven children.

After his death Achieng's uncles and cousins came to help them take the body to be buried in their rural home and also took everything they had with them and that was the last time they were to see or enjoy all that their father had worked so hard for. According to their tradition, her mother was inherited by one of her brothers-in-law, who already had other wives and thus began Achieng's life of misery. He decreed that girls did not need to go to school and doing so only made them arrogant, immoral and hard to control. Achieng, who loved school cried for months and begged her mother to send her to school but to no avail. Her mother had lost everything and relied totally on her new husband for economic support.

When she was about fifteen, Achieng ran away from home when she discovered that her uncle was arranging for her to marry a man much older than her as his third wife. She went to Kisumu town, more than two hundred kilometers away from her home and where, she knew, nobody would come looking for her. She got work as a domestic help before joining the hundreds of women who were working in the fishing industry, frying fish racks to sell on building sites and in Kebuye market in Kisumu town. But within a

short time it became difficult to obtain the fish racks, which were now being turned into cattle feed by big companies. Achieng left Kisumu and moved to the tea plantations in Kericho. Although she managed to get a job picking tea, she found the work very hard and the conditions poor and so, when a friend suggested they go to Nairobi to look for a job, she jumped at the idea. In Nairobi, she got a job as a domestic help but although the pay was poor, she had a place to sleep. But that also came to an end when she was thrown out after her boss found out that she was pregnant with her husband's child. She says that the man of the house used to crawl into her room whenever his wife was working the night shift at the airport where she was an air traffic controller. She liked him because he used to give her money and buy her nice clothes, which she needed since her pay was so low. But now all that was gone and with a baby on the way, and no income or shelter, Achieng approached a women's welfare society which was helping single mothers living in the slums of Nairobi by training them in skills like tailoring, jewelry making, embroidery and shoe repair. Achieng opted for jewelry making and now she sells jewelry three times a week around Nairobi in crafts markets and the rest of the time she works for the same welfare group training other women to make jewelry. She lives at the group's compound where she shares a single room with another single mother. Achieng tells me that she would like to move to any western country because she hears that there people can find work and good pay, but she has no idea how to go about it. She also knows that migrating to the West takes more money than she can afford and she also says that her opportunities anywhere in the world are limited by her lack of education and communication skills.

4.3. Those who left

As I drove through the lush countryside in my native Kenya, I saw much evidence of new buildings under construction and my companion informed me that the owners are those families fortunate enough to have daughters working and living abroad particularly in Europe and North America. Many of my relatives and friends had already left the country. I was, once again, on my way to attend yet another farewell party for another relative who was joining her sister in the United States. I had visited "Rose" earlier the same year in Massachusetts where I met a very cohesive community of mostly Kenyan women and their children. They exploit immigration loopholes that allow relatives to visit by issuing letters of invitation to relatives and friends, but do not hold hosts accountable should the guests fail to return to countries of origin. They also "sponsor" students to go to school but are not held responsible should the students fail to do so. They assist newcomers to look for jobs, give out social security cards to help in procurement of jobs and contribute money to take care of legal and other problems they encounter. Sometimes they operate at the edge of legal margins but with strict code of silence should one of them be caught. Their knowledge of immigration laws and loopholes is impressive. The ones with legal status also act as an informal conduit through which money is sent back to relatives in Kenya. Should one of them die, they conduct money-raising events in order to send the body home or raise money for hospitalized members of the community. They have their own church where they worship in their mother tongue and children attend Sunday school also taught in Gikuyu to ensure that the children do not forget their

language. Weddings and birthday parties are communal affairs usually celebrated in the church hall. Women's societies are a way of life in traditional African communities. They offered a voice through which to negotiate on issues that affected women. In pre- and colonial days, women would form groups to cultivate, harvest and thatch huts. Child-care was a communal activity, usually done by post-menstrual women. Today in Kenya, in many urban centers, women have formed what they call merry-go-rounds that cater to their economic aspirations by offering small loans. In these merry-go-rounds, several women form an association into which they chose officials (chairperson who calls meetings and an accountant who is responsible for the money), and contribute an agreed sum of money to a central kitty on a monthly basis. For about three months the money is allowed to accumulate into a kind of operating capital. After that, money collected each month is given to a member to do whatever she wants, and lots are cast to determine when each woman gets her money. Should need arise such as a death in the family of one member, money is drawn from the central kitty to help her out. This system bridges the gap left by banks that will not give loans without collateral which most women do not have.

I was not able to establish what role the few men in the community play, except for the three male pastors (there is one female pastor), because the women seem to call all the shots, apparently making most of the decisions in the community. The men seemed to be resigned to their fate, but contented to let the women take the reins since when I inquired, none of the men I talked to complained. It is fair to mention that the men also worked

and took part in childcare, a fact that would shock many of their compatriots back home since in Kenya that is strictly women's work. Many of the women worked at two or three jobs and although they complained about the long hours, all of them were grateful that they could finally manage to feed, clothe and send their children to school, in the US and/or back home in Kenya. These are some of their stories, hopes and aspirations.

4.3.i. Rose (55)

Rose lost her job as a civil servant when the Kenya government was forced to downsize in the 1990s. Although she was at first reluctant to receive the so-called "Golden Handshake" the allure of being her own boss was too much to resist. She was also under great pressure from her husband to accept the offered retrenchment, so that they could start a chicken farm. Unfortunately, too many civil servants being retrenched went into the same business with resulting fall in prices of eggs and chicken meat. The "Golden Handshake" also proved to be inadequate and they had nothing left over to fall back on after the initial investment. They also had received little, if any, training in entrepreneurial skills. Within a few months Rose had transformed from a confident, cheerful woman to a bitter and desperate one whose husband drank excessively and became physically abusive. She had to remove her children from a school in the city and send them to live with her mother-in-law in the rural areas. Her life became one of deprivation and desperation. Her only hope was to go to "America where other women are going to work" she told me.

Happily, she did achieve her dreams and now lives in Massachusetts. She managed to get to the US through one of her neighbors and an old friend who had gone to the States years earlier. She invited Rose over after fulfilling immigration requirements for hosting a visitor. Rose went on a visitor's visa and at its expiration she went into hiding in another state until the heat cooled before going back. Back at home, her husband remarried within a year of her leaving and started another family, hopefully one that would produce a son, since Rose only had daughters, five of whom she managed to bring over to the US, while one still lives in Kenya. She managed to bring her daughters through a network established by the immigrant women where she lives, as explained above. Rose works and lives in the US as an illegal immigrant. She works in the health field taking care of patients in a mental institution. Rose is very proud of her achievements and those of her daughters. She told me that if she had not managed to go to the US she would have died at the hands of her husband and had even contemplated suicide. But she hopes to return to Kenya one day to retire, simply because "Kenya is home". She has now also built rental houses, so that when she finally goes home she can live comfortably. In the meantime, she is still an illegal immigrant because although all her daughters have become documented, she says that since she has lived there for so long illegally, she is afraid of deportation should she seek to legalize her status.

4.3.ii. Muthoni (54)

Muthoni is a childhood friend of mine who lives in Florida. She worked in Kenya as an accountant after finishing her studies at Oxford University in England. Like Rose, she

had been retrenched in 1989 by the para-statal where she worked. She accuses the organization of retrenching her because she is a woman while preferring to keep the male accountants. While in employment, her children had attended a very expensive private school but it had become impossible to retain them there after losing her job. Her marriage was also starting to crumble because of the heavy burden that her husband was now forced to carry. He finally moved out and started living with a girlfriend, and Muthoni divorced him.

Muthoni first went to the US on a business visa and managed to establish a small business, selling Kenyan crafts. When that did not work as well as she had anticipated, she paid off an American friend to marry her. She was then able to get a job in a department store. After that, she brought her children over under the "family unification" category. Muthoni now is the chief accountant in the department store and says she is happy and successful. Since her degree was from England, she had no problems having her credentials recognized by the American authorities as soon as she got married. She has since divorced her second husband because it was a marriage of convenience and lives with another man. Her two daughters have finished their first degrees, one is pursuing further studies in engineering, the other works in the tourism industry, while the youngest, a son, is in medical school. Muthoni is now an American citizen, has bought property in the US and has no intentions of ever going back to Kenya permanently. She says she has no regrets because for her, through hard work and determination, she has managed to exploit parts of globalization to establish a good life for herself and her

children.

4.3.iii. Lucy (36)

Although Lucy came to Nairobi to look for a job immediately after graduating from high school with good grades, it took her four years to find one. She had come into the job market at the time of the infamous SAPS when the job market was flooded with civil servants and university graduates with better credentials chasing very few jobs in the private sector. Unfortunately, Lucy lacked skills and job experience and a high school certificate had ceased to hold any attraction for employers. Lucy became disillusioned with city life and spent time between her sister's Nairobi home and her mother's rural home. After four years she finally managed to get a job working as a croupier in what was then, the only casino in Nairobi. But it was not long before her boss took a fancy to her. For two years she spent her working time trying to avoid his advances. Matters came to a head when she was required to work the last shift and the boss would find ways to detain her while the other workers got their official transport to their homes. It meant that Lucy would have to rely on her boss for transport back to her small apartment. One early morning, he insisted on coming to her apartment and he raped her. She failed to go to work for two days and when she told her sister what had happened after the two days, she took Lucy to the police station to report the rape.

Generally, rape cases are difficult to prove and in Kenya almost impossible to prove, time consuming and victims often operate in a hostile atmosphere (see Kameri-Mbote, 2001).

Lucy gave up trying to prove hers because the management did not believe her. To complicate her case, the rapist also happened to be the nephew of the casino's owner. Casino croupiers at that time did not have a union so there was no organization to take up her cause. She was given a cheque for the days she had worked for that month and dismissed. She then moved to the coastal town of Mombasa and managed to get a job in the casino there. Unfortunately the casino closed down within the year and she was once again on the search for another job. She moved to the neighboring country of Uganda and tried to get a job in the only casino in the capital city, Kampala, but could not since she required a work permit. The Ugandan authorities would not give her a work permit because her field was not in a skilled category and could, therefore, be done by an Ugandan. She went back to Nairobi in search of a job.

Lucy lived for a while with her sister who was in the Kenyan diplomatic service and was soon afterwards posted to work in Washington DC. Lucy moved back to her rural home to stay with her mother, where she got involved with a man and had a son. It was a difficult life since her mother had no steady income except for meager income from the sale of milk from her two cows. Then her mother became sick and she had to sell the cows to pay hospital bills. Her sister arranged for her mother to go to the US for treatment and to be accompanied by Lucy since they pretended that the mother did not speak English and needed an escort, a ruse that worked with the American embassy in Nairobi. They got visitors' visas.

Although her mother's treatment was successful and she returned home to Kenya, Lucy overstayed her visitor's visa and currently lives in New York illegally, as a domestic worker for a rich American family with three children. Last year, through her sister, she managed to bring her son to the US where he is attending university. Since Lucy lives with the family she works for, her son lives with her sister in Philadelphia and Lucy manages to see him only on the weekends when she is not working. Although she says that the family is good to her and gives her better wages than most of her friends in similar positions, she works long hours and sometimes does not get time off. But she says her life is better than the one she had in Kenya and her satisfaction lies in the fact that she has managed to bring her son to the US and hopes his life will be better than hers. She has tried to get legal status by paying an American man to marry her, but the man disappeared with her money and she cannot take him to court because what she attempted to do is illegal and would lead to her deportation. So she hangs on and hopes that one day she will find a way to stay legally. She does not know whether she wants to live in the United States or go back to Kenya but for the moment she says she is only interested in seeing her son finish school and get a good job.

4.3.iv Florence (55)

Florence is Rose's cousin and worked in Kenya as a teacher in a high school after graduating from the University of Nairobi. But because a teacher's pay is poor, she decided to go into the catering business after she got married to a banker. She got a loan and opened a small catering business in Nairobi. For reasons that are not clear since her

husband did not see it fit to explain to her, he lost his job and joined her in the business. While she took care of the kitchen, supervising their two employees and generally running the business, her husband controlled the purchasing department. But he had a drinking problem and most of the money went into that rather into purchasing supplies for the business. After two years the business collapsed and she decided to try her hand at large-scale wheat growing. She got money from her mother who is a well-established and wealthy business woman. But at harvesting time, her husband decided that since the land, which he had inherited from his father, belonged to him, everything that grew on it was also his. Florence was left broke and with a growing family of four children. She went back to teaching but the husband still had no job. They had a joint account and he managed to use most of the money she earned to support his drinking problem. The bank loan had not been repaid for many years and the bank sold their family house, which they had used as collateral. She took her children and went to live with her mother. After about a year, her husband got a job and Florence and their children went back to live with him in a rental house belonging to her mother. While they were separated he had become involved in another relationship and blamed Florence as the one who had pushed him into it by leaving him. He became abusive and Florence was in and out of hospitals because of domestic violence. She suffered extreme embarrassment whenever she went to class with physical evidence of this abuse, and was forced to resign from a job she loved. She finally decided to leave him and went back to live with her mother.

Florence moved to the US on a student visa but had no intention of going to school so, when her student visa expired, she moved in with her cousin Rose and started to work as an illegal immigrant. She had to change jobs and go into hiding to another state when immigration authorities came looking for her after the expiration of her student visa. But as soon as the heat was off, she went back. She explains this by saying that she felt at home in Massachusetts since the Kenyan community there has support systems. All her children managed to come to the United States apparently to attend university but have all dropped out and lived at various times as illegal immigrants. It had become impossible to afford their school fees when her mother in Kenya's businesses began to fail because of a poor economy in the country. They have now achieved immigrant status, the daughters by paying American citizens to marry them, and her son by joining the American armed forces. On two previous occasions, Florence has tried to regularize her status by paying two American men to marry her but they did not keep their part of the bargain after receiving payment. She says this is a price one has to be prepared to pay since Americans know that for many immigrants, marriage is the easiest way to achieve legal status and some get into the marriage scam. They know that illegal immigrants cannot resort to court action and are easy prey.

4.4. Personal biography

I grew up on a farm at the slopes of Mt. Kenya with three siblings, two older brothers and a younger sister. To my parents who were born and grew up in colonialism, nothing was more important to a child than a good education and they believed that a child's access to

education should only be limited by her/his own ambition. Since my mother and father had paid employment we all managed to get at least high school education, although I was the first one in the family to go to university. When I graduated from the University of Nairobi, finding a job was easy because both the private and public sectors used to recruit students in their final year at the university and from colleges. After working for an oil company for a couple of years, I decided to find a job, which would offer me the opportunity to travel, because I wanted to see the wider world. For almost two decades, I worked in the government's tourism department and traveled widely, selling Kenya as a tourist destination.

However, after many years of mismanagement Kenya's economy was fast failing and I decided to seek fresh pastures. I had since married and had a daughter. To me, Kenya's insecurity brought about by a failed economy, and marauding gangs of jobless young men, was not a place where a child could grow up in security. I got a job in Botswana where the pay was good and crime was at a very low rate. But it had its own problems including xenophobia and sexual habits among the Batswana that could only be described as highly irresponsible. The rape rate was extremely high and I once more felt that my personal security and particularly that of my daughter was at risk. After talking to several of my friends and relatives about the possibility of moving to the West, I was advised to try Canada since it was a good destination, where my daughter could lead a safe life and have a good future. I needed a break from work, and decided to seek a study visa, and go back to school. I had even contemplated migrating to the USA where I have a lot of

friends and relatives most of whom had migrated after the economic failure in Kenya and the resultant political instability. But tuition in the US is very high and I did not want to drop out of school and become an illegal immigrant like most of them had. After one year, I managed to bring my daughter over and I feel that she is safe in Canada and will have a good life here. But I intend to go back to Kenya sometime in the future for, to me, Kenya is home.

4.5. Interviews with Immigrant women in St. John's

I will begin this section by documenting experiences of immigrant women in St. John's as told in their own words, giving reasons why they came to Canada and pointing out their major experiences of the immigration process. According to Musisi and Turrittin (1995) their expectations are echoed in the words of an immigrant woman who exclaims: "I am not just a number; I am a human being, female, immigrant and African. I deserve and I am looking for a meaningful and a good life in Canada" (p.5). I wish to record six other voices of African immigrant women in the context of their lived experiences and to examine whether their quest for a meaningful life in Canada has been realized. I wish to document the reasons they came from their countries, their experiences of migration, and how these experiences have shaped their lives. To this end, some of the questions that I asked the include level of education, occupation in country of origin, reasons for migration, information before arrival in Canada, expectations on arrival in Canada, forms of assistance on arrival in Canada, and the integration process (Appendix C).

4.5.i. Patience

Patience initially came to St. John's to do her PhD at Memorial University of Newfoundland in 1992, on a Commonwealth scholarship. Her undergraduate and Masters degrees were in English and she had taught English for five years at university level in her home country. She was unhappy with the English Department at Memorial University's insistence that as a foreign student she was required to do a course in English As a Second Language: "Although I knew that I did not need the ESL course, I was not sure about the requirements of the department, so I just did what they asked...but I was disappointed." Apart from that first hitch, her initial settling process was smooth within her department, both the lecturers and students helped her to settle down. She was also introduced to a Canadian family that had spent some time in her country of origin, and they "adopted" her, making the integration process very easy for her. Her Commonwealth scholarship meant that she did not have to worry about tuition but to make extra money she worked in her department as a research assistant and also found other employment on campus. Thus, during her studies, she did not have financial problems.

However, after finishing her studies, Patience found that it was very difficult for her to get a job. She found out that her Canadian credentials and job experience, and also her teaching and other work experience in her country of origin could not guarantee her a full-time job at MUN. She says that she does not know exactly why it is that she has not been able to get employment that is commensurate with her education and experience.

Secondly, she says that for immigrant women, it is more difficult to get employment because of other duties that tie them to the home, such as being mothers and wives. Although this is also true for Canadian women the experience can be viewed differently for African women because in Africa, there is always someone to lend a hand (an aunt, a sister or the grandmother) in child-care. One can even drop off her children with a neighbor when need be, but in Canada this kind of support system is missing for immigrant women and a woman has to do everything herself. Secondly, although Patience was not able to find employment that was commensurate with her education, this might be more because of the small job market in Newfoundland. Having only one university places a premium on university positions, whereas a bigger city like Toronto or Vancouver, with many universities might prove to be different for someone with her credentials.

Patience is self-employed "partly by choice and partly by force" as she puts it. She imports art and crafts and all kinds of materials from all over Africa and sells in her shop and also sells on line, shipping to many parts of Canada, the US and even Europe. She also exports technology products from Canada to Africa. She says she loves what she does although she has to work very hard. She says "you should love what you do or do what you love." She does volunteer work with the Multicultural Women Organization doing projects for them and also the African Canadian Association and tries to help in any way she can as a member of the immigrant and also the larger community.

When I asked her what kinds of problems she had encountered in setting up her business, Patience said that by the time she decided to go into business, she was well prepared and had done her research and was able to write a business plan. She received financial assistance from the government because they accepted her business plan and approved her initial start-up capital with a grant under the self-employment program. Initially she started operating from home because she did not plan to open a store at the start-up. But in time, she started going to craft fairs and discovered that people were more comfortable with buying from a store rather than going to her house for sales, and others, particularly those living around St. John's, were not comfortable buying on-line. She tried to get a place at the Avalon Mall but she says the rent was prohibitive and she had to settle for a cheaper place. She says for immigrant women who want to start their own businesses, it is important to know the modalities and logistics of starting a business in Canada. It is not easy because there are so many requirements and information is difficult to come by, particularly about organizations that can assist one. One has to know that taxes such as the GST and HST have to be collected and remitted to the government once the business generates more than \$30,000 annually. Other requirements include income tax evaluation and business insurance. For those who intend to import products from Africa, shipping is very expensive, there is no assurance that shipments will arrive and even when they do, it takes a long time. One also needs to know and become a member of certain associations so that one can learn from them and also open up networking systems. Another important feature is funding, which can come from various sources such as bank loans, but Patience cautions that bank loans could be a very expensive modality in operating a business and

advises for lines of credit. There are organizations where one can find funding such as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), Human Resources and other organizations that give grants for small businesses. She concludes by saying that one should talk to people, get the information that one needs and stay focused. She emphasizes that for someone who wants to go into business, it is crucial to write a business plan "don't let other people write it for you, do it yourself." When help is needed there are people who can help but one needs to do it oneself because "you are the one who knows what you want." In the meantime, Patience continues to run her business and is thinking of diversifying, but was unwilling to elucidate, probably because of competition.

4.5.ii. Atieno

Atieno started her story with her landing in Toronto at 17 years of age. She is reluctant to talk about where she came from but only to mention that she spent some time in a refugee camp in Kenya. She came as a refugee under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. She was very young and did not know where she was going. Landing in such a big city was overwhelming for she had not witnessed anything of such a scale before and the cultural shock was also great. She did not have sufficient information about her destination. She also found out that some of the problems that "I was experiencing back home, were also here." Of major significance to her young life was the problem of homelessness and she wondered why the Canadian government had brought her to Canada and yet it was not able to take care of its own people. She explains this misgiving by stating that it was due to the fact that she did not understand the

immigration system itself. Because she was not given enough information of what to expect when she landed in Canada, the cultural shock was so much greater. She also found out that a lot of the promises that were made to her in her country of asylum were not true. For example, she had been promised that she would be sent to school so that she could finish her high school, which had been interrupted because of civil war in her country, but on arrival in Canada she was sent to work instead. She had never worked before and had no idea how to go about finding employment. She was overwhelmed by the new responsibilities and wanted to go back to Kenya, her former country of asylum. The refugee agency under which she was placed told her that sending her back was not an option. Eventually she met a Canadian family that took her in and treated her as one of its children and also enabled her to go back to school. Seventeen years later, she met someone, fell in love and he brought her to Newfoundland.

Atieno has a Masters degree. She wanted to work with international organizations with the intentions of helping the people back home and also bringing something back to Canada, "bridging the gap between the home that I knew...and my new home here." She did not succeed with this intention because when she started seeking such work with the federal government and international agents she was informed that she needed French. She thought that having her native as well as other African languages and her education credentials would help her in realizing her dream, but apparently they were not enough. One of the stipulations to working in the civil service in Canada or with their aid agencies is the knowledge of the two official languages, English and French, one which Atieno

probably did not know about. Although she sees her inability to get a job as one of discrimination, I think it could well be that she did not qualify because of her lack of knowledge of French. However, this is something that the Canadian authorities with whom she sought employment should have explained to Atieno instead of leaving her to her own interpretations. Secondly, this stipulation of being bi-lingual is one that puts barriers to immigrants particularly from Africa where most countries operate on English, French or Portuguese depending on colonial legacies, or Arabic, as official languages.

Currently, she is a stay-at-home mother with three children. When I asked Atieno about her future plans, she says that for the moment her major concern is bringing up her children and giving them the best education possible. She also wants to prepare them for the world and the life ahead of them because she does not want them to go through what she did. She would like to go back to work, maybe on part-time basis when her older children go to school. She says that she and her husband, who is also from her country of origin, have discussed going back home one day.

Atieno considers that the major problem being faced by immigrant women is striking a balance between family and work. Similar to Patience, It is important for her to teach her children about where "I came from." Balancing the two cultures is very difficult and that is why she has chosen to be a stay-at-home mum, so that she can pass on her culture to her children. She says that passing on her language to her children is very important "because that is their identity." She says that knowing that there is racism and

discrimination in the world, she wants her children to “be grounded” so that later on when they face the problem of racism and discrimination, they will be able to stand firm and fight back. “Africa is where they come from, that’s their background, even though they are born Canadian.” Atieno says that is the main reason why she stays at home is to raise her children but the drawback is that her career is suffering, and living on one income makes life difficult financially and they are not able to progress financially. So she considers that the balancing act that immigrant women are forced to strike between family and career is the biggest problem. Atieno is caught up in a situation which also affects non-immigrant women in similar ways but one that she views differently because of her African experience where there is always someone to lend a hand in child care.

4.5. iii. Lerato

(This interview was conducted in Atieno’s house.)

Lerato is a medical doctor. She was recruited to come and work in Canada in her home country through a recruiting agent. She had indicated that she wanted to work anywhere in Canada and that is how she landed in Newfoundland. She works in a rural area outside St. John’s and because of this, one of the perks of working in rural Canada is that she was accommodated in a fully furnished house so settling in was easier than if this had not been the case. A member of staff from the hospital was available to show her around and advise her on social insurance, medical board, etc. The administrative side of things was easy because her path was made smooth by the hospital staff. But once that was done, she was left by herself and that is when life became very lonely and she started asking

herself what she was doing here and wanted to go back to her country. There were two other women from her country that she knew but they were living a long way away, but just knowing that they were there was a source of courage and she stayed on. After a while she met other people particularly through running, which she likes to do.

She says that on the whole, she finds Newfoundlanders to be very accommodating and that has made her integration process much easier and thinks she might have found it harder had she gone to another part of Canada. But now she is ready to go to other parts of Canada or elsewhere in the world because now she is confident and knows that she can survive. She is involved in church activities and has a group of people who come to her house once a week for bible studies and over the weekend she volunteers with youth activities in her community.

4.5. iv. Sarah

Sarah was very reluctant to talk about herself and indicated that she was only doing so, because she wanted to help me out with my thesis. The interview was very brief (about 10 minutes). In her country of origin, Sarah had run a farm. Sarah pauses and tells me that she does not want to identify the country she comes from or the type of farm she had because, since St. John's has such a small community of African immigrants, it would be easy to identify her if such details are made available. She goes on to explain that in her country anyone can own a farm by buying land, so she procured a loan from a bank and bought a piece of land. She employed two people and she says that it was a good

business and she was able to support herself.

Sarah says that she has friends here both from the Canadian and immigrant communities.

She attends meetings with the Multicultural Women's Organization and also attends church. She says that people in Newfoundland are friendlier than in the other part of Canada where she and her family had lived before coming here. Once again she is not willing to divulge where she lived before coming to St. John's for the same reason she had given before. She says that although racism does not "glare you in the face" it is there. For instance, she has noticed that once in a while, when she walks into a shop, the workers would approach her and inquire whether she needs help and because they don't inquire that of "others," she wonders whether these workers just assume that because she's an African, she is on welfare and cannot afford whatever she is shopping for. The issue of behavior from shop assistants can have different interpretations depending on where a person is coming from. To a person with previous experiences of racism, the behavior can have the interpretation that Sarah had. I come from a country where many retail businesses are run by Kenyans of Indian origin and some of them have a habit of following a customer of African origin around, suspecting them of shoplifting. My suspicions are naturally aroused in Canada when a shop assistant comes to me to ask me whether I need help because of my Kenyan experiences. On the other hand, asking a person who looks unfamiliar to a business establishment whether they need help could well be just guest relations and customer care. The training a shop assistant has would dictate that they go out of their way to help a new customer, and have no racial

undertones. This act all depends on the interpretation of the customer based on prior experiences.

4.5. v. Mary

Mary came to St. John's as an undergraduate student to attend MUN. She had received some brochures about MUN from friends in Canada and she also looked up information from the MUN web-site but she says that the information was not adequate to prepare her for life either in Newfoundland, St. John's or Canada. The biggest shocks that Mary experienced were the weather and the people. Coming from somewhere very hot, she was not prepared for the cold of St. John's and although she found the people friendly, they are "not very inclusive people". The people operate in cliques and it is very difficult for an immigrant or someone from out of St. John's to penetrate those cliques. In class, she found that she was one of the youngest students and she found that it worked against her as an immigrant and also as a girl because her peers did not take her very seriously. "The biggest challenge that I found at the university was being looked down upon." She found out that the students had a very negative and ignorant view of Africa and she got annoyed when asked ignorant questions like "do you ride an elephant?" She also found it very uncomfortable when she would answer a question in class and everybody turns around to look at you. She found out that she was scrutinized a lot, something the local students did not have to deal with. With the professors, she found the foreign professors more helpful, maybe because they had had similar experiences and understood more the problems of being away from home. The local professors did not know how to handle it.

She gives the example of a class where they were dealing with corruption and one student quoted corruption in Africa. Mary was offended by that and says she had to stand up for herself and other Africans and state that corruption was not just an African problem but was everywhere. In her opinion, much of the corruption that afflicts many nations in Africa and elsewhere is political corruption in which government and political officials seek illegitimate personal gain through actions such as bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement. In this way, Mary believes, much money that could be used for the development of national populations end up in the pockets of well-connected individuals. While not condoning corruption in any way, Mary's main concern is that although many countries in Africa do have corruption on a massive scale, Western media reporting always gives the impression that corruption is synonymous with Africa. The failure to differentiate between African countries while dealing with issues is to blame and it is, therefore, understandable, although not correct, when the general population in the west assumes that all African countries suffer from the same level of corruption.

Mary has recently graduated from MUN, is working in St. John's and has also had a baby.

She had the baby just after graduating and before starting working and she found it extremely challenging, as would any woman in the same situation. She found that there were no resources to help with new immigrant single mothers. The biggest challenge that she had was that it took her a long time to recover from childbirth and she had nobody to help her, like the family support that a local person might find easy to have. Mary, like

many other immigrant women that I have talked to, assumes that a non-immigrant new mother would have family support, which would not be the case for one who does not have family in the same locality. For example a woman from Ontario who has moved to St. John's for any number of reasons would find herself in much the same position as Mary, although she might have the option of moving back to Ontario for such support which Mary did not have because of distances involved and cost of such a move.

Fortunately, when she went to her place of work, she found that her employer was very accommodating and gave her enough time off to take care of her baby, something that the employer did not have to do but chose to do to help her out. She has also been given a flexible schedule, which gives her the opportunity to pick up and spend time with her baby before he goes to bed. She has to organize her own child-care because her employer does not provide that at the place of work. She therefore, drops off her baby at a baby-sitter before she goes to work and picks him up after work.

On the question of racism, she says that the biggest problem she has at work is not being included and she considers that as one of the worst things that can happen to a person at their place of work. She gives an example of Fridays when everyone receives invitation to go for lunch but so far, she is yet to receive one. She thinks that she is not invited on racist basis, particularly being the only black person among about 60 people and being the only one never invited to join a lunch group. She says that she is not sure whether she has experienced other forms of racism in the office. As for future plans, she says that her short-term plan is to stay on in St. John's for a year or two and then move on. She

concludes: "It is hard to be an immigrant and I wish the local people would help in making immigrants feel more comfortable."

4.5.vi. Abiola

In her country of origin, Abiola was working in broadcasting and also produced children's programs. Abiola does not want to name her country of origin because she says that such a detail would be an identification tag. One day during a military coup while she was at work, soldiers raided her place of work, since one of the institutions that are targeted are broadcasting stations so that soldiers can announce the military takeover. Her workstation happened to be separated from the master control room where the soldiers were, and she had time to hide behind the door and they did not see her. They had threatened to shoot her co-workers and that is why she hid. When she got home, she told her parents that she would not be going back to work. Her parents had actually been thinking of sending her abroad to join her three sisters, two of whom were in England and one in Toronto. They wanted her to join her sister in Canada so that she could also have a sister with her since the two in England had each other. Her immigration process was complicated by the fact that since there was no Canadian embassy in her country she had to take a long flight to a neighboring country.

Her intention when she arrived in Canada was to work rather than go to school. At her interview with the Canadian embassy, the official who had conducted her interview had indicated that since she had studied abroad, was fluent in English and had good prior

experience in broadcasting, she would not have any problems getting a job. So she came with the expectation that she would get employment broadcasting without problems. However, none of her applications were acknowledged and neither was she invited for job interviews. Her sister suggested that she should start looking for other kinds of jobs. She eventually got a job working in a call center for minimum wage. Once she changed locations and came to St. John's she started applying for jobs with radio and television stations and she was called for a couple of interviews. But she did not get work. She managed to get a job with an agency with whom she had initially volunteered as the coordinator. Abiola says that there are several reasons she thinks she was not able to get a job in her field of specialization. She was told that she needed Canadian experience but she thinks that is not a valid reason. "For me, a radio station is a radio station. I don't think the work changes drastically. It is not a matter of life and death like being a doctor...particularly coming from an English speaking country." In one interview she had been asked whether she was familiar with weather forecasts. She had indicated that in her country, with two major seasons, the dry and wet season, weather is not a major part of broadcasting. Although the weather here might be a major issue, she did not think that this would be a problem to learn if she was given the job. She thinks that underlying the issue of Canadian experience is discrimination, that the issue of Canadian experience is a smoke-screen for discriminating against immigrants. On the question of sexism, she does not think that this played any part in not getting a job since she has seen a good mixture of men and women in the major television stations. So, she concluded, it was more a question of discrimination on account of race rather than gender.

When her expectations were not realized, Abiola decided to go back to school to learn about production. She found that some of those teaching her did not even have her experience and were teaching her what she already knew. So she decided to go for a masters degree in English literature, with a major in English language and then teach at the university. She did this to prove more to herself that "I couldn't be that bad." After finishing her Masters degree, she applied for a teaching job at MUN but was then told that she had to have a PhD. "It is one of those things, you get there and then they change the question." Some of her teachers only had master degrees but she was required to have a PhD. When she inquired about this, she was told that those already in employment with masters could retain their positions, but new employees had to have PhD. She decided to take her PhD in a university outside of Canada because she felt that since she had a Masters degree from MUN that was "not recognized for anything" she would take her PhD in another university. At the moment, after being accepted by another university and getting a grant to enable her do her research in the province, Abiola is conducting her research in the province. As mentioned earlier, because St. John's has only one university, the competition for jobs is tough which might not be the case in a different place such as Toronto with multiple universities. But to an immigrant already with a sense of perceived racism due to earlier experiences this can breed negative feelings.

Abiola says that there are a lot of systemic barriers against immigrant women. She is discriminated against because of her gender, the fact that she is an immigrant and also on

account of being a black woman looking for work in a highly specialized west-European field. It all has to do with the colonial mentality that is prevalent in people of western European origin. When it comes to gender, such a mentality can be traced back to Western European thought systems, based on dualism dichotomy in which, according to Mies et al (1988:3), the complicity of human existence is reduced into simplicities of opposing spheres and in which woman becomes the binary opposite of man. By associating negative norms with woman and positive ones with man, woman becomes marginalized and excluded from the public domain such as government. From this point of view Abiola perceives a post-colonial establishment like the one in Newfoundland as highly patriarchal. With Anglo-Celtic thinking, a man is always perceived as being able to do better. She says that this is an ideology that is rooted in a colonial hegemonic, white male dominated way of thinking, which is very prevalent in this province. In such a society a man, even an immigrant man, would find it easier to find a job than an immigrant woman.

As a black person, Abiola feels that there is the feeling that black people are not as educated and not as capable. "I think that there is a certain stereotypical feeling...they are surprised that you even speak well." She feels that for instance, in a new bank, when she approaches a cashier there is a look of apprehension on their faces. They are not sure whether Abiola would be able to communicate with them and when she does, there is a look of surprise that she actually can. Abiola also feels that there is the mentality of "so she's black, so what can she do?" in which case Abiola is referring to racism which is a

system that judges people purely on account of their color. She explains that maybe this comes out of the fact that this might be "an island mentality" because many of the people have never left the island and, therefore, not had the opportunity to interact with people from other cultures who might be highly educated people and who can do well in their areas of expertise.

As an immigrant, Abiola has had to deal with experiences that make her perceive discrimination as a fact of life that many immigrants have to deal with. This attitude has changed her because she feels like she has to continuously prove herself. Despite the fact that she has facilitated workshops and is involved in research projects, when she has to speak, she feels that she is always being judged on the facts that a) she is an immigrant, b)black and c)a woman. This feeling particularly is more pronounced when she addresses a male audience. She feels that she has to be 10 times better than the next person of western European origin who is going after that same thing (fund raising). This kind of feeling puts a lot of pressure on immigrants "it is difficult enough to meet the standard and even when you meet the standard, it doesn't get you anywhere." Abiola feels that this needs to change, and people have to feel that they can use their qualifications to benefit the province.

Abiola has stopped applying for jobs because she has come to accept the fact that she will not get one, and decided to "play them at their own game." In one of her volunteering activities, she got the job of writing proposals. Although she generated much needed

capital for the organization she volunteered with, when it came to employment, the organization informed her that since she did not speak like a Newfoundlander, she could not get the job. So she has set up her own company which deals with research and facilitation and fund raising. In the meantime, she continues to do research for her PhD, hoping that it will give her leverage in her new field of interest. She is interested in policy issues because she believes that systemic barriers exist because of how policies are made and how they become translated into practice and ultimately affect immigrant families. She does not intend to stay in the province "for the rest of my life" because she does not feel that there is challenge enough in what she wants to do. Since she is not working, she does not have those ties to the province and with what she wants to do, she can do it anywhere in the world. She feels that she has no attachments to the province and says that this is a shame because there are many immigrants like her who have expertise in certain fields but they are devalued in this province instead of being exploited. She adds that such people do not feel like it is worthwhile staying and that is why many people leave the province. As stated elsewhere the small job market in Newfoundland is a challenge and other provinces may offer better options for jobs. Abiola knows a few of African women who graduated from MUN and decided to go to Alberta and New Brunswick for work not only because the pay was better but because they were offered jobs straight after graduating. She concludes that if someone wants to further their career instead of flipping burgers, they might want to leave, because their qualifications are wasted. When this happens, then other advantages like peace and quiet which the province has to offer are forgotten and people move on.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Problems encountered by immigrant women

Introduction

From the stories of the African immigrant women in St. John's, there are certain issues that make it difficult to settle in Canada. Abiola, for instance, indicates how she thinks that race and gender interact with being an immigrant. Although their stories are not identical, I explore their similarities to find what themes they see as barriers in their integration process.

- **Inequality and Difference in Immigration Policies**

Some of the problems that immigrant women encounter could be blamed on Canadian immigration policies. For instance the Immigration Policy Review of 1990s guided Canadian immigration policy into the point system, making race and sex irrelevant, at least in formal language of policy if not in actual application (Thobani 2000). Applicants would, henceforth, be judged on such criteria as formal education and training, occupational skills and experience, occupational demand, knowledge of Canadian languages, and age. Additionally, there has been a growing emphasis on the amount of capital an immigrant is willing to invest in Canada, leading to a growth of business immigrants, especially from east Asia. Writing on this commodification Arat-Koc (1999) sees it as having profound implications for women: "One of the implications of this commodification is that it leads to an evaluation of people's potential contribution and

value to the country solely on the basis of their expected place in the labor market. Those people, whose skills are considered useless, less useful or irrelevant to the labor market are either excluded from, or get differential treatment through immigration. This process has a particular gendered dimension, as some of the skills women have and the contribution that most women make, such as through "women's work" has little or no value in the market place" (p.3); also see Bloom et al., 1995; Morris & Sinnott, 2003). Another point in Canada's immigration policy that excludes women is the high application fee charged for immigration, which is beyond the capability of many women, who traditionally, earn less than their male counterparts. Personally, I find it difficult to meet this challenge in order to apply for landed immigrant status for my family and myself. I can, therefore, only imagine how this would affect a poor woman in any part of Africa who wants to migrate to Canada for any reason, including violence.

- Double-duty syndrome

Whether women migrate on a voluntary or forced basis, women immigrants experience peculiar difficulties brought about by gender. Boyd (1984) avers that women immigrants experience the restrictions of a sex-segregated occupational structure in which women's jobs are characterized by lower wages, fewer opportunities for advancement, and less job security. Secondly, emphasis on women's roles within the family, when combined with paid employment, can result in the double duty/double day syndrome. Although this is also the case for non-immigrant women, the main difference is one of conditioning; the immigrant women are used to having family and community members assist a new

mother but once an African woman migrates to Canada or the West, that scenario changes and she finds that she has to do all the domestic, and probably other work. Additionally, many women in Africa do not have to choose between going for employment in the job market, or staying at home to take care of the family because they have the option to employ house help or what is generally referred to as a maid. A maid is a kind of jack-of-all-trades who cooks, cleans, does laundry, takes care of kids and in some cases, also takes care of the vegetable patch, and milks the family goat. Upon migration it might come as a great shock to an immigrant woman used to a maid in Africa to find that this is not an option because of lack of affordability, (a situation which certainly reflects not only inequalities among women in Kenya). I know that one of the major attractions that Kenya holds for me is my total loathing for housework and cooking which I do not have to contend with at home. For an immigrant woman, Boyd (1984) explains that double duty could result in her being too exhausted to pursue options which could improve her situation such as learning the language of the host community. As a result, for reasons of time and energy, immigrant women who do not speak the language(s) of the destination country remain locked into job ghettos. Boyd (1984), therefore, concludes that the women suffer a double negative effect that of being foreign born and of being female. Abiola concurs when she says that she feels discriminated against on three fronts: being a woman, black and immigrant.

The issue of double-duty syndrome is not merely a question of time for immigrant women, i.e. the limited time a mother is forced to spend with her children because of all

the other duties that she has to take care of. It is multi-faceted. For those women who migrate with their children, there is always the nagging question of whether one did the right thing in removing them from familiar people and grounds. Although many of my peers tend to think that their decisions were right because of the opportunities that are available in the West, many times I ask myself whether it is right to separate my daughter from her father and all those who love her. Or is it fair for me to deny her father the right to be part of his only child's daily life? I also wonder whether it is worth it all to go without the support, mental, physical, financial and psychological that I find at home.

Deeply involved in the duties of a mother is also one of discipline. Many immigrant women admit that one of their major fears for their children is the seemingly lack of discipline that is rife among the youth in the West. One of the most important aspects of social cohesion in many Africa communities is the respect for elders which is emphasized to children from an early age. When this tenet is disobeyed, discipline can be swift and harsh mostly involving corporal punishment. Many African immigrant mothers feel that in the West, authorities judge them wrongly in ways that they would choose to instill discipline. This occurs out of cultural differences. Porter & Jaya (2005) concur: "Very few social workers in Newfoundland have any experience or training in cultural differences. Their response to a difficult situation involving immigrants, especially adolescent boys is to assume that the parent (mother) is incompetent" (p.14).

- Foreign Credentials

In a study done for the Gender, Migration and Diversity/Immigrant Women Research Domain of the Atlantic Metropolis Centre of Excellence (Porter & Jaya 2005) the researchers found that the refusal by Canadian authorities to recognize foreign credentials can lead to major problems for immigrants including women immigrants. Amina, a medical practitioner, demonstrated the frustration that she felt when she recounted her hollowing experiences at one time when she exhausted all her resources and could not get a job. It was a shocking testimony of how even medical personnel can be reduced to a desperate situation in a province in dire need of such skills. Sarah has been forced to repeat professional examinations that she had already done in her country of origin because her foreign credentials are not recognized by Canadian authorities. From meetings that I have attended and research that I have been involved in among other immigrant groups, it is pertinent to mention that this is a major bone of contention for all immigrants of both sexes and not only for African women immigrants. For immigrants who come to Canada with credentials either from their countries of origin or other countries, they find that these are not acceptable at face value and the process of transferability can be long and frustrating. The Live-in Caregiver Program deskills many nursing personnel who come in to work under the program since their nursing credentials are not recognized in Canada. However, even possession of Canadian credentials is not a guarantee of employment in one's field of specialization as Patience, Atieno and Abiola found out.

Additionally, the problem of accent affects most immigrants, including African women.

In Porter and Jaya (2005) Amie says:

As soon as you open your mouth and they know that your accent is different, that means that you're stupid...that you didn't go to school. When you try to express yourself, sometimes they don't even listen. They think that you're stupid because of the way you talk...even if I'm here for a million years, I'll never talk like a Canadian (p.22).

For a province that has a very distinct accent, this is ironic. My daughter has devised her own survival tactic in the minefield of accents; she has two accents, a Canadian accent for communicating with Canadians and her 'home' accent that she uses with me. Of her Canadian accent, she posits "why should I suffer" ridicule particularly from her peers. It is amazing how easily she switches from one to the other depending on whether she is addressing one of her friends or me. As for myself, my accent is part of what defines who I am and I would not change it. On the issue of foreign credentials, however, it is important to note that the Canadian government, in recognition of the role that immigrants with foreign credentials play, has recently established 320 service centers all over the country to help those with foreign credentials get them assessed and recognized more quickly (CIC news release Nov.30 2007). Currently, there are also concerted efforts by the government, both provincial and national, to encourage international students to become permanent residents, and attract more immigrants in order to ease Canadian labor shortages (CIC News Nov.2007).

- Sexual division of labor

The UN report (2004) contends that while women are migrating in increasing numbers on their own as principal wage earners, they tend to work in traditional female occupations including domestic work, the garment industries, nursing, and teaching (see UN, 2006). Apart from service occupations, immigrant women are also engaged in food processing, production line, and sexual services, or what is referred to as reproductive labor (see Willis & Yeoh 2002). Mies (1998) in what she refers to as the "universalizing of the housewife ideology...to define all the work that women do-whether in the formal or informal sectors- as supplementary work" (p.118 &119) concurs. The definition of reproductive work as a woman's domain has trivialized women's work and led to devaluation and exploitation of women's labor in the modern globalized workplace. Willis (Willis & Yeoh, 2002) avers that it is the transfer of genderized labor that is becoming more entrenched as women in the industrialized world reject the notion of domesticity and join productive (vis-à-vis reproductive) labor market. In her study of Ghanaian women immigrants in Toronto, Donkor (2005) found out that these women got work at the bottom of the capitalist structure, doing jobs that freed "real workers" to do work that mattered to the state. She explains this anomaly as a result of non-recognition of foreign qualifications and also the overall lack of education qualification for the Ghanaian immigrant women (see Kazemir & Halli, 2001; Krahn et al., 2000; Porter & Jaya, 2005; Momsen, 1999). Abiola accuses Canadian employers of moving goal posts in order to bar her from working in her field of specialization. In the US, Lucy and Rose

were engaged in work that was not commensurate with their qualifications because as undocumented workers, the question of qualifications did not arise; they work at whatever is available. The women in Kenya whom I talked to had no preference for skilled work, even the women who had high education like Margaret, but said that they would be contented to work at whatever they could get, as long as they could maintain themselves and their children. Whatever face it wears, the main characteristic of reproductive work is that first and foremost, it is defined as women's work, is unrecognized, devalued, unpaid or under-paid. Although there are African women migrants such as Lorato and Muthoni who are employed in highly skilled job categories, most migrant women are absorbed in reproductive work (UN, 2004), many because they are undocumented. Non-documentation of immigrant women was encouraged by the fact that until recently, women were statistically invisible in migration data (UN, 2005). This can be explained by the tendency to represent migration as a male activity (Moussa, 1993; Kelson & DeLaet, 1999). Momsen, (2000) also explains that by taking up jobs within the private domestic sphere, women remained largely unrecorded in censuses, and often out of reach of labor unions and governmental organizations.

- Racism

Writing on early Canadian immigration policies, Thobani (2000) avers that it particularly targeted women from racially "undesirable" races, Asian, Caribbean and African by excluding them from migrating to Canada even when their husbands and other male relatives were allowed in as cheap labor. Flynn (Epp et al., 2004) concurs, stating that

from its early inception, Canadian immigration policies have been used to control black migration even in times when migration was encouraged as a way of addressing labor shortages. Thobani (2000) argues that even currently, Canadian immigration policy continues to be racial and gendered in character. She is critical of Immigration Policy Review of the mid-1990s, accusing the government of imposing immigration as a problem on the Canadian psyche. Additionally, she avers that it perceived those who immigrate in the family-sponsored program, mainly women, as economic dependents, trivializing the work that they do (Thobani, 2000; see Bannerji, 1996; Bannerji, 2000). Arat-Croc (1999) also accuses the Canadian immigration policies as addressing its gendered and racial tendencies only after post-war economic growth in Europe reduced its migrations to Canada. According to Status of Women Canada (SWC), the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) allows foreigners to work in Canada as live-in caregivers for a specified period of time, in return for which Canada offers them permanent residence. LCP is among programs that allow foreigners to work without being subject to the points' system. The Canadian labor market has always been in need of domestic labor (Herzig, 2003). Initially these workers were recruited from Britain and Ireland with the hope that they would find husbands and thus become mothers of future Canadian generations (Herzig, 2003). Earlier Canadian policy on domestic labor divided the European world into preferred and less-preferred nations effectively excluding the non-European world. When the European market ran dry in the 1950s, Canadian policy turned to the Caribbean for women to work in Canadian households. Today, these positions are mainly occupied by women from the Caribbean, and the Philippines. Currently it is estimated that 76.92%

of all immigrant live-in care givers are from the Philippines, but there are also women from other countries, particularly from former Soviet Union and eastern European countries (SWC 2003). Harzig (2003) asserts that rather than seeking some form of collective solution such as creches, day care, or flexible work hours and time-sharing for fathers and mothers alike, the Canadian state has on the whole promoted easy access to inexpensive domestic servants or care givers. The LCP program has been criticized for placing domestic workers in an ambiguous position in which they are neither a visitor, nor an immigrant but a temporary worker. Historically, Canada demonstrates that this precarious status was only imposed on domestic workers when their countries of origin revolved from Britain to the Caribbean and the Philippines, making it discriminatory. In the 1970s when Canada turned to these two world regions for domestic labor, it stopped granting them permanent residency as it had done to domestic workers of European origin. It is sexist because domestic work is a field traditionally reserved for women, and LCP treats program participants the way it does because they are women (SWC 2004).

Some of the participants in my interviews were very reluctant to mention racism as a problem in their integration process in and around St. John's. In one of the African Canadian Association meetings that I attended, two participants wondered whether the association should bring it up as an issue in a scheduled meeting with service providers within the provincial government. When I asked why this issue should not be brought up if African immigrants felt that racism was an impediment to their integration process, I was informed that Newfoundlanders consider themselves anti-racialist and are very

sensitive to issues surrounding racism. So it is "politically incorrect" to mention it, as such action always puts officials on a highly defensive alert. Abiola explains this stance as a result of most Newfoundlanders being isolated by not having traveled much and hence having little exposure to other cultures. However, this explanation is not completely true since Newfoundlanders, particularly around St. John's, have traditionally been seafaring people and also have large numbers who seek employment outside the province. I felt that the immigrants' reluctance to discuss the issue of racism was more expressed by the older immigrants or those who have been here longer, unwilling to 'rock the boat'. The newer and/or younger immigrants felt that this is an issue that needs to be addressed urgently because they perceive it as an important impediment to their integration process. But that immigrants have had incidences of racism is not in question. Sarah infers that although she has not come across "in your face" racism, she still considers that she is, at times, treated differently from locals when she enters some stores. By "in your face" racism, Sarah means the aggressive show of bias such as racial slurs and rude gestures, people spitting in your face or being shoved out of the way, etc. on account of your color. Mary is vocal on the racism experiences both at the university where she felt that she was put "under scrutiny" and was not treated well by her peers on the account of the fact that she was African. She also accuses her colleagues of racism in the work place by excluding her from their Fridays' socials. Abiola says that she always has to prove herself, itself an exhausting process. Atieno, equally vocal on the racism issue, perceives the society as racist and is preparing her children to be able to deal with the issue when they grow a little older by instilling in them her traditional values. She

says that she does not want them to be caught unaware, as she was when she landed as a young girl in Canada. When I asked her whether she considers her lack of commensurate employment in spite of high academic and training credentials, as racial, Patience was very reluctant to answer in the affirmative, and only said that she did not know the reason.

Racism is rife in the Western countries' immigration policies and starts right from their foreign missions in Africa. From my own experiences and those of other Africans that I have talked to, the process of going for a visa in most Western foreign missions can be an experience one would not want to repeat. Despite what one reads on the Internet about applying for immigration to Canada and the encouragement potential immigrants are given, one only has to visit the Canadian High Commission in Nairobi to find out that the practice is very different. Further, Konadu-Agyemang (1999) sees racism playing a major role in destination countries and contends: "the 'selective' nature of the international immigration selection process, which gives better chances to people of certain races and countries, has spawned a new breed of immigrants who do not fit into the orthodox typology" (p.404). As the gatekeepers, Canadian officials at the embassies have wide-sweeping powers of deciding who migrates and who does not. Tettey and Pupilampu (2005) assert that African immigrants at Canadian embassies have to "contend with ingrained default mindset among immigration officials, not only from Canada but other industrialized countries, that they are economic refugees and potential burdens on their countries' social systems. This problem is replicated in the mindset of ordinary Canadians" (p.34). For instance, Sara thought that shop assistants here in St. John's think

that she has no money when she enters a shop to buy something. Sara's feeling is not an isolated case and I also get the same feeling when I enter one of the up-market stores at the Avalon Mall. These mindsets influence the attitudes of officials towards applicants, the kind of scrutiny they undergo, the rates of success among applicants, and the services they receive at Canadian immigration offices in their countries. Tetey and Puplampu, (2005) contend that: "Complaints by many Africans in Canada...suggest that there is a high rate of rejection of visitor visa applications by their parents and other immediate relatives who want to visit them" (p.34). I know this for a fact because Canadian authorities will not grant a visa to my husband to come for a visit despite the fact that he has a good job at home and has no intention of coming to live in Canada. In case of visa rejection, the embassy officials are not required to give any explanation. In a country like Kenya with a large non-black population, it is difficult to gauge to what extent acceptance or rejection is based on race. However, while examining the 1996 Canadian census, Tetey and Puplampu (2005) found out that of the 247,240 people who identified themselves as Africans, only 30% were Blacks with the rest being composed of those who described themselves as Whites, South Asian, and other races. Canadian preference for non-black races from Africa was, therefore, highly visible. On the same topic, Tetey and Puplampu (2005) contend that the inclusion of South Africa in the preferred category for doctors might have something to do with the fact that during the apartheid era, preference for medical training in South Africa was given to Whites with the result that the majority of South African doctors are white. Racial profiling is also a method used by immigration officers at points of entry. I have witnessed Africans and those who look

like they are of Arab ancestry routinely being taken out of check-in counters for further security checks of their luggage and travel documents. Explanations that such scrutiny is “routine” are hardly credible. Having been a victim of these “routine” checks every time I am traveling in the Western hemisphere, I am more convinced that the so-called “war on terror” is being used more and more to discriminate against black Africans and put barriers in their immigration process. Tettey and Puplampu (2005) contend that Africans are also expected to undergo extensive and expensive medical examinations because of the colonial stereotypical connection between Africa and disease. I had to undergo these extensive examinations before coming to Canada and on inquiring from the Canadian embassy-mandated doctor (a Motswana) the reason for this, he sarcastically told me, was that it was part of the price for going to paradise. Tettey and Puplampu (2005) give examples of how a Congolese woman who fell sick the day after arrival in Canada was treated on suspicion of carrying the deadly Ebola virus, while people arriving from Kosovo were not required to undergo any medical examination but ended up infecting others with tuberculosis while the Congolese woman was pronounced Ebola-free after all. The colonial stereotype of the diseased African body is well and living in Canada. My own experience at the Blood Donor clinic in St. John’s demonstrates this point aptly; the form that one is required to fill prior to donating blood asks one whether one has had sex with an African. This dehumanization of the African body has made me decide to keep my perfectly good blood to myself.

- Sexism

Sexism is gender discrimination that involves a reinforcement of behavior and attitude on the basis of traditional stereotypical roles assigned by society. It is present in the workplace, in the home, in government and in general aspects of relationships between men and women. Jost and Kay (2005) explain "Social stereotypes are indeed powerful environmental stimuli that do not depend on conscious, personal endorsement for their effects to be palpable" (p.499). The central place occupied by dualism epistemology, particularly in western society, that identifies the male with positive attributes while consigning negative ones on the female plays a major role in sexism. Mies (1988) contends that reducing the complexity of human existence into simplicities of opposing spheres of "either/or" dualism depicts the mind (male) as the seat of intelligence (objective), which is completely divorced from the body (female) which in turn operates within unintelligent sphere of emotion (subjective). In a world dominated by white, middle and upper class males, a woman's perspective is made invisible, she is denied a voice, making it easy for marginalization to take root. This subjugation is then justified on account of her supposedly inherent inferiority. Mies (1988) sees such a system as excluding women from active participation in the public sphere on the basis of prior epistemological and ontological differences between women and men. Women can be socialized to accept gender stereotypes that marginalize them and internalize social and economic inequalities. Like the stay-at-home mother who perceives herself as a "nobody" because she does "nothing" despite the fact that she is the first one to wake up and the last one to go to bed.

- Isolation and loneliness

One of the feelings that all the migrants I talked to or interviewed both in Canada and the US felt was one of loneliness. Because of the work that they engage in, particularly those employed as domestic workers, immigrant women can be isolated with the families that they work for. Lucy, in the US, is not able to live with her son because the family she works for requires her to be a live-in. She says that the family treats her well although she sometimes works long hours and cannot see her son as often as she would like to. I was not able to find an African immigrant domestic help to interview in St. John's.

However, Morris & Sinnott (2003) contend that Canadian immigration policy requires that "domestic workers (most of whom are women) live in the homes of their employers, which can subject them to financial, physical and sexual assault" (p.11). This kind of arrangement can also isolate such women, leading to loneliness and lack of support that might be found within the immigrant women networks. SWC concurs, stating that domestic workers live in physical and social isolation, with little or no privacy, and are often victims of all kinds of abuse. They (Morris & Sinnott, 2003) conclude "they have had to leave their families for a job that is unrecognized and underpaid" (p.6).

Isolation and loneliness can affect women in other situations. Even Lorato, a highly qualified professional, felt very lonely and initially considered going back to her country of origin as did Atieno, who felt that even her former refugee camp offered more in terms

of companionship than what she was facing on arrival in Canada. Lorato corroborated Mary's sentiments, that although the locals are friendly, the society is exclusionary, an opinion that is prevalent as expressed in many of the meetings with African and other immigrant groups that I have attended. I have not been spared from loneliness and although I have made some Newfoundland friends, the idea of phoning before we can meet is still foreign to me for, at home, we are used to just dropping in. Holidays can be a very trying time in terms of loneliness for many immigrants, particularly for those without family. Women immigrants who come from cultures where women are not encouraged to go out of their homes unaccompanied, going out to meet people on their own is not an option, compounding the feeling of loneliness. For women immigrants, there sometimes arises the need to cling on to their children for companionship in the absence of loved ones and familiar faces. This can bring in conflict with the children urging their mothers to "get a life" and the mothers feeling guilty for passing on responsibilities to their children that the mothers should shoulder. This is particularly the case when language is a barrier to social interaction for the parent while the children become more conversant in local languages. Reliance on children in such cases can be a source of low self-esteem particularly for a woman from a community where motherhood is a symbol of prestige and responsibility.

5.2. Conclusion

In my research, one thing that strikes me is the difference between the attitudes of the women in Kenya who expressed the desire to migrate to the West for various reasons and

the actual lived experiences of those who did manage to immigrate. For those women in Kenya, their visions of life in the West are colored by images on television, movies and magazines, but mostly by the material things that their sisters bring in from the West on their brief visits back home. Their expectations are, to me, unrealistic but understandable. While conducting my research and also attending meetings with immigrants (refugees excluded), I have wondered whether their lives here are better than the ones they left behind. Immigrant women are faced with many barriers to the "meaningful life" that immigrant woman at the beginning of this chapter was crying for. Abiola blames systemic discrimination for this anomaly, as do Atieno and Mary, and, to a lesser extent, Patience. Once African women actually get to their destinations, they find it hard to translate their expectations into reality. Patience and Abiola, highly qualified, have had to craft self-employment when attempts at procuring paid employment failed. Their experiences support Preston (2003) who asserts that even among immigrant women who are affluent and well-educated, gender and racial inequalities are sources of oppression. Additionally, migration can also entrench traditional roles and inequalities and expose women to new vulnerabilities as a result of precarious legal status, exclusion and isolation (Jolly & Reeves, 2001; also see Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005). However, according to Giorguli-Saucedo (2005), experience shows that migration can also provide new opportunities to improve women's lives and change gender relations, even displacement as a result of conflict, can lead to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities to women's benefit. In my research, I have found that most of the immigrant women have had to contend with new roles and lack of traditional support

systems that are to be found in their home countries. In one meeting that I attended, one woman said that at home, she could at least sell something when in need of money, but here, there was nothing to do. But for some, immigration can bring about economic and personal independence, as illustrated by Muthoni, Lorato, Mary, and most of the women of Massachusetts. Pessar (1999) puts the ambiguities of immigration for women aptly when she asserts that migration can result in improvement, deterioration or re-negotiation of gender inequalities for women. Finally, after my research I believe that immigration authorities need to address gendered perspectives in policy and host communities' attitudes need to be more accommodative of immigrants for in Mary's words, in the first place, "it is so hard to be an immigrant".

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

In this thesis I deal with the issues of poverty and violence as the two main impetuses that elicit the desire to migrate for many Kenyan women. The lives of numerous Kenyan women are a sad choreography of poverty and violence, each feeding on the other and breeding gender inequalities which in turn sinks them into ever more poverty. Gender inequalities have been credited by many scholars (Onsamu, 2008; Muyanga et al., 2007; UNESCO Report 2005; Justino, 2006) and various Kenya government reports, with creating poverty among African women and with fueling the AIDS crisis in Kenya and other countries where they impact heavily on the lived experiences of women. The interrelationship between poverty, violence and gender inequalities was played out in the lives of various participants in this thesis project. All my research participants in Kenya were touched by some sort of violence in their lives, be it domestic violence or denial of their rights, while a seemingly impotent, male-dominated government looks on. Mwikali, Achieng, Florence and Wanja all bear the scars of gender inequalities, with the Mwikali and Achieng, in particular, being condemned to live in poverty and sometimes to engage in dangerous work which could lead to permanent injury or death. Lucy's experience of rape and her inability to prosecute her rapist points to how gender inequalities promote violence as drawn out by Amnesty International (AI Report 2002). For Florence, her case points to an endemic problem of women's "limited ability to own, acquire and control property in Kenya" (HRW, 2003). This condition has been credited with women's

chronic poverty in Kenya and most parts of the developing world. A study undertaken by the Institute of Economic Affairs (Onsomu, 2008) states that:

...gender inequalities can be attributed to limited access to education, lack of skills, limited access to technology, cultural impediments and other constraints (such as) limited employment options and participation in decision making. All these serve to seriously constrain women's ability to effectively participate in and benefit from economic development (iii).

In my research, Mwikali and Achieng were prevented from attaining a good standard of education by poverty. They were also forced to engage in unfortunate undertakings to earn a living, exposing them to HIV/ AIDS, and violence. But one can argue that although paid employment can alleviate instances of chronic poverty, it is not always a tight-clad guarantee of escape from poverty, for many employed people, mostly women, can be categorized as working poor. For a woman like Florence, her university degree did not guarantee her a job where she could take care of her children in the kind of lifestyle that she desired. Because most women who go on to university education are enrolled in arts degrees, their engagement in the job market is in the lower cadres since it is the scientific and technical fields that command the best paying jobs. However, Florence could and did put her higher education to good use because when it came to migrating, she used it to find ways of getting out and escaping a bad economic and marital situation. The same could not be said of Mwikali and Achieng and, as the latter told me, she was aware that her limited education was her major impediment for the

actualization of her desire to migrate. The Onsamu, (2008) inference that gender inequalities are reinforced by negative stereotypes and socio-cultural attitudes are borne out by Mwikali's and Achieng's misfortunes. Wanjia was also a victim of such stereotypes when her mother persistently told her that she should be quiet or risk the wrath of her husband. Wanjia's mother had internalized the Gikuyu stereotype of *mutumia* (woman, the one who keeps quiet) as Wanjeri (2006) expounds in her study.

6.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is based on African feminist theory and issues of development. Feminist theory cannot be monolithic and all encompassing. It should be geographically and historically specific, inclusive and accepting of difference. Any region and its people are capable of knowledge generation. Failure to recognize this results in accusation and counter-accusations and ideas that go in all directions, and seemingly without purpose, creating more confusion than form. This is the way I felt when I embarked on this foray into academic feminism. I still feel that, as each feminism tries to drown the others out, this is fueling what seems to be a lack of interest in feminism among younger women and also among activists. By my observation, feminism faces a real danger of being confined to the academy, where professors will be publishing books which nobody wants to read. To avoid this, is it important that those who consider themselves feminists should look into what unifies women more than that which sets us apart. Divisions are easy to exploit and have been used by patriarchal institutions to manipulate women throughout history. There are shared experiences and

dreams which women can use to find common ground. The 1970s is a clear illustration of what can be achieved when this is done, with Western women forcing the world to take a closer look at the marginalization of the third world women and focus on gender in aid deliverance. From my own experience with the Maasai women, it is clear that however uneducated, they had their set ideas as to what was important to them and perceived research as being useless unless it delivers change to their lives (see Oyewumi, 2005). However, when delving into people's cultural beliefs, a researcher would do well to tread carefully or contend with hostility and resentment.

Similarly, development projects, particularly those that target women, have to be based on the knowledge that women have of their own particular situation and needs. For example, digging of wells in an area which has adequate rain simply because this is the focus of an aid agency somewhere in London or Paris makes no sense. Most important, development, in any of its definitions, will not be achieved as long as gender inequalities continue to plague women in Africa and elsewhere in the third world. Development projects have to address gender inequalities in order for them to be of any benefit to women, and to communities. In the implementation stage of development projects, it is important to consult with women and consider their leadership role in the community. In my experience, much of the work that is done in the implementation stage of development projects is done by women, and as such, it is only sensible that they should be consulted for the process to succeed. That way they feel part of the project and work towards making it successful. Failure of consultation often leads to resentment which in

turn can lead to sabotage and failure.

6.3. African Women and the Migration Process

This study has taught me that despite and maybe because of the hardships in their lives, African women have an admirable determination to succeed. My friend Rose told me that she had succeeded in becoming quite affluent out of hard work and because "I had no choice." Like many of the African women that I know, their suffering has given them an iron-clad will not only to survive but also to 'become somebody.' This rises out of the determination to give their children a better life and for economic independence so that they will not have to depend on another person and be forced to accept abuse. This was mostly manifested by my immigrant participants but also to a large extent by those women still in Kenya who had escaped abusive relationships. The Kenyan women in Massachusetts give a clear demonstration of how immigration can provide a way out of poverty. It also supports scholars (Ngate & Kokole, 1997) who aver that cultural products are not simply replaced but are refashioned and given new meanings, and that despite westernization, the traditional character of a people remain (see Terborg-Penn & Rushing, 1996). For instance, the women in Massachusetts have carried the Gikuyu women's traditional support-systems into a world that refuses to recognize them but knows the value of their contribution to the American health-care system. Even in a foreign land, they have continued to rely on each other with merry-go-rounds for economic support and a strong religious belief which is manifested in the central role their church (Christian) plays in their social lives. They are also very proud of their

mother tongue and hence church services are carried out in the Gikuyu language and children are encouraged to learn and speak it. Atieno is also determined that her children should learn her language despite the fact that they were born in Canada and says that it is only through her language that she can impart her traditional values to them and prepare them for a life where they will be discriminated against. Despite being bombarded by American individualistic ethos, the women of Massachusetts's interconnectedness and community support are admirable as is the central role that motherhood plays in their lives. All of them, whether they had children in the US or not, said that whatever they were doing was in order to secure a better future for their children. Lucy holds the opinion that her fate in the US or in Kenya will only be determined when her son finishes school. In the meantime her major driving force is to see her son through school. Lucy and the women in Massachusetts are a confirmation of Berger (2004) findings that "although motherhood is a source of stress for immigrant women, it is also cited as a source of power. The wish to give their children the best opportunities is an engine of mothers' resilience" (p.183). Closely connected to this aspect of children is the one of family. Although I do not have statistics as to how much money Kenyan women immigrants send to their families in Kenya, it seems that a family with daughters or girl children abroad is a source of envy because of the money they send home, vis-à-vis that remitted by male relatives. It is ironic that for a country that holds its female population in such low esteem, many Kenyans are starting to take a different view of their daughters and other female relatives. As one woman told me about her neighbor "I am not poor because I have three girls, but my friend here is in trouble because she has only boys." A few years

ago this would be taken to mean that the girls would grow up to get married and bring in bride wealth, but today such an opinion has other connotations, that the traditional view of the girl child is shifting and she is now increasingly perceived not as a burden but as an asset to her family.

Although immigration can be a liberating process for African women, many of the expectations of immigrant women are not realized. The immigration landscape is littered with broken dreams for immigrants in general and immigrant women in particular. Like Abiola explained she feels discriminated in Canada on three fronts, being an immigrant, a woman, and black. The deskilling of immigrant professionals occurs when foreign credentials are either not recognized or the process for their recognition is long and tedious, placing many immigrant professionals in jobs that are not commensurate with their qualifications: hence doctor cab drivers or nurses who clean people's houses in a country with a serious shortage of health-care providers or who are sent into retraining programs which had already been completed in countries of origin. Immigrant women can also find themselves without family and community support that they took for granted in their countries. Mary found that when she had a baby she had to do everything for herself and her baby, and this was particularly hard since she was a first-time mother. In Africa, she would have been surrounded with family and community support, making the transition to motherhood that much easier. For those who come in as domestic workers, they can be placed in a situation of isolation from other members of the immigrant community because of the immigration requirement that they live with the

families that they work for. This can also lead to physical abuse. For those women who have not had exposure to other races, experiences of racism on arrival in the West can come as a great cultural shock, while for those with such experiences many instances can be viewed with suspicion of racism as in the case of Sara or myself who perceive inquiries of help from shop assistants to mean they think we have no money. But the most unpleasant is when racism is systemic, when it is imbedded in the national psyche, because it can mean living in undesirable neighborhoods or being afraid at all times. The quality of life changes negatively when one lives with constant fear, not knowing what to expect. For those women who come from areas of political and social instability, to exchange one type of fear for another can deepen feelings of trauma.

6.4. Suggestions for further research

- **Gender Inequality, Poverty and Violence**

According to Machinea (2005) "study after study has shown that there is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role. When women are fully involved the benefits can be seen immediately...when women thrive, all of society thrives, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life" (p.8). More attention needs to be paid to the role of social institutions, norms, traditions including family law.

Machinea (2005) contends that because discrimination through social institutions is often hidden, it is nevertheless a major source of gender inequality. Female participation in the workforce is low in areas where discrimination through social institutions is high. Rules and regulations that govern these social institutions have to be examined in any attempt to

change the overall institutional framework, particularly to issues pertaining to laws that give more rights to women within and out of the family, access to property and violence. African countries which are signatories to several international statutes that promote gender equality and protection of women against violence need to incorporate these statutes into their legal frameworks. Finding solutions to gender inequality would go a long way in addressing poverty issues in Africa, for one feeds the other.

As stated in Chapter 2 there is not much literature written by African women about African women immigrants in Canada and the West in general, and much of what is there is mostly androcentric and represents Eurocentric perceptions. Although more work by African feminists keeps appearing, this trend should be encouraged since more research is needed in this area. There is need to find out more about the peculiar problems that affect African female immigrants and come up with policies that effectively address them. African women are bound to continue taking central stage in the migration process because as Tetey and Puplampu (2005) aver, the processes that triggered the participation of African transmigration show no signs of abating any time soon and neither do the flows of Africans from the South to the North. That African women are going to continue to make a large percentage of these migrations should not be in doubt. It is imperative that both sending and receiving countries start to look at migration not only through gendered but also racially colored lenses in order to harness the abundant positive attributes of African women. Canada and other Western countries' governments need to shift the focus from creating immigration as a problem on their citizens' psyche

and focus on the contributions that immigrants make to the economies and other vital sectors of their countries, a process that should start right from the gate-keepers in Western embassies located in African countries.

- Brain drain

Any country's most important resource is its people. Africa cannot afford to keep on losing one of its most valuable resources. "In twenty-five years, Africa will be empty of brains" exclaims Dr. Lalla Ben Barka of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. According to the International Organization for Migration, since 1990, Africa has been losing 20,000 professionals annually. A report by the BBC (Oct 17, 2001) claims that this brain drain is estimated to be costing Africa \$4 billion a year. The continuous outflow of skilled labor contributes a widening gap in science and technology between Africa and other continents. The departure of health professionals has eroded the ability of medical and social services in several Sub-Saharan countries to deliver even basic health and social needs. Although statistics are not available for professional or non-professional women, it is an established fact that much of the nursing sector in Africa is, as elsewhere in the world, powered by women and they have been leaving in droves for greener pastures in the West, leaving behind a struggling health sector in Africa. African governments need to stem this tide by installing social, political and cultural trends that promote gender equity and hinder push factors. Scholars, particularly feminists, should carry out more research which is gender-sensitive in order to assist governments to achieve this.

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APPENDIX A:
Personal Data

(Not to be given to anyone else except the researcher). The information contained herein will be kept separate from the rest of the data to safeguard actual names.

1. Participant's Names

Surname _____

First Name _____

Middle Name _____

Chosen Pseudonym _____ (to be chosen by participant)

2. Contact Address

Street No _____ Apt. _____

City _____ Province _____

Area Code _____

Telephone _____

E-Mail _____

3. Country of Origin _____

4. Age _____

5. Date of Arrival in St. John's _____

6. Marital Status _____

7. Number of Children _____

8. Immigration Status on Arrival _____

9. Current Status _____

10. Current Occupation _____

APPENDIX B:
Participant's Consent Form

1. Title of Research:

Why Do African Women Emigrate? The Experiences of African Women
Immigrants and Refugees in St. John's, Newfoundland.

2. Name of Researcher – Wanjiru Nderitu

3. Purpose of Study:

The main aim of this study is to document the experiences of refugee and immigrant women from Africa who are currently living in the St. John's area. I wish to document the reasons for choosing to emigrate, their experiences, with an emphasis on how these experiences have shaped their lives, and how factors such as racism and sexism might have influenced them. I wish to explore how these women view themselves as opposed to how they think others view them.

4. Expectations of Participants

Should you agree to participate in this study, I will interview you individually about your experiences of being a refugee or an immigrant, and the problems you might have faced, are facing, in your life before coming to Canada, in the process of coming to Canada and in the integration process.

5. Confidentiality

All the information that is collected in this study will be accessible only to me. I will request you to choose a pseudonym which will be used in all transcripts and all identifying information will be changed so as to remove any possibility of identifying participants. All the information, including names you might mention,

will be confidential and will not appear in transcripts. All research tools, including handwritten notes, audiotapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key in my house. My supervisors will not have access to any personal data sheets that might identify participants.

6. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time until the report is complete. You may refuse to answer any question you do not feel comfortable with. You may also end an interview and amend any information previously given. You may withdraw your consent by telephoning, writing or e-mailing me or my supervisors as the given addresses and numbers indicated below.
7. If you have any concerns about your participation in this study, please refer to:

Chair, ICEHR

Dr. Tim Seifert

Phone: 737 8368

E-mail: icehr@mun.ca

Any other information should be directed to:

Dr. Marilyn Porter

Department of Sociology

Memorial University of Newfoundland & Labrador

A1B 3X8, Sociology 3087

Tel: (709) 737 7982

E-Mail: mporter@mun.ca

Dr. Rosonna Tite

Department of Education

Memorial University of Newfoundland & Labrador

A1B 3X8, Education 3044

Tel: (709) 737 8617

E-mail: rtite@mun.ca

Wanjiru Nderitu

40 St. Laurent,

St. John's, NL

A1A 2V2

Tel: (709) 579 4427

E-mail: wa_wairima@hotmail.com

8. Please sign both copies of the consent form and keep one copy for your records.

I _____ have
read and understood the terms of participating in the study being conducted by Wanjiru
Nderitu and hereby give my consent to participate.

(Name of participant)

(Date signed)

(Name of researcher)

(Date signed)

APPENDIX C:
Sample Questions:

1. What is your level of education?
 - i. University graduate
 - ii. Community college
 - iii. High school
 - iv. Elementary
 - v. Never been to school
 - vi. Other, e.g. Koranic (Madrasa)
2. Occupation in country of origin
 - i. Salaried formal employment in government, semi-autonomous or other
 - ii. Informal employment such as artisan, farmer, trader, hawker
 - iii. Never worked
3. Why did you migrate?
 - i. War/civil strife in my country
 - ii. Pursuit of education
 - iii. Economic reasons
 - iv. Family reasons
 - v. Other (please specify)
4. Did you come to St. John's:
 - i. Straight from your country of origin?
 - ii. Via another province in Canada?
 - iii. Via another country?
5. Who made the decision to come to Canada?
 - i. I made the decision myself
 - ii. My family: father, mother, husband, sister, brother (please specify)
 - iii. Immigration officers
 - iv. Other (please specify).
6. In the country of application, did you receive information about what to expect on arrival ?
 - i. Precise information
 - ii. Scanty or unclear information
 - iii. No information
7. What other problems did you encounter in the immigration process?
 - i. Delay in processing documents
 - ii. Cost of application
 - iii. Other (please specify)

8. Did you expect to find a job on arrival in St. John's?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
9. If your answer is Yes, did your job correspond to your qualifications?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
10. If your answer is No, why do you think this is the case?
 - i. Language problems
 - ii. Lack of Canadian credentials and/or experience
 - iii. Other (please specify)
11. On arrival in Canada, did you have any contacts to assist you?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
12. If you answered Yes to (11) who were those contacts?
 - i. Government officials
 - ii. NGO workers
 - iii. University (if you are a student)
 - iv. At place of employment
 - v. Other (Please specify)
13. What kind of help did you receive?
 - i. Finding accommodation
 - ii. Language training
 - iii. Finding schools for the children
 - iv. Employment
 - v. Health and social services
14. Did you attend language school?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
15. If you attended language school, who paid for the classes?
 - i. Myself
 - ii. My family
 - iii. Federal/Provincial government
 - iv. NGO
 - v. Other (please specify)
16. Are you currently employed?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No

17. If you answered Yes to (16), do you consider your current employment corresponds to your education or work experience?
- Yes
 - No
18. If you answered No to (17), what do you consider to be the barriers to meeting your expectations?
- Lack of Canadian credentials
 - Lack of "Canadian experience"
 - Racism
 - Accent
 - All of the above
 - Other (please specify)
19. Do you think immigrant men have an easier time finding work in Canada than immigrant women?
- Yes
 - No
20. Are you in touch with other immigrants or immigrant societies?
- Yes
 - No
21. If you answered Yes to (20), which ones are they?
- Association for New Canadians
 - Multicultural Women's Association of Nfld & Lab
 - Nfld and Lab, Multicultural and Folk Arts Council
 - Refugee and Immigrant Advisory Council
 - Other
22. Do you have Newfoundland-born friends?
- Yes
 - No
23. Are you a member of any social group (religious, society, etc, which have Newfoundland-born members?
- Yes
 - No



