AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF KENYAN WOMEN IN CANADA: THE IMPLICIT CONTRADICTION OF THE FEDERAL SKILLED WORKER PROGRAM

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Abstract

My own experiences and those of other women from East Africa as recently landed immigrants inspired this autoethnographic research paper regarding experiences under the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) in Canada and the challenges we have encountered socially, economically, and politically as we negotiate and adjust to a new culture. I wanted to make meaning of how African immigrant women negotiate race, gender, class, and ethnicity.

This research responds to calls from scholars (Knowles, 2016; Li, 2003; Okeke, 2016) to examine why educated, racialized immigrants are experiencing downward mobility, economically and socially. It explores intersectional questions related to African women. I argue that advanced education and skill level for black African immigrant women decreases the need for targeted support and hence minimizes the need to access settlement programs and services, which can be a catalyst for falling into poverty. Families that come to Canada under the FSWP are not given enough support to transition into the labour market. Statistics Canada shows that there has been a gradual increase in black immigrants since 1990, and in the last ten years immigrants have predominantly been from Africa. Immigration, Refugees and Citizen Canada (2019) reported that immigrant women participate less in the labour force compared to men.

In this exploration, I find that there is urgent need to address the barriers that limit black African skilled immigrant women from their lived experiences. This research study aims to bring awareness and advocate for culturally relevant settlement programs and support groups to elevate, recognize, and empower them for a successful integration into the society

Key words: Skilled African Women, Federal Skilled Worker Program, Intersectionality, Settlement programs, Stories

Dedication

To my adorable children Jermal, Jordan, and Justin, who have missed spending valuable time with me amidst the pandemic, homeschooling, and my studies.

To my husband and friend, John Wanjau, a good orator, who has never complained and has been cheering me on throughout my academic journey. Asante.

To my most loving sister and friend, Nduku Isaboke. Cheers! The “phantom” paper is finally done. Thank you for always being there and quietly listening as I rattled on and on.

To my most loving grandmother, who has since passed on. I miss you; I wish you had waited for me. I made it “nga syuma”, mwaitu wakwa (my beloved mother). If only you were here.

Acknowledgments

It is through God's love and mercy that all praise and thanksgiving I give to him. It has been a difficult and challenging period undertaking this thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic. I found strength in the spirit of the Almighty during those times I felt I could not go on. In the beginning of my second year, I experienced a difficult pregnancy; but I pressed on. I have lost my paternal aunty, my maternal grandmother, and in December 2021 I lost my paternal grandmother with whom I was very close to — I not only lost a confidant but also a friend.

I thank all the East African women here in Canada who overwhelmingly responded to the call to participate in this study, most of whom did not qualify but wanted their voices amplified in the hope of making a difference in the lives of other women through their stories. To all participants: without you, I would have no story to tell.

I would also like to recognize my fantastic group, Women Investing Together (WIT), to which I am the founder and sitting president. I have found immense inspiration in you, a safe space to build, empower, and share. You have strengthened me in my moments of weakness, and you have supported me and stood beside me as we made those tough decisions that would, in future, change our lives.

To Dr. Merle Jacobs who has walked with me and held my hand throughout this research project. Your patience and guidance have transformed me. Thank you for being a confidant and a voice of reason in those difficult moments. Every student needs a Dr. Merle Jacobs.

My supervisors, Dr. Livy Visano and Dr. Awalou, thank you for trusting me and giving me the space to make mistakes, correct them, and most importantly, allowing me the independence that I needed to facilitate my growth in academia. You were always there, and I do not take that for granted. Lastly, to Dr. Kymberly Bird the Director of Interdisciplinary studies who has selflessly supported me throughout the period of my study.

Declaration

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights, and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices. Furthermore, to the extent that I have included copyrighted material that surpasses the bounds of fair dealing within the meaning of the Canada Copyright Act, I certify that I have obtained a written permission from the copyright owner(s) to include such material(s) in my thesis.

I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee, the Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other than York University.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The population of African women coming into Canada as skilled immigrants has seen a steady increase since the late 1970s (STATS, 2016). This growth is a result of revised immigration policies which now allow diverse, educated, and skilled groups from different countries into Canada (Bashi, 2004; Knowles, 2015; Halli, 2003; Parai, 1975; Satzewich, 2015). Some women arrive as dependents (Aham-Okoro, 2017) of the principal applicant; in most cases this is a male counterpart (Model, 1990).

The decision to emigrate to another country is not easy, as one has to leave everything and start a new life (Ngoubene-Atioky et al., 2020). Women in particular face far greater challenges than men when emigrating due to cultural upbringing and societal expectations of the country of origin and the host country (Erel & Reynolds, 2018). Some cultural beliefs and traditional roles can contradict that of the host country and cause some tension (Rasmussen et al., 2012). Women have to contribute to the home without the support of nannies and extended family (Creese, 2017 p.148; Kaushik & Walsh, 2018) which they would have had back home. As a result, they settle for jobs that allow them to balance responsibilities at home with employment demands. Immigrant women are arguably the most vulnerable in the labour market (Wong, 2017). Due to their responsibilities at home, the jobs available and suitable for them are precarious and low paying (Wong, 2017, p. 67). In addition, women are limited in terms of career advancement because of factors beyond their control, such as such as language issues, their race, gender, and work time flexibility.

There is an assumption in Canada that all people of colour come from either Africa or the Caribbean (Showers, 2015), yet the African black community in Canada is diverse. The historical backgrounds of different African countries vary greatly; the languages spoken in the various African countries are many; and the cultural norms between them are diverse (Danso & Grant, 2000). The black community in Canada consists of those born in Canada, the Caribbean — some have roots from the African Americans fleeing slavery — and Africa. The diversity of the black population in Canada is a reflection of their diverse experiences.

The purpose of this study is to explore and examine the settlement challenges experienced by first-generation black Kenyan immigrant women, who arrive under the Federal

Skilled Worker (FSW) program. The rich diversity in African ethnicities allows us to appreciate that each African country has its own unique cultures, experiencing settlement in Canada differently.

1.1 Background to the Research Problem

I arrived in Canada eight years ago under the federal skilled worker program. The first few years as a new immigrant from Africa were challenging, especially the first few months. Inaccessibility to affordable housing, difficulty in securing employment close to my skills, limited English, long wait times for childcare space and government subsidy coupled with exorbitant fees, and the feeling of loneliness because I had no families and friends in Canada were some of the top reasons that made settlement extremely difficult. I wondered how the experiences of other black African immigrant women compared to mine, and how they navigated these hurdles. The experiences of skilled black African immigrant women in Canada are few in academic literature (Danso & Grant, 2000; Este, 2017; Wong, 2017). Life experiences provide us with tools to address prejudice associated with race. Discrimination and marginalization for black continental women is an everyday reality (Oluo, 2018). My aim is to make a difference in the lives of African immigrant women through my education, by studying our limitations socially, politically, and economically to make sense of our struggles, to advocate, empower, and challenge existing policies to bring about more social support programs.

This thesis explored the barriers that limit skilled black African immigrant Kenyan women by collecting and archiving their settlement stories. I provide a detailed account of my experiences using autoethnography as a skilled black African woman and incorporate stories of other black Kenyan immigrant women of their experiences during their first years as newcomers to Canada. This collection of stories aims to speak to the silences of a racialized, gendered, and oppressed subset of invisible groups in Canada. Through the research carried out for this thesis I aimed to bring awareness to and promote culturally relevant settlement programs and support groups, to elevate, recognize, and champion skilled black African women in Canada.

1.2 Research Question

As detailed in the previous section, my experiences as a black African woman inspired this research study. Through these experiences, I sought to make meaning of how I negotiate

race, culture, gender, class, ethnicity, and language and how I situate myself within a dominant Western ideology. Given the complexity of conducting an empirical, qualitative study, the theoretical frameworks I used will allow me to deepen our understanding of the experiences of black skilled Kenyan women. I incorporate the voices of other black Kenyan immigrant women into my analysis in addition to my own autoethnography and allow the narratives to speak for themselves. Every skilled black Kenyan immigrant woman's settlement story is unique, and the stories shared in this study do not necessarily reflect the experiences of other Kenyan women.

As my aim was to understand the experiences of skilled black Kenyan women as immigrants to Canada, I needed to answer the following broad research question:

How do skilled black immigrant Kenyan women negotiate settlement in Canada in the first years?

To answer this question, I needed to ask the following sub-questions:

1. What are the significant challenges Kenyan women face in immigrating to Canada?
2. How do East African women negotiate the complex intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, class, language, and culture?
    a. How does ethnicity affect their social and economic participation?
3. How efficient are government-sponsored settlement programs in ensuring that the intended outcomes of successful settlement are achieved?
4. What do skilled black women immigrants in Canada think of the settlement programs available, and how do these perceptions correspond to the support they received on arrival?

From the literature and my own experiences, we could argue the following:

1. The lack of language and social capital increases the likelihood of unemployment and encourages low-wage labour for Kenyan women post migration.
2. Higher education and skill level for black Kenyan immigrant women decreases the need for targeted support and increase inaccessibility for these services.
3. The Canadian government admits skilled workers through a specific immigration program but does not have culturally sensitive support programs.
4. The lack of cultural need-based support programs for skilled black continental women is a catalyst for falling into poverty.

1.3 Purpose of Study

Most of the existing texts focus on black African immigrants as a homogenous group (Danso & Grant, 2000) sharing the same culture and similar experiences; this is misleading because black immigrants fall under different ethnicities and categories. The purpose of this study is to add to the growing literature, central to immigrants of colour and specifically black women from Africa. The thesis examines why highly skilled black immigrants are experiencing downward mobility, both economically and socially (Knowles, 2016; Li, 2013) and explores intersectional queries related to African women (Reid et al, 2018). It has been argued that it is not possible to fully explore black women's experiences through the myopic framework of race and gender discrimination, as is often studied by scholars (Crenshaw, 1991). There is a need to expand further the intersecting patterns that are not simply limited to racism and sexism but also include other factors crucial to everyday experiences (Okpewho & Nzegwu, 2009). By focusing on Kenyan women, I aim to widen our understanding of how race, class, ethnicity, stereotypes, parenting, gender, and language intersect to shape and form our identity (Showers, 2015).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Canada's Immigration Policies: An Overview

The majority of Western countries acknowledge that Canada's immigration policies are the most efficient (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). Canada is also well known for its diverse immigrant population, making it one of the most attractive destinations for economic migrants in the world (Knowles, 2006). Canada's reputation is that of a welcoming, friendly, accommodating, beautiful, and economically stable country. It is a promising destination for those in pursuit of a better quality of life and so the demand has been rising for entry to live and work in Canada from all over the world.

Immigrants from the global South have been increasing in number since 1990. The black population has more than doubled in the last twenty years as a result of the revised point system in 1962 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Of total black immigrants, 40.3% of came as economic — *independent* immigrants — between 2011-2016. Of this number, 65.1 % came from Africa.

Even with the revision of the immigration policies, discourses on a fair admissibility process are not new. The application process for skilled immigrants is rigorous, as Canada's government is intentional in the selection process (Kirks, 1995). The ideal candidates under the point system are: the most educated and highly skilled (Li, 2003, p. 40); possess a high proficiency in Canada's national languages: English and French (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018); and can show evidence of the required funds or savings (Treitler, 2015, p. 15,) to help in the settlement process once their applications are approved for permanent residency. Potential applicants are awarded points based on age, skills, education, language, employment history, and funds (Guo & Guo, 2011; Wag, 2018). Being highly educated, highly skilled, and proficient in either English or French (based on test scores) increases eligibility and admissibility for permanent residence to Canada (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018; Reitz, 2013).

The objective of the point system is to address Canada's labour shortage (Christopher, 2011). Therefore, potential candidates must fit into the skills and job demands for each province. At the same time, the government must be careful not take away domestic jobs (Jeffery & Reitz,

2013; Halli, 2003) or accept immigrants and have no jobs for them. The Ministry of labour presents a provincial report that outlines areas in the labour market that require human capital; each province's needs for labour are unique to address and satisfy specific labour shortages in those provinces (GOC, 2006). The focus for FSW Program is to match an applicant's skills and education with the labour demand (Tsefai, 2021). Therefore, skilled immigrants are, in essence, economic migrants purposefully selected for immigration to Canada to fill existing labour needs.

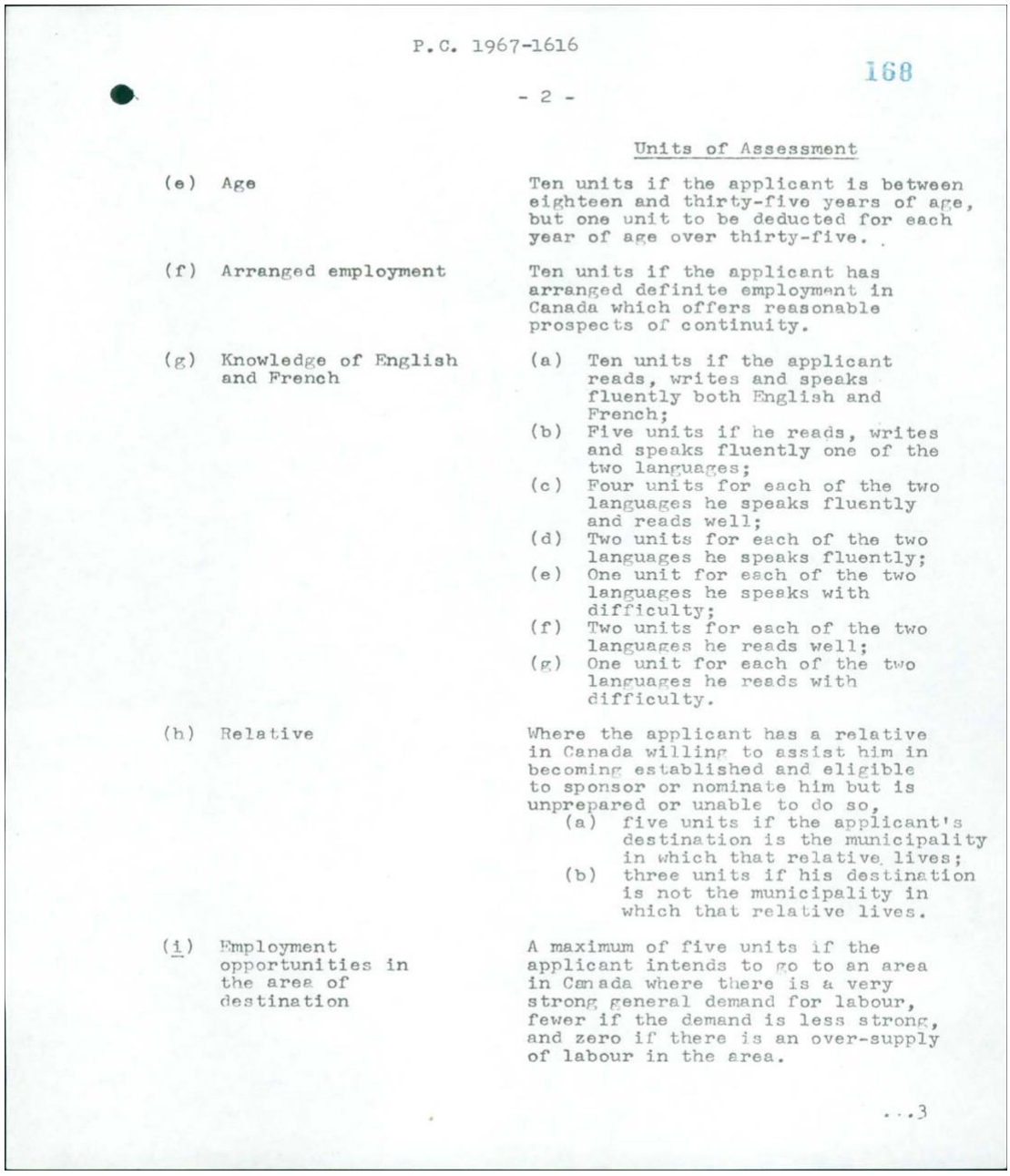
2.1.1.1 The federal Skilled Worker Program

To be eligible to apply for permanent residency in Canada as a Federal Skilled Workers (FSW) a person has to meet Canada's minimum requirements in terms of education and skills, language ability, as determined by the labour market (cic.gc.ca), and younger applicants receive more "points". The federal skilled worker program — or a point system previously called the 'independent class' (1976 Immigration Act; Kirks, 1995) — is improvement on the immigration policy of the 1960s. The early 1960's policy was explicitly discriminatory; selecting only specific ethnicities it was highly selective of the kind of immigrants Canada wanted to bring into the country (Kirks, 1995). The revised 1962 Immigration Act is responsible for allowing countries that were previously not admissible the opportunity to immigrate so long as they meet set standards. From 1960-1973, we see a great shift that focuses on the value and contribution of an individual to the economy of the country, rather than where a person comes from (Kirks, 1995. Green, 2004).

Historically, Canada's immigration policy was not shy at keeping the country white (Calliste, 1994). As such, immigrants from Europe and the United States (US) were desirable and not subject to stringent application procedures. Europeans and immigrants from the North were encouraged and welcomed into Canada and offered incentives such as land and citizenship. Churchill (2004) argued that the early 1960's point system was more accepting of North American expatriates as they had a similar culture to Canadians and would integrate easily. They speak the same language, eat similar foods, dress similarly, and are a true reflection of Canada's national image. At the same time, the decision on acceptance of immigrants from the Global South, on submission of their applications — regardless of their skills, education, and class — was left to the opinion of an immigration officer, the final authority on their admissibility to

Canada (Calliste, 1994; Parai, 1975). Research shows that, even today, immigrants of African descent are often subject to a more rigorous immigration process, as "the exercise of discretion by visa officers is said to allow for racial biases to creep into the decision-making process" (Satzewich, 2015, p. 1023).

2.1.1.2 Application Process



P.C. 1967-1616

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		Units of Assessment
(e)	Age	Ten units if the applicant is between eighteen and thirty-five years of age, but one unit to be deducted for each year of age over thirty-five.
(f)	Arranged employment	Ten units if the applicant has arranged definite employment in Canada which offers reasonable prospects of continuity.
(g)	Knowledge of English and French	(a) Ten units if the applicant reads, writes and speaks fluently both English and French; (b) Five units if he reads, writes and speaks fluently one of the two languages; (c) Four units for each of the two languages he speaks fluently and reads well; (d) Two units for each of the two languages he speaks fluently; (e) One unit for each of the two languages he speaks with difficulty; (f) Two units for each of the two languages he reads well; (g) One unit for each of the two languages he reads with difficulty.
(h)	Relative	Where the applicant has a relative in Canada willing to assist him in becoming established and eligible to sponsor or nominate him but is unprepared or unable to do so, (a) five units if the applicant's destination is the municipality in which that relative lives; (b) three units if his destination is not the municipality in which that relative lives.
(i)	Employment opportunities in the area of destination	A maximum of five units if the applicant intends to go to an area in Canada where there is a very strong general demand for labour, fewer if the demand is less strong, and zero if there is an over-supply of labour in the area.

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Figure 2.1 Immigration Regulations, Order-in Council PC 1967-1616, 1967

Investigating the potential for racial bias by immigration officers in approvals for application from countries in the Global South, Satzewich (2015) reported that the approval percentage for those countries was at 87%, much higher than those from Britain or where applicants are predominantly white, therefore dismissing the idea that the admissibility process is systemically or inherently discriminatory. However, this study fails to address the overwhelming number of potential applications from the African continent which are only served by six embassies. In addition, these applications take a long time to process due to the rigorous scrutiny subjected to applications from this geographical location and therefore result to a high rejection rate, and the overall rate of successful applicants is quite low (Tettey & Puplampu, 2005).

All applicants are required to exhibit and prove their skills, educational background, and language requirements, and prove they are who they claim to be beyond reasonable doubt (Satzewich, 2015; Tsefai, 2012). However, Satzewich (2015) points out that immigration officers are aware that most countries in Africa are poor and that this somewhat justifies "fraud or misinterpretation" being exercised by those applicants out of desperation. This explains the long processing times for applicants from countries in the global South and the intensity of scrutiny of the presented documents. These processes can take a long time and are incredibly expensive, as they require certifications and endorsements from lawyers and other professionals.

Firsthand accounts of the experiences of the application process from skilled African immigrants are limited (Arthur, 2009). I draw from what little literature there is as well as from my personal experience, of my journey through this process. Applications for skilled immigration are intense, thorough, and detailed (Arthur, 2009, p.52,). Those who have been through the process report that it is mentally and physically strenuous right from the preparation of documents and submission. It has been reported that African immigrants applying for permanent residency encounter difficulty even before they apply for immigration, right from the application of their passports in their home countries (Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). Depending on one's flexibility and financial position, acquiring a passport and expediting the process of getting the passport, one must be willing to bribe the officers (Anassi, 2004). Even after the acquisition of the passport, meeting the other essential requirements required for application for Canadian permanent residency, such as criminal records checks, proof of vaccines, and certification of

documents such as educational credentials, highly depends on social network connections to hasten and ease the process.

Completing the application forms required by the Canadian embassy is no walk in the park. The language is quite challenging, and the process is complicated, intense, frustrating, and slow. In my case, we were assisted by an immigration lawyer to file our application. We formally submitted our application in 2002, and after a couple of years with no response from the Canadian Embassy, we were advised to re-submit our application since there was a backlog. We filled our application once more in 2006 with a different immigration lawyer. At this point, there was no doubt that the process demanded extreme patience.

The application process requires applicants to show evidence of formal education, at least a university degree; a letter accompanied by transcripts from the university must be submitted along with an affidavit to certify that the documents are genuine. All other formal education completion must also accompany transcripts, certified as true copies of the original.

Applicants are required to demonstrate that they possess considerable human capital in the form of advanced education and experience. We had to prove we had the skills that are in demand in the labour market in Canada by showing evidence of our work experience (Li, 2003). Skills 'in demand' refers to the careers that need urgent labourers. Applicants must demonstrate that they have been in formal employment; to have a stable job means that you have a regular income and that you are dependable. Applicants must show that they have held steady employment; applicants are awarded the most points for having over 6 years of experience (Government of Canada, 2020). A letter from the current employer is mandatory, accompanied by bank statements that reflect salary deposits, which may or may not need to be certified by a lawyer.

Police reports are essential and must be recent and accessible within six months (Government of Canada, 2018). We had to take two police checks because the first report expired before we could submit our application. The process of applying for a police check in Kenya is frustrating; the line-ups can be quite long, and you must ensure to get into line very early in the morning. The wait is exhausting, and when you finally have fingerprints taken you must wait for a couple of months before the report is ready — at least, this was the situation back in 2006.

The ability to communicate in English or French is mandatory for the principal applicant (Government of Canada, 2021). The principal applicant is required to sit for an English or French language exam at one of the appointed centers in their country (Government of Canada, 2022a). The exams are expensive, and appointments must be made early because spots fill up quickly. English is not the first language in many African countries, even though it is the instructional language in most schools. Pass scores for the English test (usually conducted by the British Council) are quite high. Attaining the scores required to meet the minimum points score can be difficult, and a failure would mean that the applicant would incur further costs to secure a second test.

Applicants must show proof of funds (Government of Canada, 2021); this could be in the form of property or retirement benefits. Alternatively, the applicant can show proof of a job offer in lieu of funds. The amount of funds is dependent on the size of the family; the larger the family, the more funds required to be available. This means monetary savings. This, as well as the other requirements for applicants, is mandatory; as he government of Canada does not offer any financial support to new immigrants, applicants must show that they can support themselves and any accompanying family member(s) for the first few years after arriving in Canada, before they obtain employment.

After a review of all presented documents and when the visa issuing office ascertains that you meet the minimum points required for permanent residency, a medical report must be scheduled with appointed doctors/hospitals (Government of Canada, 2022b). Proof of vaccinations, records of previous hospitalizations, and current health status must be submitted for review. In addition, blood, urine, total body exam, and chest x-rays are carried out, and the results sent directly to the embassy. This is the final stage before a visa is issued, so long as no medical concerns are highlighted.

2.2 From the “Promised Land” for African Americans in Search of freedom to the “Promise” for African Immigrants to Canada

To understand present challenges associated with racism and discrimination that black communities face, it is important to go back to history. History gives us a lens through which we can understand current structural systems, how they operate and how some of the policies have evolved over time to accommodate a diverse immigrant community (Mensah, 2014). It is

essential to trace the history of black immigrants to Canada, the racial attitudes and how these impact everyday experiences. There is a need to understand what has made Canada an attractive immigrant destination and how immigrants, especially black African immigrants, are received and perceived by the general population and government structures.

The first known skilled African to come to Canada was Matthew Da Costa in the early seventeenth century (Winks, 1971). He was multi-lingual and was hired by the Europeans to act as an interpreter in their travels. He was also a voyager and a business person who well understood the pidgin language of the indigenous people, which is well known today as the Creole language (Winks, 1971).

Canada was a safe haven for African Americans fleeing slavery from the US (Barrington, 2012). The Underground Railroad — the name of the network of escape routes led by "conductors" like Harriet Tubman that was used to help free enslaved African Americans, crossing the border into Canada — is widely recognized as part of Canada's first African American immigrant history (Clinton, 2005; Petry, 2007). The years between 1873-91 saw black loyalists desperate for freedom and dignity arriving in Nova Scotia ready to bask in the promise made to them after the civil war (Walker, 2008). Canada's history of slavery began back in the early 16th century where farmers, the clergy, and those that held government offices owned slaves (Walker, 2008). The discourse on slavery and the aboriginal people emerges as the hidden history in what is now known as 'the forgotten 200 years' of Canadian slave history (Nelson, 2010; Whitfield, 2012) and argues that slavery was alive and thriving in Canada.

Freedom, jobs, and land were just some of the promises made to African Americans fleeing the South. The demand in Canada for workers with skills and the desire to live a non-racist and discriminatory lifestyle was the perfect marriage, even though this journey was not easy for those escaping enslavement. On arrival in Canada, the black settlers and loyalists found that racism and discrimination would be part of their everyday lives. The promise of fertile lands, a welcoming community, and an improved way of life was a fallacy (Mensah, 2010, p. 48,). In 1842, Canada saw the arrival of 3600 black American slaves settle in Preston, Nova Scotia, in high anticipation of fertile soils on allotted lands (Winks, 2021). The story of Africville is a good example of black economic migrants who experienced adverse forms of oppression. They were settled on unfertile and rocky land and thereafter denied title of ownership of this land. They were denied access to clean water, living in unsanitary conditions and were seen as an inferior

population (Clairmont & Magill, 1999). Those fleeing slavery from the US were astounded that they continued to face racism and discrimination despite having been told that Canada was a 'safe place' (Winks, 1971). They received a cold reception from the white settlers, the lands and jobs they had been promised never given to them.

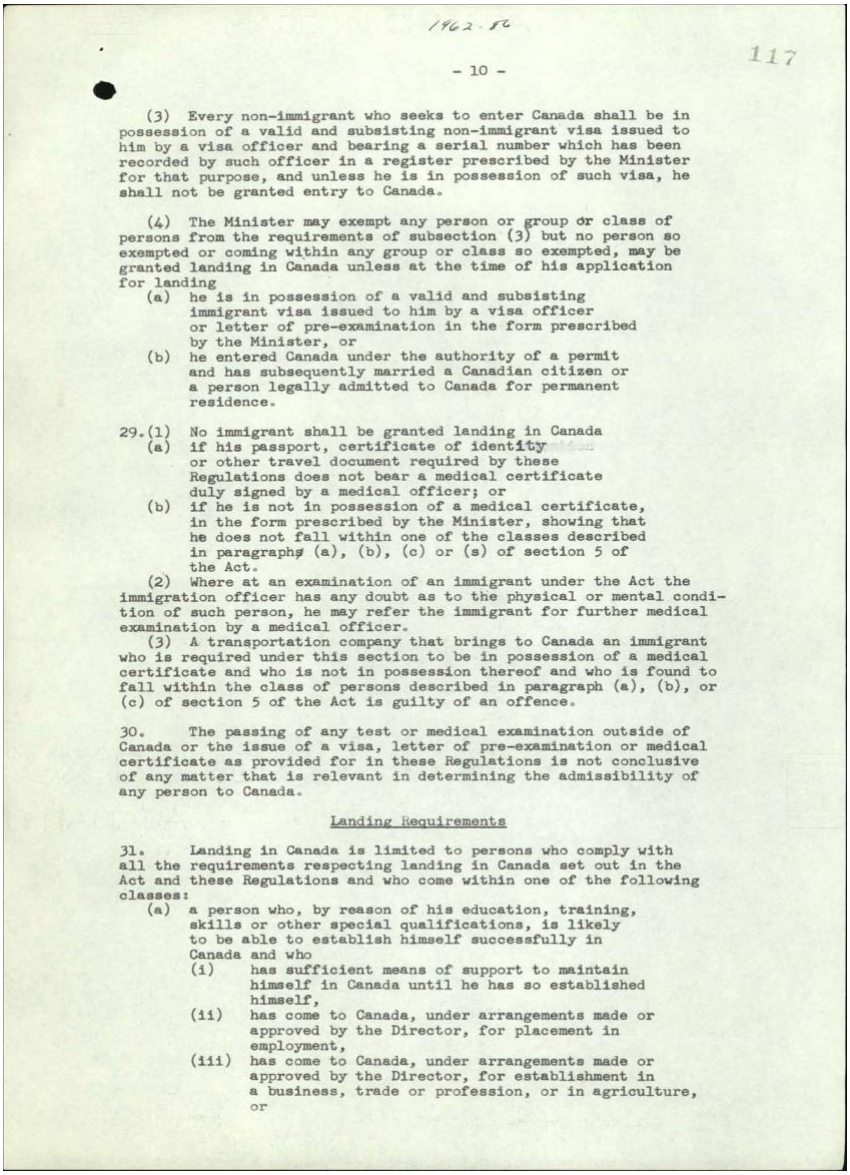
As the population of people of colour increased, so did the heightened tensions of insecurity and the discomfort that the black immigrants were taking over the country, which did not sit well with the dominant white population (Calliste, 1994). There was great concern by the settlers, politicians, and the clergy that Canada should be kept white. Intense fear that the increasing number of coloured immigrants threatened the peaceful existence of the white population because of their particular culture of 'backwardness' was a genuine concern. Stereotypes associated with black people as backward or uncivilized, ignorant, immoral, and criminals (Peabody, 2004; Walker, 2012) heightened tensions within the communities. Black immigrants were seen as an economic threat. The notion that people of colour would crumble Canada's economy was a result of the general assumption that businesses, investors, and the general, dominant white population would not settle and invest in a place with populous black people.

The increase in the number of African Americans coming into Canada continued to cause distress to the white settlers, with the politicians sharing these sentiments (Walker, 2020); Immigration policies were subsequently revised to restrict the entry of people of colour into Canada to limit and discourage blacks from venturing into this "safe space". Canada was now marketed as a place with a harsh, cold climate, unfavourable for blacks (Knowles, 2013). The skilled apprentices of colour were no longer welcomed, and an apparent cold reception for peoples of colour was experienced by those that were already settled in some of the provinces.

In 1911, "Order-in-Council PC 1911-1324" (See image) (The Canadian Encyclopedia). Admissibility became more stringent throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

> The desire for Canada to keep the country white is well documented and described in Order-in-Council in P.C., 1956, 785; these Orders in-Council were passed in pursuance of Section 61 of the Immigration Act obvious to attract immigrants from United States and Western Europe. The Dahousie Review further reports that Mr. Harris who was the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in the early 50s claiming that coloured immigrants could not adapt and integrate into Canada due to climatic conditions, peculiar cultures and the inability to readily assimilate into Canadian cultures. (Rawlyk, 1962)

There have been significant immigration policy amendments since the early 1900s, the most profound revision taking place in 1962. The federal government revised its policy on race discrimination in the admissibility process. However, this did not take place immediately. In 1967, the point system was introduced to target only the highly skilled and highly educated immigrants to address labour demands. The new immigration act of 1976 did not take effect until 1978; its focus was to improve Canada's economy, social and cultural goals, and promote Canada's demographics (Canadian Encyclopedia).



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(3) Every non-immigrant who seeks to enter Canada shall be in possession of a valid and subsisting non-immigrant visa issued to him by a visa officer and bearing a serial number which has been recorded by such officer in a register prescribed by the Minister for that purpose, and unless he is in possession of such visa, he shall not be granted entry to Canada.

(4) The Minister may exempt any person or group or class of persons from the requirements of subsection (3) but no person so exempted or coming within any group or class so exempted, may be granted landing in Canada unless at the time of his application for landing

(a) he is in possession of a valid and subsisting immigrant visa issued to him by a visa officer or letter of pre-examination in the form prescribed by the Minister, or

(b) he entered Canada under the authority of a permit and has subsequently married a Canadian citizen or a person legally admitted to Canada for permanent residence.

29.(1) No immigrant shall be granted landing in Canada

(a) if his passport, certificate of identity or other travel document required by these Regulations does not bear a medical certificate duly signed by a medical officer; or

(b) if he is not in possession of a medical certificate, in the form prescribed by the Minister, showing that he does not fall within one of the classes described in paragraphs (a), (b), (c) or (s) of section 5 of the Act.

(2) Where at an examination of an immigrant under the Act the immigration officer has any doubt as to the physical or mental condition of such person, he may refer the immigrant for further medical examination by a medical officer.

(3) A transportation company that brings to Canada an immigrant who is required under this section to be in possession of a medical certificate and who is not in possession thereof and who is found to fall within the class of persons described in paragraph (a), (b), or (c) of section 5 of the Act is guilty of an offence.

30. The passing of any test or medical examination outside of Canada or the issue of a visa, letter of pre-examination or medical certificate as provided for in these Regulations is not conclusive of any matter that is relevant in determining the admissibility of any person to Canada.

Landing Requirements

31. Landing in Canada is limited to persons who comply with all the requirements respecting landing in Canada set out in the Act and these Regulations and who come within one of the following classes:

(a) a person who, by reason of his education, training, skills or other special qualifications, is likely to be able to establish himself successfully in Canada and who

(i) has sufficient means of support to maintain himself in Canada until he has so established himself,

(ii) has come to Canada, under arrangements made or approved by the Director, for placement in employment,

(iii) has come to Canada, under arrangements made or approved by the Director, for establishment in a business, trade or profession, or in agriculture, or

Figure 2.2 Immigration Regulations, Order-in Council PC 1962-86

2.2.1.1 The Promise

Africa is a beautiful continent and has seen a growing economy over the years; however, the economy faces several challenges as the population continues to grow. Most countries in Africa experience abject poverty, corruption (Anassi, 2004), a health system that is not fully functional, challenges in the education system, and limited job opportunities even for those who are highly skilled and educated (Arthur, 2009; Guskin & Wilson, 2017). These are just a few of many challenges that force some of the most educated and experienced of the African population to investigate the potential move to more affluent countries for better economic opportunities. Coupled with the prospects of improved quality of life and job availability, Western and European countries are therefore attractive to those able and willing to go through the process of emigrating.

A person intending to immigrate to Canada is attracted by the potential of economic empowerment and the prospects of an efficient government, a well-run education system, job opportunities, and the promise of a better future for their children (Dirks, 1995). Use of images that portray a paradise in marketing strategies that appeal to potential immigrants promises a life-changing experience for those who qualify. No wonder those that have established careers and are well versed in their fields of practice are willing to pack up and leave their families and jobs for a more fulfilling life abroad.

Packing up and leaving one's country of origin is a difficult decision, leaving behind all they have ever known since they were born; friends; a culture that is all so familiar; they are venturing into the unknown (Okpewho & Nzegwu, 2009). The ability to be economically empowered to the extent that one can financially uplift those left behind is one of the driving forces behind applying for citizenship in an affluent country.

In establishing who is let into Canada and why (Knowles, 2018), the immigration department's central focus is the potential value for Canada's economy of the persons eligible to live and work in the country. Immigration policies are rules and regulations that guide the criteria of admissibility for immigrants, visitors, and investors into a country and therefore, the ideal candidate must fit the political, cultural, and economic vision of the country (Stoffman, 2002). Canada's point system is applauded as one of the effective immigration systems in the world (Kaushik, 2018). It is efficient and designed to narrow down and focus on Canada's labour market needs and therefore creating a strong stable economy. The point system must remain

precise and objective to achieve its' mandate, and with this, Canada presents itself as promising and as worthy of the rigorous application process.

Challenges in securing employment ranks top on the list for immigrants of African origin. High professional jobs are inaccessible due to lack of Canadian experience (Bauder, 2003). Internships and volunteer work is also well guarded and only those with inside networks have a chance of accessing those opportunities (Creese, 2017, p. 67; Satzewich, 2015). The cost of living in Canada is relatively high, which means a reliable and well-paying job is vital for a fairly comfortable lifestyle. Research now notes that skilled immigrants are more and more falling into poverty, and they continue to struggle and face considerable challenges (Bauder, 2003; Greese & Gillan; Knowles, 2016). Immigrants, especially of African women, face far more challenges and discrimination than their male counterpart (Dion, 2001, p.12). These struggles are a result of lack of opportunities due to racism, and the stereotypes associated with people from the African continent (Idemudia, 2001; Reid-Maroney et al., 2018; Pasolli & Smith, 2019, p. 281).

There is limited literature on how skilled African immigrants negotiate settlement, family and work in the first years of immigrating (Reitz, 2013). Most studies focus on men as the subject matter and also existing literature sees African immigrants as a homogeneous population (Reid, 2018) and therefore ignores its diverse ethnic backgrounds. It is also argued that the population of African immigrants is quite small compared to other immigrants and as such not enough research has been carried out. Challenges associated with strain on finances, family time, housing, employment and (Parson, 2016) are essential areas of study and scholars argue that they are the foundation of a successful settlement process and has been under-explored in the context African skilled workers.

The 1976 Immigration Act section 3(d) states that one of the fundamental goals of Canada's immigration policy is to ensure that permanent resident immigrants are fully supported to integrate into the economy successfully (Kirks, 1995; Kyeremeh et al., 2021), especially those entering into the labour market. The government's funded settlement programs and services available for new-comers put in place are a "one-size-fits-all" arrangement that caters to all immigrants regardless of the class category (Bauder, 2015). These services mainly focus on English classes to ease communication and to employment services. The majority of immigrants come from English or French-speaking countries. Skilled and educated immigrants who come under the Federal Skilled Worker Program do not necessarily need language assessment English

classes as this is assessed during the application process. Furthermore, it is argued that settlement service providers are responsible in pushing immigrants into the lowest labour market and support this by calling them “survival jobs” (Creese, 2017, p. 66,). It is evident that many skilled immigrants already qualify on many levels including in terms of their language, education, and skills and therefore do not need interpretation services but agencies that direct them to employment opportunities that will give them work experience that match their skills and education (Bauder, 2003).

Most immigrants agree that their lives have considerably improved since moving to Canada (Guerrero & Rothstein, 2012). This statement contradicts reports that more immigrants continue to fall into poverty (Knowles, 2013. Ngoubene, 2020). The question on what constitutes an improved lifestyle for immigrants needs to be further explored. Factors such as stressors related to racism, job precarity, health, work/life balance, childcare, career and education, economic well being are important to determine immigrants’ outcomes (Bauder, 2015). Marginalized and racialized communities are silent more often than not because of they do not want to be seen as ungrateful for a country that has granted them citizenship (Yesufu, p. 144, 2005). New immigrants acknowledge that the health, education and other infrastructures that provide services are more efficient than those in their countries. What is often left out is the experience of the interactions with these systems and the impact they have on everyday life.

Deskilling and other forms of overt and subtle forms of racism and discrimination are experiences that are familiar with African immigrants. The promise that does not materialize here is that of economic wellbeing which is the foundation of the promise given by the government for skilled immigrants that jobs are assured. Support in the creation of social networks which would enable referrals and connections to job opportunities and advancement of cultural capital which is the recognition and a holistic approach of cultural values essential for the survival of immigrants.

2.3 Factors affecting Immigrants to Canada

2.3.1 Social Health Inequity

Raphael (2006) describes health as the social, economic, and political factors that impact our everyday lives. Raphael argues that the health of a population is influenced by factors beyond those associated with risk-taking behaviours such as smoking or drinking, or even

illness. In other words, health is not only the state of lacking sickness but also considered the economic and social conditions that enable or disable a person from accessing resources. In addressing the social determinants of health for black immigrant women, the host country has the responsibility to ensure that the environment is conducive and supports participation of its citizens in social and economic activities (Jacobs, 2015). Factors such as shelter, education, income, food, justice, and equity are essential in assessing how they influence health.

Health, in this context, moves away from the traditional narrative of sickness that requires a doctor's attention, but involves rather the broader exploration of the root causes that contribute to an unhealthy lifestyle, as health deteriorates over time. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the reality of its adverse effects on black communities, has cemented what is a lived reality for many. The overrepresentation of racialized and minority communities as frontline service workers and cramped housing arrangements, for example, means that the risk and level of exposure is much higher in these communities. It comes as no surprise that there has been a higher percentage of infection rates in these communities compared to others (McKenzie, 2021). There are reports that immigrants of African descent experience difficulty settling in a new country in the first years, yet this area is vastly under researched. Examining social determinants of health for racialized peoples in Canada has not been a priority for government initiatives (Jacobs, 2011). As the number of racialized skilled immigrants continues to rise, there is likely be a significant increase in downward mobility as more black immigrants fall into poverty (Jacobs & Ouedraogo, 2017; Knowles, 2005). There are several compounding factors such as the immediate loss of status, economic incapability, racism, language, ethnicity, gender, and others (Kyeremeh et al., 2021). Downward mobility is greatly attributed to having a low income, which results from of dearth of employment opportunities. Other factors that affect social health include environmental aspects, gender, and culture. Therefore, it is essential to examine why racialized skilled immigrants are not succeeding (Marmot, 2005).

Jacobs & Ouedraogo (2017) argue that race is an essential component of social determinants of health as it central to power relations. Racialized communities do not get the opportunity to advance economically, not because they are not capable but due to the perception that they are inherently inferior. This kind of systemic racism accounts for why racialized communities continue to experience different forms of oppression and discrimination structurally, the impact evident in their declining overall wellbeing. Racialized communities are

not able to advance economically nor socially because the opportunities and support are not available.

Immigrating to another country disrupts everyday life. Geographical dislocation has substantial effects on the overall health of immigrants (Jacobs, 2015). Access to affordable and safe housing, equity in resources such as well funded schools and hospitals, and most importantly, access to inexpensive fresh foods, are all significant to successful settlement. The adaption process to a different culture largely depends on the support available. Support programs for new immigrants rank as the most crucial for a successful life, as the most profound difference is adjustment to the social and physical environment. Research shows that people of colour encounter racism in their everyday lives (Danso & Grant, 2000). African immigrants stand out because of their accents; it is easy to identify them. Subtle and overt forms of racism such have been reported; for example, there have been reports where black persons have been closely monitored in a certain retail store or ignored in other establishments.

The overrepresentation of African women in low wage jobs comes as no surprise, given the dearth of system and support networks. Women with children require flexibility in working hours, and opportunities such as warehouse jobs and retail jobs allow women to work shifts. In addition, inequities in employment are further pushing women to take up jobs that can accommodate their household responsibilities. These jobs cannot offer the opportunity for nor flexibility of career advancement. Canada is also an expensive country, so there is pressure to retain a job to ensure that bills are paid. A majority of well-educated and skilled women also take up these precarious jobs because of deskilling. They lack opportunity to gain experience and are unable to volunteer to learn professional roles — roles which are well guarded by gate keepers (Solar & Irwin, 2010).

Having no family and friends to connect with on an intimate level can affect one's mental health significantly. A close support system is no longer available for most immigrants, who must rely on building new relationships, a process that can take time and can be incredibly daunting. There is a substantial difference in the new space, and this calls for an adjustment regarding family, community, and work environment. It is important to note that for East African women, family and friends hold special bonds that cannot be replaced. For immigrants, it is essential to maintain contact with family members; however, travelling thousands of miles every couple of years is expensive, leaving some to contend with being away from close family

members for long periods of time. Families with children are especially impacted, as children often grow up without getting to know their family other than through phone and video conversations. Studies show that women in search of economic opportunities have been forced to leave their children in their home countries (Crawford, 2009), which can have a significant impact on the women's mental health.

Research tells us that women of colour often don't receive the medical attention they deserve when they report an illness (El-Mowafi et al., 2021). It is often believed that women of colour are resilient and/or enduring to pain, leading to assumptions that they might not be experiencing serious ailments, as they claim to be. Health discrimination is not a new discourse. Women of colour have struggled with health issues associated with mental challenges, pain management, nutrition, and overall wellness and yet their medical issues are rarely taken into consideration. Racism in the healthcare system is driven by structural inequities that do not recognize, acknowledge, or review policies that do not actively put in place equality in service delivery.

Good nutrition is essential for both mental and physical wellbeing. Nutrition and food choices should rank as part of the most important determinant of health for immigrants. Is there food security for African immigrants in Canada? The subject of food can be quite emotive considering it is the engine that controls our attitude, mood, and how well we feel about ourselves. When one is not able to access the foods that have been part of their everyday life it becomes a stressor. Ethnic foods for African immigrants are scarce, and when available can be very expensive. Different groups of immigrants are now able to access foods that are native to their ethnicities. Foods from East Asia, the Philippines, Italy, and Greece have been successful in filling the gap in food supplies and shared them with other communities. The same cannot be said for traditional African foods. The stores that carry these products are few and not easily accessible, and the foods available can be expensive to purchase due to high customs charges.

The percentage of parents reported for child abuse by Children's Aid Society (CAS) is higher for people of colour (Lavergne et al., 2008). It is reported that African parents are strict and can be abusive to their children because of their upbringing and their cultural values that advocate for child discipline (Rasmussen et al., 2012). Conflict between parenting styles, especially in modes of discipline, clash culturally and this presents a complicated situation. It is evident that organizations such as the Children's Aid Society (CAS), whose aim is to protect

children and put the interest of the child first, overlook these cultural differences and the perception of their roles as parents (Yohani et al., 2020). As a result, there is an overrepresentation of black children in foster care whose parents are accused of excessive disciplinary practices. CAS fails to accommodate the cultural aspect of parenting, losing the opportunity to have a holistic approach that caters for both the child and parent (Yohani et al., 2020) to resolve some of the case that are seen as abuse. Child abuse and maltreatment should not be accepted at any level; however, what entails child abuse and the factors that lead to children being taken away from their parents should be carefully investigated to minimize separation between parents and their children, which has the potential to affect mental health (Yohani et al., 2020).

Black parents experience anxieties associated with having black children in a society where racism is an everyday reality. Reports of name calling in schools, race shaming, and bullying remain a challenge in most schools (Codjoe, 2001). It is reported that the likelihood of black children eventually joining a gang or getting involved in violent activities is much higher (Firmin et al., 2016). Black neighborhoods are also not well funded, meaning that children attending schools in those communities do not have equal access to the tools and resources that would boost their chances of having successful career opportunities (Cénat et al., 2021). With this in mind, we can only imagine the stress that black parents suffer with, when they consider their children's future. Children raised in areas that are considered low class like these black neighbourhoods do not have the same opportunities as those from affluent neighborhoods, who are privileged to have access to a variety of resources; greater income provides the ability to pay for tutoring for children while they are still young (Adjei & Minka, 2018).

Health, therefore, revolves around economic capability. Income is central in determining access to a better quality of life through a better education, food security, and secure, safe housing. The ability to be economically capable means that access to fresh healthy foods is not a stressor, the ability to live in a good, safe, and nurturing neighborhood where access to resources is not limited is essential for the entire family's physical and mental health. However, these are external factors that are not usually associated with the health system (Raphael, 2006), yet have a significant impact in the long run on the health status of an individual. I would argue that race, geographical dislocation, absence of social capital, employment discrimination, lack of cultural nutrition, parenting restrictions and anxieties, and healthcare discrimination are all significant

factors that contribute to African women's declining health. The call to explore immigrants' health through a more holistic approach means there is a need for proportional representation in decision-making, especially in policies that impact the black community and in particular, women. The need to amplify the importance of culturally relevant support systems required a pathway of social inclusion and is a sure way to build cultural capital, which is tied to economic capability. If realized, it can support a healthy, thriving community.

2.3.2 Multiculturalism

On October 07, 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau proclaimed Canada's policy on Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is the governments' commitment to recognizing a diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic society (Jacobs & Ouedraogo, 2017, p. 267) by supporting the equal distribution of resources to all its citizens regardless of age, gender, class, or race (Guo & Guo, 2011). The revision of the 1962 Immigration policy is responsible for an influx of immigrants from non-European countries, from the 1970s to date. Therefore, immigration remains central and vital in Canada's national image as a culturally diverse and inclusive society Kirks, 1995). The government promises to continue to fight various forms of discrimination, including but not limited to racism in employment and housing, and political participation continues to be a contentious debate.

Canada is a multicultural society that has embraced a diverse population. Its multicultural policy recognizes the different cultures as part of the national fabric (Hyman et al., 2011). Canadians like to think of themselves as a mosaic, unlike our neighbours in the South who embrace the idea of a melting pot meaning different cultures and ethnicities blend and assimilate. Scholars question the inclusion and participation of racialized communities in host societies citing colour blindness in the accolades of multiculturism and/or as a political agenda. Racism is a lived reality to black bodies. Some scholars argue that multiculturalism is a political agenda whose main aim is to ensure that the liberal political party remains in power because its policies favour immigration (Stoffman, 2002). Immigration is an emotive topic, and due to a high percentage of Canada's population being immigrants or children of immigrants, issues that favour immigrants and their inclusion in public and political participation are more likely to receive support. In addition, in his analysis on Politics of recognition, Gutman (1994) interrogates the efficacy of multiculturalism, arguing that it demands that all citizens in society

contribute to the country's economy and be treated equally regardless of their historical background.

However, this statement overlooks the systemic barriers that have marginalized people of colour and refuses to investigate the power of privilege and how these structural barriers continue to oppress the minority groups. Participation and contribution into the economy also calls for an equitable distribution of resources. Needless to say, immigrants have greatly contributed to nation building and their participation in Canada's strong economy cannot be ignored. As a result, recognition of diverse cultures does not resolve the underlying issues of lack of representation and the acknowledgement that racialized immigrants are grappling with job precarity, racism, discrimination, and overworking — all of which are supported by an oppressive system that does not support personal growth and development. Identifying historical barriers that persist within government structures, such as those that reproduce oppression in various forms, requires re-evaluation.

Recognizing different cultures and ethnicities and allowing autonomy is not parallel to equity but further advocates for difference rather than inclusion (Garcea et al., 2008). Taylor (1994) argues that the failure to recognize marginalized communities in our society is a form of violence and oppression. The lack of recognition is inherent in all government structures and intentionally makes marginalized and racialized communities inferior. Structural and systemic discrimination is a lived reality to many racialized and minority groups in Canada, and year after year, the government gives a false sense of belonging under the umbrella of multiculturalism (Jacobs, 2016). As a result, the government is blind and is in denial that racism and discrimination are a lived reality for people of colour.

Skilled black immigrants' success in settlement and integration is slow due to lack of accountability from the government (Stein et al., 2007). Currently, both overt and subtle forms of racism have been cited as an ongoing hurdle that is difficult to address or will not be addressed because of the power struggles within the government system. In other words, racism is not simply the dislike of people of colour but rather an act of protecting structural power and ensuring that power remains within certain elites through oppressive channels such as restricting access to professional jobs, political participation, and wealth accumulation. In saying this, multiculturism simply is a band-aid solution that does not address the deep-rooted issues of privilege and oppression in society.

Recognition or lack of recognition should not be the central argument, rather the lack of representation of racialized groups. When it comes to professional jobs, professors in institutions of higher learning, political offices, and policy making people of colour are consistently absent which raises the question, how can policies be effective if they are not representation of a multicultural society?

2.3.3 Language as a Survival Tool

Language proficiency in Canada's official languages English or French for skilled immigrants is essential in assessing immigrants' eligibility. Most countries from the global South are either French or British colonies. English and French are the instructional languages in schools in these countries. Immigrants from Africa have a high proficiency in these languages and can communicate well. Even though African immigrants have the language knowledge and can communicate well, they face difficulty in communicating due to their African accent and a lack of language skills (Kigamwa & Ndemanu, 2017), especially in the professional space. It is not their lack of English knowledge but rather the tone, and how they express themselves that can be misunderstood when communicating. To speak with an accent separates an individual from the society. For this reason, language is essential to assimilation for newcomers (Thomas, 2010). Even though most skilled immigrants are efficient in their communication, their accent is used as a tool of discrimination.

Adamuti-Trache (2012) describes language *capital* as the acquisition of the dominant groups' language through learning opportunities, practicing, willingness to improve language skills, and immersing oneself in the new culture by increased daily interaction with native speakers. Newcomers often need to volunteer with different organizations to acquire work experience, understand how these organizations operate, understand how to communicate, and get used to how language is utilized daily. In acquiring these language skills, they build on their language capital through repeated interactions. Immigrants with English knowledge are better positioned to acculturate and adapt through practice to learn and improve their skills.

Unlike black Canadian-born persons, the one factor that shows difference between the black communities is the African accent. Immigrants from African are easily recognized and differentiated by how they speak, which becomes a limiting factor in everyday interactions. Grocery shopping, job searches, social conversations, and searching for housing can be an uphill

task for African immigrants. It is no surprise that the question “where are you from?” keeps popping up, based on appearance and accents.

Language discrimination is a subject that is central to immigrants. While in search of housing, landlords and agencies can tell from phone conversations that the person from the other end of the line is not a native and can choose to reject the application for lease at their own discretion. Women looking for customer service jobs are often not recruited because their accent is undesirable; the same can be said about employment and how accents limit employability (Creese & Kambere, 2003).

Telephone conversations and enquiries are not easy either. African immigrants are forced to change their voice and accents to reduce the bias associated with their accents. African immigrants seeking jobs and attending telephone interviews can be disqualified based on their accents, especially in jobs that require customer service. Without intentionally losing one’s ethnic dialect, successful integration remains farfetched. The burden to learn, acculturate, and fit language into everyday activities is the burden of the African immigrant so much so that even those that are African or black Canadians are discriminative towards those that do not speak like them (Kigamwa & Ndemanu, 2017).

The lack of a Canadian accent is used as a tool for discrimination in various — yet very important — services such as housing, employment, health, and in community participation (Idemudia, 2001). Widening opportunities for internships and access to volunteer opportunities eases the anxiety of integrating into the labour market. Accents cannot be changed. Realizing this aspect, allows space to adapt and create more opportunities for positive change. African women are coming together and creating their communities (Trueba, 2002) with those who share similar values and traditions to empower and move towards positive change, as I will discuss in Chapter 3.

2.4 Government Support Programs and Settlement Services for Newcomers

The greatest support system for new immigrants would ideally be that of family and friends. Having family or friends eases the psychological and economic burden of settlement in a new culture and environment (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Stressors such as housing and employment should not become a challenge because of human and social support unavailability. Most skilled or economic migrants do not have this social support, and the settlement process

can be daunting (Bergeron & Potter, 2006). Most skilled immigrants from Africa lack support from family and friends after leaving them behind in their home countries and depend entirely on government programs to give a helping hand navigating through their new environment.

Settlement services are programs sponsored by the government to support newcomers to transition and acquire employment, housing, healthcare, and to help with finances. These services are important because they dictate immigrants' outcomes. The programs receive a substantial financial budgetary allocation from the government (Bauder, 2015). They aim to respond to the immediate needs of newcomers from diverse groups through appointed organizations. While the role of these organizations is vital, there are still gaps in several key areas, such as a lack of inclusion. Immigrants from minority communities, feel left out as the programs are not culturally engaging and at times, these services are only available for a limited period (Burstein, 2010).

One of the challenges that new immigrants face is lack of a social network. Having a network of friends who can give referrals on job openings, housing or help with childcare goes a long way in easing the burden of settlement. The social network is a great determinant of job search success; therefore, the lack of a social network can result in downward mobility due to dearth of referrals to entry job opportunities. Social exclusion and a lack of belonging can be an area that the government pays attention by introducing social support groups as part of the policy on successful immigrant integration.

2.4.1 Immigrant Settlement and Integration Programs

The term 'immigrant settlement' describes the first few years after immigrants arrive in the host country. Integration is measured by the degree to which one is engaged in employment, civic duties, and education. Therefore, integration it is the degree of measure for economic and social inclusion for immigrants (Adamuti-Trache, 2012). Essential services include but are not limited to finding housing, schools and daycare for children, and employment. Scholars argue that the period before an immigrant leaves their country of origin and the first years of arrival into the host country are crucial in determining their outcome (Kirks, 1995). Proper pre-arrival briefing on a country's culture, job availability, housing arrangement, and social engagements are the most critical areas that require absolute support. The government's 2011 report on strengthening Canada's economy- Foreign credential Recognition Program admits that

acknowledgement of foreign credentials has been a significant challenge and the greatest obstacle in successful labour market integration (Richmond & Shields, 2005). The report points out that, the "labour market is guarded by gatekeepers who allow those they know privileges to access these jobs (Creese, 2017). The report also highlights the support programs available for skilled immigrants on arrival but fails to mention the accessibility of these services. The report aims to create awareness of the support services available for skilled immigrants (Foreign Credential Referral Office) but does not mention how this knowledge will be disseminated to the communities that need them nor how relevant and adaptable these programs will be to their consumers.

The Canadian Immigrant and Integration Program is a pre-orientation program funded by the government to introduce skilled immigrants to the Canadian culture before their departure and assist in the job search upon arrival. Most newly landed economic immigrants find it is a great challenge not having a support system in place (Bergeron, & Potter, 2006). Scholars argue that immigrants who successfully integrate into the society have a solid, substantial social capital, gained through networking (Biles et al., 2011). Most African skilled immigrants lack this kind of support and do not have pre-existing networks in their host country (Creese, 2017); as such, they depend entirely on government programs. Furthermore, the lack of access to information and guidance has been identified as one of the significant challenges new immigrants face (Treitler, 2015). Taking this all into consideration, their resilience in finding employment and adjusting to a new life is remarkable.

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) unites all organizations that provide direct services to immigrants (Biles et al., 2011). The primary objective of the Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) is to assist newcomers in Ontario in finding employment (Funding Guide, 2001), making settlement easier for newcomers. This can be through facilitating volunteering opportunities by connecting newcomers to different organizations to gain skills or holding employment workshops through their affiliate programs.

The primary goal of Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) is to ensure new immigrants learn the basic language requirements of either English or French to communicate with and participate in Canadian society (LINC Program, 2011) by assessing the proficiency of immigrants. Adamuti-Trache (2012) describes language capital like currency; it has the ability to determine one's social space through interactions. Therefore, language becomes

significant for immigrants as a measure of successful integration. Language capital is essential for African women, and thus critical for successful integration. There is a lack of access to language training for minority immigrant groups; 90% of immigrants can speak one of Canada's national languages fluently but lack the exposure to, and efficiency in, language skills (Adamuti-Trache, 2012).

The Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP, 2020) attends to immigrants' immediate needs, especially information accessibility with regards to health and employment. The ISAP is tasked to identify individuals in need and provide support based on those needs. The program can provide its clients with advice on job searches and direct them to workshops that would help with interview preparation and skills improvement. Other not-for-profit organizations, such as the United Way of Greater Toronto (Lim, Siemiatycki, 2005), are also actively involved in assisting new immigrants in settlement services.

George (2002) argued that African newcomers to Canada continue to struggle regardless of the various settlement programs available, due to their diverse needs. Africa's diverse cultures and ethnicities are unique and thus the needs of newcomers from African countries cannot be assumed to be the same as those hailing from other countries and parts of the world. Similarities in everyday experiences for black immigrant Africans, such as racism, lack of inclusion, and prevalent inequity (George, 2002, p. 125), do not necessarily mean the same lived experiences. These shared forms of oppression have further pushed the perception that all black people are the same and share the same culture and lifestyle, which is misleading. This leads to the failure to attend to culturally based needs and results from a lack of research to offer a guideline to the most immediate requirements for newly landed immigrants who do not have support in place. Settlement services, therefore, are ineffective in terms of service delivery due to failure to assess African immigrants' needs before they leave their country of origin, their needs on arrival, and their settlement needs (Richmond & Shields, 2005).

The Federal government continues to invest a lot of money in settlement programs, some of which are not impactful (Bauder, 2015). Skilled immigrants are not motivated to seek these services out as they do not offer services geared towards helping them to attain their most immediate needs of affordable childcare, desired housing arrangements, employment, or internships that would eventually provide a secure settlement. The inefficiency and inefficacy of such programs designed to accommodate immigrants in general results in low accessibility and

use by the skilled immigrants they are targeting and thus, as a result, these programs only profit the NGO's and not their intended recipients (Richmond & Shields, 2005).

Gaps identified in these programs also point towards a lack of social inclusion. Newly landed black African immigrants, as a minority group, desire to belong. Accommodating and creating safe, inclusive spaces in the communities and wider society has thus far not been prioritized (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). The diversity of Canada's population is often seen as inclusive and accepting of all races, religions, and ethnicities under the umbrella of multi-culturalism, and yet more and more minority groups do not report feeling this sense of belonging.

The government's report on recognizing immigrants as vital for Canada's economy (IRCC, 2019) details the commitment to funding, and working with partners and stakeholders, to ensure successful integration for new immigrants. It also acknowledges the challenges in qualifying foreign credentials. With this shortfall, we can argue that skilled immigrants are left out in the trenches. The support programs pre-arrival and post-arrival do not target the most immediate need of new immigrants, which is employment. In addition, accessibility to the existing support programs have been a challenge as most new immigrants are not aware of these programs (Yesofu, 2005).

2.4.2 The Implicit Contradiction of the Points Program

Debates on immigrants and their contributions to Canada's economy are nuanced. Scholars explore what constitutes immigration policies, immigrants' integration, and a more accountable approach to immigrants' outcomes. As early as the mid-1980's, discussions on settlement services and programs available for newcomers led to revised policies whose aim was to ensure that new immigrants were supported as much as possible. There was the introduction of language classes to help with English and French communication challenges, job placement organizations that would assist new immigrants to integrate into the labour market, and other services including but not limited to filing taxes, health referrals, and childcare and school application processes.

The government continues to address the need to support various settlement programs for new immigrants. Current programs aim to provide essential settlement services for all new immigrants regardless of the immigration class category. Immigrants who arrive under the

family class, economic immigrants, and refugees can access these support programs to help with settlement and the integration process. Immigrants who arrive under the Federal Skilled Worker program have different settlement needs. As economic immigrants, the support programs available fail to address their specific needs; smooth transition into the labour market has been a challenge, with most overrepresented in low wage employment due to the acquisition of Canadian experience.

Settlement needs for skilled immigrants can vary (Tolley & Young, 2011) and, in most cases, share commonalities. Limited job opportunities in line with one's skills and education create a situation where one takes any job available for the upkeep of the household. It is important to note that staffing agencies funded by the government will only direct newcomers to menial jobs, those commonly referred to as 'survival' jobs (Creese, 2017). There is a need to investigate the efficacy of tailoring support programs identify and target ways vulnerable groups can acquire work experience within their field of skills, to access housing more easily, and to be able to enroll their children more easily into subsidized daycare in the first few months of settlement.

A "one size fits all" settlement and integration support program implies that immigrants are a homogenous population and, therefore, ignores the fact that skilled immigrants do not necessarily require all services, such as the language tests and classes. De-skilling happens due to the pressure to settle for jobs that are easily accessible simply to pay the bills. Settling for jobs that are easy to access and those that offer time flexibility mitigates stressors such as economic hardship, childcare challenges, and inaccessibility to professional jobs due to lack of Canadian experience. There is a clear struggle in finding professional jobs given the overrepresentation of skilled immigrants in low wage employment. A more focused, targeted approach to integrating immigrants into a fair job market should be a priority.

Studies show that racism, housing, and discrimination affect location and occupation (Danso & Grant, 2000; Owusu, 1999). It is well known that there are challenges obtaining housing, especially because it is a requirement by landlords that their tenants demonstrate they can afford the rent. Finding affordable housing for newly arrived, skilled immigrants is a daunting task. The houses available where landlords will overlook some of these requirements are in neighborhoods that are high in gang activity and violence. Overall, the government fails to fulfill its promise for skilled immigrants in the labour market.

Daycare subsidy and space availability present one of the significant obstacles that African immigrants encounter. Coming from a country in which childcare is affordable and readily available, women are then forced to sacrifice their careers and financial capabilities in Canada to stay home with the children. High childcare costs and a lack of social networks become two of the greatest barriers for African women's career advancement.

Skilled immigrants are required to have enough funds to see them through the first months as newcomers. Availability of funds is a requirement that is well documented. On arrival, new immigrants do not get financial advice on how to invest or manage their money. The welfare and success of new skilled immigrants should take precedence, and a well-coordinated financial advisory settlement support system should be put in place.

The period before an immigrant leaves their country of origin and the first years of arrival into the host country are crucial in determining an immigrant's outcome (Kirks, 1995). As highlighted above, there is a need to re-evaluate the policies on settlement programs and their efficacy. Left out in these support programs are African skilled immigrant women. Little is known about them (Kreyeme, 2020; Showers, 2015), and with this subgroup at the bottom of the social strata (Man, 2004; Showers, 2015), it is imperative that we re-examine their needs and how support programs can be better tailored.

2.5 Challenges of Kenyan Immigrant Women

The population of skilled African women immigrating to Canada has seen a gradual increase over the last years (Arthur, 2009). This increase is attributed to revised immigration policies that relaxed the rules on immigrants from the global South (Li, 2003, p. 34). Not much is known about the lived experiences of African women in Canada (Crawford, 2009). Most of the studies are overshadowed by their male counterparts (Arthur, 2009). Part of the reason is that some African women come as spouses or otherwise are listed as dependants of the principal applicant, the male subject (Aham-Okoro, 2017).

Packing up and leaving one's country of origin is a difficult decision. One leaves behind all they have ever known since they were born including friends and family, who constitute the social support structure for the women. It has been argued that the fundamental motivation for African women to migrate is primarily to fight for the survival of their families, seeking a better lifestyle and economic strength (Adelowo et al., 2016). As a result, women handle a double

workload of contributing to the financial security of the household in addition to performing the traditional role of sustaining a household (Falola & Fwatshak, 2011).

Research on immigrants of African descent fails to recognize the distinct, unique, and diverse cultures that those from countries in Africa carry with them (Li, 2004). The focus of these studies has also been predominantly focused on the male subject (Arthur, 2009). In family application cases, where the male is the principal applicant, the spouse is listed as a dependant regardless of her education and skill level. The immigration process recognizes the male subject as the principal applicant. At the same time, the spouse — in this case, the female — is a dependant of the male subject and therefore the system reproduces patriarchal and gender inequities. Canada's immigration policy does not recognize married women as individual applicants who independently are part of the process and contribute significantly to the application's success.

Most African countries are patriarchal. The men are the leaders economically, politically, and socially as well as head of the household; men subjugate females. It is the norm for African women to oversee the household and children. These traditional roles supersede other interests that the woman might have, such as community involvement and career advancement. Before any decision is made, women must consult with men and seek their approval. In recent years, women have become more educated and liberated from dependency on their husbands, and we can now see some flexibility in power negotiations within the household. However, patriarchy goes beyond leadership within the home and is a constant within the belief system in which Africans are brought up. Some of the salient features of patriarchy are embedded within cultural practices and dictate what a woman should be and what she should do. While this narrative is slowly changing, we must not forget that the reproduction of the patriarchy is at times driven by women (Falola & Fwatshak, 2011). These deep beliefs cannot be wished away — they are part of a woman's identity.

In her work on the experiences of French African immigrant women, Mianda (2004) argues that gender roles are reproduced by women themselves, and the perception that these women are oppressed by patriarchy and in need of an enlightenment presents a false narrative of how African women see themselves and their roles as mothers in relation to the societies they live in. She further asserts that it is impossible to separate this cultural attachment and recognize the roles they play in maintaining their social status and preserving the face of the family.

Though there has been research on experiences of African immigrants, there is limited study on African women immigrants specifically. The role of African immigrant women as transnational immigrants cannot be ignored. They are the link between their countries of origin and their new culture. They facilitate the well-being of their families left back in their home countries while simultaneously taking care of their households, actively participating in their communities, and ensuring that their cultural values are passed down to their children.

Adapting to a new culture can be difficult, not only for women of African descent but for all immigrants (Adelowo et al., 2016). First is the culture shock; how things are done from one's country of origin can conflict with the new culture's way of life (Jacobs, 2015). The value systems may differ significantly which can cause conflict within communities and within the household. The majority of racialized women encounter racism every day (Erel, 2019); simple day-to-day activities such as shopping, community participation, general social interactions, and accessing services can lead to exclusion from society (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2019). These factors can contribute to the women feeling isolated and lack any sense of belonging. The more one is different from the majority of community members, the more they are 'othered' and rejected as members of the same society because they do not fit.

Family, in the African context, includes immediate family members brothers, sisters, parents, plus the extended families which does not limit the extent to which blood relations run. Cousins from either side of one's parents, aunties, and uncles are all considered close family members. It is a communal set up that expects each member to support and lift each other up. With this in mind, African women experience do not experience a sense of belonging when they immigrate to a new country. Leaving family behind to immigrate, the move from a communal setting to an individualistic culture means the domestic help that was once available is no more. This has resulted in some immigrants sending their children back home to ease economic pressures (Arthur, 2009). It is also part of the African culture that women ensure all domestic work is taken care of, and that children are safe and fed. They must also support the family financially by taking up available employment that will fit into their schedules. Juggling domestic work, children, and their day jobs leaves them no chance to participate socially and politically and, as a result, they are excluded from the community and bound to their home and places of work (Philomena Okeke-2016). Men can step in and help but it is not expected of them (Mianda, 2004).

African immigrant women in particular are adversely implicated in what Yesufu (2005) describes as being ‘a minority within a minority’. As immigrants, other than finding difficulty in housing, employment, childcare, and building social networks, other factors such as discrimination towards one’s ethnicity, language accent, and cultural and traditional norms exacerbate an already complicated settlement process. Financial pressure from the country of origin (Wong, 2005) is also a stressor. Families left back home expect and often demand financial help and do not understand the difficulties of settling into a new country.

Women are the channel through which culture, language, and meaning are passed on to the next generation (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2018). They are tasked with the preservation and transmission of those cultural values from the country of origin. All these social stressors have severe repercussions on their general health (Nkimbeng et al., 2021). The general perception of African immigrant women is that their traditional roles bind them. Roles associated with marriage, their children’s upbringing, and the upkeep of the household are a woman’s domain. These conventional roles conflict with the modern Western ideal of mothering and household activities, where the roles are shared.

African immigrant women are stereotyped to be harsh parents, and as such, their parenting skills conflict with those of the host country (Tastsoglou & Jaya, 2011). There is also an assumption that they are loyal to their husbands and can withstand physical and mental abuse due to the traditional expectations of their cultures; that they will keep the family together regardless of any hardships. African women are introverts and lack creativity and self-motivation. The African immigrant woman is overwhelmed by her duties and the society’s expectations. These ideologies and cultural baggage can be immense in the host country as the woman is also expected to contribute to the house economy as well due to the high cost of living.

In most African countries, women enjoy support in household duties and with their children’s upbringing. This is because of the support from family and friends, and they can afford to employ home help. These support systems are not available once these women emigrate. The universal expectation of the role of women as nurturers and protectors of their children cannot be disputed; however, in the African context, the woman is charged with taking care of the children and all the other duties of cleaning, cooking, and ensuring that everyone in the household, including the husband, is well taken care of. Unlike many of their Western counterparts, most male partners do not assist with child-rearing and household chores. African

men have been brought up with the belief that the house belongs to the woman. Helping around the house for African men is seen as a weakness. A man “cannot” perform household chores while a woman is at work. The transition to a Western country and negotiating both cultures in terms of parental responsibilities is something that most African men struggle with for some time.

Finally, in this exploration of the settlement challenges that skilled African immigrants face, we cannot limit the study to the intersections of race, gender, and class (Ngoubene-Atioky et al., 2020) because there are other significant factors to consider. Ethnicity, negative stereotypes, African accent, social networks, and even religion give us an in-depth look into various forms of identities and how these identities intersect and further complicate settlement. All the aforementioned obstacles — inaccessibility to affordable housing for skilled African women due to the demands of providing proof of employment in the first few weeks of arriving, long waiting lists for provision of subsidized childcare (as a result of lack of social support from friends and family), and the effects of discrimination — are under researched. Not much is known about how skilled African women are adapting and coping with their everyday challenges and what needs to be done before and after immigration to ensure a comfortable and meaningful transition.

2.5.1 “Racism Happens Through Black People as Well” – Theodore R Johnston.

As a new immigrant, I would get excited to see other black people in the malls, grocery stores, or while dropping off my children to school. I felt re-assured when I enrolled in school to see other black students as well. I did not care that they did not come from my home country; I felt that I was not alone in those public spaces and the presence of a few black people around me was welcoming. I would always make eye contact and give a smile. At times my smile and nod of a salutation was well received but, more often than not, the other person would not acknowledge my greetings.

Johnston (2014) states that black people can discriminate against black people in what he describes as implicit biases. Black-on-black racism is an issue that is known but not often talked about within the black community. Black African immigrants face prejudice within their community. They are often seen as the person that is not desired or deserving because they either do not speak with the same language accent, have different and varying perceptions of cultural

values, and they increase competitiveness of available opportunities. Black African immigrants that are supported by communities other than their own have higher chances of success if they build a social and professional network around other communities.

These unconscious biases are a result of colonial and historical slavery (Peine, 2019) that expects black people to "wear the mask" (Maya Angelou), be twice as nice, and be on their best behavior. Wearing the mask is the assumption that even in situations where injustices are evident, one ignores the situation and pretends that nothing has happened. When we think of silenced voices in the black immigrant community in Canada, we understand how difficult it can be for these communities to express the difficulties they experience, especially those associated racism and discrimination and a lack of opportunities. Living and working in Canada is perceived as a privilege that many do not have. Therefore, grievances related to career advancement, home ownership, wealth creation, and advanced education affordability are not taken seriously.

It is expected that black African immigrants must be content with what they have, otherwise they are seen as un-appreciative of the country that they now call home. Black African immigrants especially appear to be in the spotlight in all instances because they are easy to identify because of their names, skin color, and their accent. Creese (2011, p. 24) uses the term "hyper visibility" to describe the distinction between African immigrants and those from other black communities who stand out when they speak up. For those who do not have African origins, it is difficult to differentiate the different black ethnicities by country of origin; however, within the black community, differences in accents, language, and cultures are a sure way of knowing someone's ethnicity.

Voices of Dissent on Immigrants

Stoffman (2002) discusses the efficacy of immigration policies, citing a wide range of challenges that immigrants face and puts the blame on what he calls a "dysfunctional" immigration system. In his argument, Stoffman examines the admissibility of many skilled educated workers and the ubiquity of low wage jobs in the labour market that do not require advanced skills. De-skilling remains one of the main challenges, and a significant factor that limit African immigrants in settlement (Ngoubene et al., 2020). Stoffman (2002) argued that the

overrepresentation of minority communities in low-wage jobs coupled with their over qualification is an indication that the department of immigration is flawed (Stouffman, 2002).

Do immigration policies address a demand in the labour market or is it a political agenda for the sitting government? Is there a labour shortage in specific skills that require urgent recruitment of international labour, or is Canada's immigration policy a political propaganda to accept as many immigrants as possible for re-election purposes? These immigration debates are shared with other scholars who argue that Canada's natives risk losing their jobs due to an uncontrolled inflow of immigrants (Dirks, 1995) and lack of accountability.

Canada's immigration policy lacks a system that measures immigrants' impact and economic well-being. It is not accountable to immigrants' inflow, and the system lacks efficacy (Creese, & Wiebe, 2012). In addition, a lack of disaggregated data further reinforces a gendered and racialized process that oppresses women as the primary caregivers even though they make substantial contributions to the economy, while men are appraised as the leading economic contributors (Creese et al, 2008). Hence without detailed demographic data collection, it is not possible to generate economic outcomes that are specific. The unpaid labour of taking care of homes, community engagements while at the same time working full time on low wage for women are areas that could help in identifying targeted support.

Most of Canada's population is composed of immigrants and their children, so issues related to immigration can be sensitive and emotive. Some scholars have questioned the political motive of the Liberal government approving the entry of immigrants into Canada, claiming that they are making a difference to Canada's economy (Dirks, 1995). Yet research shows that many immigrants are not able to access professional jobs, despite many immigrants being more highly educated than their Canadian counterparts, and there is a considerable difference in their earnings (Mensah, 2010).

Discourses claiming that immigrants benefit the most from a government supporting immigrants are far from the truth. There is the possibility of a political agenda behind immigration policies, given that a large proportion of the population supports a government that is sympathetic on immigration matters and one that encourages immigration. However, we could argue that the motivating factor for any economic immigrant is economic empowerment, not political motives. This argument therefore does not align with the social, economic inequity that

most African immigrant's experience and has led to the feeling that they were tricked into immigrating (Bauder, 2003).

Most skilled immigrants feel short changed (Parai, 1975, p. 173,) after arriving in Canada and not being able to transition smoothly into professional jobs. Current immigration policies require a complete overhaul, to focus on short term benefits both economically and politically (Collins, 2013). This sounds like good policy; however, it is clear that Collins' (2013) perspective is that all national security, identity, and social problems can be resolved by keeping Canada white and exploiting immigrants' skills when needed.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

When I started writing my thesis, I knew that I wanted to write a paper that would reflect the unspoken and silenced voices inside me. I want to give life and integrity to some of the assumptions about black African immigrant women and yet often not spoken about in fear of being seen as not intellectual enough or dismissed as another experience that every immigrant black woman goes through. Usually, I am told that my challenges are not different from other immigrant women and feel that I have no reason to investigate how other women like me think about the same issues. Therefore, my purpose is to apply theories that will help us understand these challenges and incorporate a culturally relevant lens in exploring the epistemological and ontological approaches from the perspective of black skilled immigrant Kenyan women. My theoretical perspective aims to explore a more profound sense of what it means to be gendered, racialized, and "othered" in a predominantly Western society, through the idea of Ubuntu and belonging.

The theoretical frameworks applied to this research paper build on Ubuntu philosophy and interrogate social capital as an important cultural value for African immigrants' survival (Idang, 2015). Social capital is a resource, derived from networking with others. It develops over time through connections to various individuals and groups, providing opportunities through a referral system (Li, 2003). Social capital can lead to job or volunteer opportunities, housing referrals, babysitting referrals, and similar opportunities through this network of connections. Having sufficient social capital is essential, as it influences the overall outcome and impact of immigrants. Herbert Blumers' symbolic interactionism theory helps us understand ways in which belonging is dependent on those around us and the interactions we have with different structures. Crenshaws' (1991) theory of Intersectionality allows us to understand how multiple identities compound and impacts black African women due to their ethnic, race and linguistic differences. Appiahs' Critical race theory is further applied to examine systemic racism right from the application process to the settlement support accorded to skilled African immigrants.

3.2 Ubuntu Philosophy

Ubuntu is an African concept referring to humanness; this ideal has roots in ones' connectedness with others (Van Breda, 2019). The literal meaning of Ubuntu is "I am because you are" and is present in most African social interactions, implying that success or failure is dependent on the support — or lack of — from those around you, and the society as a whole. Therefore, the Ubuntu philosophy grounds itself on the importance of community (Lutz, 2009). There is great value to belong in a community that is inclusive, accepting, and supportive. Ubuntu therefore has its primary foundation on people as a currency and without it, life becomes difficult. Ubuntu is participatory; its nature dictates a revolving, evolving, and involved interaction with those around us. Other than immediate family members, the community, service providers, and systems of power will only thrive with the understanding that "we are because you are". The essence of Ubuntu is the expectation that all community members uplift, protect, and support each other (Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2018). African societies exist and flourish within these networks; Ubuntu refers to human solidarity and is dependent on a communal lifestyle (Falola & Nasong'o, 2016).

My aim in this thesis is to apply Ubuntu theory as a vital component in the settlement process (Schreiber & Tomm-Bonde, 2015) through an exploration of skilled Kenyan women settlement stories and their interaction with the society and government support structures. When immigrants leave their countries of origin, they leave behind families and social support networks and find themselves in an environment that is considerably culturally different. They have to adjust from a communal society to an individualistic society. Having left a communal culture where the support from friends, family and relatives is solid, women especially struggle to belong and conform to numerous values that are considerably different from their own, such as in parenting practices, women's traditional roles, work/life balance, and participation in the community.

African women are the primary custodians of traditions (Gathogo, 2008). They will guard and reproduce these practices through their children and the community. The roles a woman should take up in the home, parenting, being a wife, and being an active community participant are values upheld by women. A woman's role in the community is in essence part of what African ethnicity is about, and so it becomes a taboo or bad luck for those who do not carry forward these traditions. It is for this reason that African mothers generally carry their traditional

roles seriously, immersed in household duties and the upbringing of their children. The majority of African women are willing to give up on their careers and full-time jobs, and instead dedicate themselves fully to taking care of their families. They are often described as lacking ambition and are subjugated by their partners (Reid-Maroney et al., 2018). These stereotypes have continued to sideline them and inevitably put a benchmark on their capabilities as black immigrant women, significantly affecting their employability and involvement in the communities they live. In this case, good or bad narratives are carried by the communities around us and the systems that we interact with every day. These narratives play an essential role in who we become and how we see ourselves.

Coming from a patriarchal society, cultural barriers also limit black skilled Kenyan women. I would argue that Ubuntu philosophy dictates that we must protect those that belong to our community from shame and ridicule. Issues such as domestic violence and suffering in silence are reproduced within the home because the women do not want shame to come to their family and they have the cultural burden of safeguarding the family unit. While there has been a lot of awareness surrounding this issue, we cannot ignore that some women continue to suffer in silence due to their core beliefs. Maintaining traditional roles, raising their children in a way which includes instilling and preserving one's culture, is a woman's responsibility.

As economic immigrants, the pressure to succeed both in family life and economically can be overwhelming because of the cultural expectations of living in an affluent country. The families left behind in their country of origin have high financial expectations. More is expected of the African immigrant woman because she is seen as a mother of not only her children but also a mother of her siblings and extended family. This role does not diminish when one migrates; rather, much more is expected from her financially. Her responsibilities do not have geographical boundaries and so this exacerbates an already complex situation. In this case, African women are expected to take care of their families, those left back home, and their community.

3.3 Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is described as the evolving process of how human beings live and conduct themselves within a community. This theory is based on the principals that we assign meaning to our daily interactions with objects, people, or structures around us and that our

cultures greatly influence these meanings (Blumer, 1969; Carter & Fuller, 2015). In other words, symbolic interactionism is a reflection of how people see us and, in turn, what meaning we create of those symbols. How we respond is therefore a result of these interactions and an interpretation of how we see ourselves.

Culture, therefore, plays a vital role in the way we interact and negotiate our everyday lives (Denzin, 1992). When immigrants leave their home countries, they enter a culture that is unfamiliar to them. The traditions, values, and social interactions are different and therefore their perceptions of the cultures of the host country can be interpreted differently and are dependent on the interactions with the people around them, government structures, and their own perceptions and experiences.

For successful integration, part of ones' culture must die (Kyeremeh et al., 2021). Belonging requires shared values and therefore an adjustment to some cultural values which conflict. For example, the use of ones' ethnic language can slowly erode as it is not practicable in everyday life other than within intimate family life. Dressing becomes a once-a-year celebration such as Black heritage month, because of its pomp and flair that is not common to the natives. Daily interactions are limited to those in the same household because the society does not allow 'getting into other people's business'. The value of some of the traditions is diminished and devalued as backward and an impediment to progress. New meaning must be created, and in the process, agency is stifled because a transformation must take place both psychologically and physically for one to integrate into society fully. During this conflict of transformation, the pressure to conform is inevitable.

Life stories can be utilized as a channel to understand how a person perceives the world around them (Carter, Fuller, 2015). I argue that it is essential to analyze how continental black women interact and make meaning of their daily experiences. In this analysis, I would argue that social structures determine economic and social success. When social structures and the society use race, class, language, and all the factors that highlight difference to oppress the minority, the same is also reflected on how that person sees themselves.

3.4 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a black feminist approach that explores how multiple intersecting identities in a predominantly white culture marginalize and oppress black women. It is a theory

that seeks to interrogate the intersections of race, class, gender, and in this case, nationality to understand daily life experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

I apply Intersectionality theory to dismantle the assumption of African immigrants as a homogeneous community experiencing everyday life in the same way as any other immigrants. The experiences of African immigrants vary and are dependent on different ethnic cultures, class, and gender. This research explores the complex nature of Kenyan women's experiences through narratives, with an aim of understanding how these experiences shape their everyday lives (Mitchell et al., 2019). I will examine how a society's perception and influences intersect with an individual identity to reproduce oppression (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). Examining and exploring social groups and their diversity concerning race, class, and gender in what Treitler (2015) refers to as the 'significant three barriers to integration' cannot offer a definitive solution to the challenges of settlement. Addressing how different compounding factors affect women of colour opens opportunities for empirical studies to identify inequalities and suggest feasible solutions to these hurdles (Al-Faham et al., 2019). Therefore, tapping into life stories and lived experiences allows a re-examination of existing policies to address inequalities.

In theorizing how race, social class, and gender intersect and make it difficult for continental black women to integrate into society, I argue that studying this subset of women is vital to include the intersection axis of ethnicity, stereotypes, language, and social capital. Therefore, to realize the impact of these multiple identities, analyzing the subjective nature of everyday experiences is important to understand the positionality (Brah & Phoenix, 2004) of skilled African immigrant women.

For example, the majority of black skilled African women are mothers. During the move and subsequent settlement process, their focus is usually on ensuring that the children are comfortable both in school and at home. As a parent of black children, I understand the anxieties that add an extra layer of worry and apprehension about the children's safety. It is also evident that being a black, heavily accented woman, one stands out. You are easily identified as being different, even in a community that you are part of. At the same time, the absence of these women in civic, social, and economic participation is the result of sacrifice to ensure a smooth-running household. The assumption here is that the children will do better than the parents and as such, black African women must shelve their career plans and uplift their children after the long wait to relocate to a western country.

Some scholars criticize Intersectionality as a theory that does not offer solutions, that it is complex and subjective. I argue that the foundation of the view is essential before solutions and recommendations are suggested. Intersectionality is a vehicle in which scholars explore the complexity of a silenced, underrepresented minority groups intending to uplift and make sense of their experiences and the challenges that limit their success. In addition, Intersectionality is crucial in understanding black studies and gives the reader a different lens in ways other groups experience everyday life.

Collins (2019) recognizes power and politics as the central pathway to understanding intersecting power relations and how these two factors are vital in shaping our societies socially. He further writes that one of the most powerful ways for subordinated groups to break from these chains is solidarity. The power of communities to unite and speak in one voice can lead to inclusion and participation in society. These communities are not only a safe space that members belong but also are a space for resistance towards positive change (Collins, 2019), having experienced intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender, as I explain in the following sections of this thesis.

3.5 Critical Race Theory

Every person of colour in Canada has experienced racism (Mensah William, 2017). It is not possible to ignore race as central in this study. Race has been used to subjugate those that do not look like the predominant majority and has been instrumental in the creation of ‘us vs them’ mentality to demarcate power relations (Jacobs & Ouedraogo, 2017). Racism is evident in all areas of skilled African immigrant’s lives as reflected in the significant difference we see in professional jobs and the overrepresentation of low wage jobs amongst African immigrants.

There has been a lot of improvement in addressing racial barriers in Canada, but this does not override prejudice in the immigration processes. Despite data that shows a higher admissibility rate but long processing times for continental Africa applications, and intense scrutiny in documentation, it also shows that the immigration process has nuggets of racism. Racism is not only a person’ perceptions about black and racialized groups but significantly embedded in the systems that govern everyday life. Critical race theory is a theoretical lens through which power in all forms — political, social, or economic — manifests itself through these structures to oppress those who look, speak, and live different from the dominant group.

Exploring critical race theory allows us to examine the nature of race as a central determinant of different forms of oppressions that are systemic. Critical race acts on the principle of accountability and calls us to question how we are all implicated regardless of race. Those who enjoy certain privileges must consciously identify their positionality and reconcile how this affects other racialized communities.

Critical race theory (CRT) is an essential lens in understanding how history shapes our economy, politics, and social positions and its implications in our daily experiences. It is the lens through which we can explore how the immigration department works or other systems put in place have operated and continue to oppress the coloured population. Through the subjectivity of everyday experiences with discrimination coloured people, we can examine race as a catalyst of various forms of oppression (Taylor, 1998). Critical race theory questions, submits, and allows everyday lived realities of discrimination based on skin colour as a testament that each individual, ethnicity, and community experiences racism differently and, therefore, rejects essentialism (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

CRT helps us analyze the social life of marginalized communities and questions the challenges they experience. For example, how equitable is access to housing, banking resources, schools? In this exploration, an examination of systemic racism accelerated by ethnicity has a profound impact on the social economic outcome of those in low social class. How we see ourselves is dependent on those around us and the way the society perceives us.

Almost fifteen years after Bell (1995) wrote that blacks' inferiority results from harsh discrimination and the myths surrounding a lack of ambition, competitiveness, and having less skills — all assumed as a result of race — the same stereotypes are reproduced today and have greatly affected black immigrants' outcomes. CRT allows marginalized groups to change the narrative, the stereotypes associated with them, and how that affects interactions with the broader community (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). The importance of CRT lies in the premise that people of colour are oppressed systemically (Treviño et al., 2008); therefore, change must start from these structures that reproduce these forms of prejudice.

Chapter 4 Research Design

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 Knowledge can be Gained from a Subjective Story: Why Stories?

My parents would take my siblings and I to the countryside farmland during school breaks. This was a rural community where my father grew up. He had a massive piece of land and grew oranges, mangoes, white corn, beans, and other vegetables to supplement his income. My grandmother was in charge of these fields, and she supervised the seasonally contracted workers. I have three brothers and three sisters, and together we provided the much-needed financial relief by working on the farms during school breaks for free.

After a long, hard day of work, my grandmother would tell us stories of her childhood just before bedtime. My grandmother cannot read or write, but her memory is filled with stories beyond her age. These stories are not only insightful but are loaded with information that has been passed down from generation to generation. Oral history is part of the African culture. Stories of courage, leadership, hardships, and successes were passed down orally through myths, narratives, parables, and or songs. These stories carry essential messages. Parents teach their children the values of hard work and the importance of community cohesion through narratives passed down from one generation to another (Vansina,1985). It was believed that the values in these narratives would always be passed down the generations and would not be lost (Banks-Wallace, 2002); however, some of these accounts have slowly vanished due to a lack of written records, and recollection becomes challenging.

I tap into the power of storytelling in my methodology as a tool for knowledge mobilization. I do not want my research work to be just any other research paper but an effective knowledge mobilization tool that explores the difficulties that black skilled African women go through and demonstrate that an academic paper has the potential of educating a diverse audience, especially those that are not conversant with the academic language (Pollock & Bono, 2013). I use my story and those of my research participants to enlighten the reader of how black immigrant women negotiate everyday life as a racialized and gendered subject. From my story and those of my participants, I give the first account of our experiences and use these stories as a tool to educate and disrupt the assumptions that exist about black African women (Flynn, 2008).

The importance of stories transcends race, class, gender, and language. In fact, in the modern contemporary world, most businesses use family stories to appeal to and attract customers to their market. Stories have the power to humanize and strengthen the ties between the storyteller and the listener (Banks-Wallace, 2002) therefore enabling people to have a clearer picture of themselves and how they overcome challenges. A life story gives the listener a more intimate encounter with the lived experience of the narrator and, as such, a greater understanding and a different perspective of how their experiences shape who they have become.

Stories give agency to the narrator and express a genuine and authentic journey given to the listener firsthand. It is a powerful tool that can be utilized to change ideas or assumptions that people might have. How African immigrants experience everyday life with social structures, economic structures, and political life is incredibly important in making policies and assessing how they impact their daily lives. Therefore, our stories will amplify the challenges experienced by black African skilled immigrant women and recommend inclusive, culturally relevant settlement programs by the government and other support groups to elevate, recognize, and champion them to success.

4.1.2 Stories as a Tool of Social Negotiation - Of Sacred Voices and the Silenced Ones

Immigrants from the global South are perceived to have come from extreme economic hardships (Anassi, 2004). This drives the narrative that Africa is impoverished, corrupt, and uninhabitable, from the Western perspective. The general assumption is that immigrants from Africa are desperate for jobs and willing to take anything available to escape the harsh living conditions in Africa. Therefore, their admissibility is seen as the government extending a helping hand, and in turn, they are expected to be grateful for the favour. The image of Canada as a country is that of a wealthy, sustainable, progressive, and diverse society.

These perceptions greatly influence how people from this region are viewed, how interactions occur, and the support accorded to them. Black continental immigrants also admit that life is better in the new host country and shy away from pointing out some shortfalls lest they are seen as ungrateful. In saying this, I contend that the sacred voices dictate and carry through the narrative that African immigrants are not smart enough or skillful enough to work with advanced systems in the west. It could be the reason why most educated and skilled immigrants settle for the casual jobs available because this narrative is carried through and

therefore as a result the impact is felt through employers who believe people of colour are not up to the standards they require. Some of the stories highlighting the challenges of being black, African, and a woman do not get attention because the voices are stifled no matter how loud they may be because they challenge existing power relations (McIntosh et al., 2019; Simons, 2014).

Government policies on immigration and immigrants are put in place to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of resources for all citizens. Drafting, passing, and the implementation of these policies, especially those that affect African women communities lack representation by voices that have the lived experiences of racism, discrimination, classism, and oppression. It is assumed that revising policies to accommodate marginalized voices on paper without implementation and passing these policies is the same as improving their experiences. The problem being that these policies are passed but do not make a difference in the lives of the most marginalized communities because they are not practical. The government has not felt the need to assess the needs of its most vulnerable communities by utilizing the power of first-hand lived experiences to understand how these communities negotiate everyday life and how practical these policies are in supporting and improving the lives of the underserved.

I would argue that the dearth of black African immigrant women's voices in the literature is an indication that their presence is not recognized. The limited texts suggest that there is need for black continental women to start writing their own stories, especially so that they change the narratives and stereotypes associated with them. It is empowering to write stories in our own worldview. Collecting and archiving life stories is an effective way of social activism. When we tell our stories, we give our accounts of how we experience life differently from other communities. Therefore, our positionality allows us to give life a real human face behind the stereotypes and assumptions that other communities might have about us. We own the stories, and therefore this gives us authority in giving the first account by clearing any misinformation that might be associated with us and empowers us by not only making the challenges we go through visible but also shows resilience by demonstrating how we negotiate these difficulties (Rindfleish et al., 2009). Stories give us agency, which transforms the way we interact and gives meaning to everyday symbols; stories give us the power to chart our own course. When structural and racial barriers impede our progress, there is a different pathway in which we can recollect ourselves, unite and support each other in what is described as awareness and self-discovery in a foreign land (Black & Garvis, 2018).

4.2 Methods and Procedures

4.2.1 Participants and recruitment

The study took place in Ontario, Canada. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in the province the initial plan to have focus groups and interviews was replaced by online submissions. Accounts for this study are a collection of stories submitted by five women who are recent black skilled immigrants from Kenya to Canada. The word *recent* refers to the last ten years of immigrating to Canada. The women live and work in Ontario.

4.2.2 Instruments

4.2.2.1 Auto-ethnography

This study employs auto-ethnography as a narrative methodology (Dyson, 2007). This will allow me to address everyday difficulties in relation to how I understand them from my cultural perspective and make a unique contribution (Wall, 2006) to the research field of skilled black continental immigrants to Canada. Due to the subjective nature of this methodology, I incorporate stories of other black continental women into the study to complement my account. I allow the stories to speak for themselves and hope to change the narrative and the perceptions about continental black women by educating and creating awareness (Ellis et al., 2011). Each participant is unique, and their immigration story gives us an overview the experiences of Kenyan women. It is, however, essential to note that these experiences do not represent all skilled Kenyan women but provide a general overview of the settlement process for black skilled Kenyan women newcomers.

This research design allows me to articulate my thoughts without fear of my struggles as a new immigrant and helps me step back and objectively explore these experiences as new knowledge worthy of study.

4.2.2.2 Criteria

Must be female between the age of 23-65

Must be black East African

Immigrated under the Federal Skilled worker program

Immigration must be recent (last ten years)

4.2.2.3 Recruitment and Account Collection

The COVID-19 pandemic restricted physical accounts collection methods such as interviews and focus groups, which were the initially proposed channels to gather information. Taking advantage of the social media platforms, I sent out a criterion with questions to East African community groups on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and requested black women from East Africa who arrived in Canada as skilled immigrants and those that are between the ages of twenty-one to sixty-two and identify as black, to respond to the flyer. This age group has a higher probability of immigrants who apply for the Federal skilled worker program in Canada. The East African community in Ontario is close-knit. Most women either go to the same churches or belong to community groups that support new immigrants, and as such, the snowball method is applied. The participants helped to pass on the request for participation in the study to other community members.

The study had an overwhelming response from East African women. However, 95% of the participants did not fit the criteria, even though they were enthusiastic to take part and contribute their stories, as most of them came to Canada as refugees. There is a possibility that there are not many East African women who came under the Federal Skilled Worker program. It could also be the case that they did not want to feel vulnerable.

Churches play a central role in spiritual fulfillment and as a safe space for ethnic, cultural engagement. The response from the churches was overwhelming, with a good number of participants expressing interest in contributing to the research study. However, the majority did not fit the criteria as most had immigrated to Canada as refugee claimants.

Out of the five participants who responded, three qualified for the research study, while the rest could not participate as they came to Canada as refugees. Out of the three, two were East African women, who from the US as skilled immigrants. The third participant came from Kenya as a skilled immigrant. All participants were requested to submit their immigration stories via email to the principal researcher. Submission of these stories is in English, and all participants have lived in Canada for at least five years. Pseudonyms have been used in this study to protect the privacy of the participants.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

The following ethical principals were adhered to during the research period:

1. Participants were free to participate in the study and/or opt out at any point without any explanation.
2. Full consent was obtained from participants before the study.
3. Participants were well informed of the risks and benefits of the study.
4. No personal information was collected, and all participants remain anonymous.
5. Permission was sought from both African Women Advocacy group at York University and Women Investing Together to include their work in my thesis.

Chapter 5 Autoethnography

I come from a big family, 3 brothers and 3 sisters, all brought up in the humble neighborhood of Jericho estate. Jericho is an estate on the eastern part of the city of Nairobi in Kenya, and is a place popularly known by the local slang "eastlando". Most of the estates on the east side of the town are known for crime, petty theft, and poverty, and are overpopulated. Just like most neighborhoods, ours was diverse, with a blend of different tribes and languages. Despite of all the challenges, our neighborhood was a close-knit community. We knew each other well and looked out for each other. Even in the absence of my parents, I knew my neighbors would discipline me if I misbehaved and later, report any indiscretions to my parents. Everyone knew so much about the other persons' household. They always made it their business. Our home was a one-bedroom townhome with another family occupying the upper level.

My parents worked hard. My mother was a secretary with the Ministry of Architecture and my father a local businessman. My mother would leave early in the morning to catch the first bus to her workplace downtown every day, Monday to Friday, and get back home late in the evening. Our nanny would ensure that we got dressed and ready for school, and in the evening, she would be waiting for us before my mother came home from work. Our nanny cleaned, cooked, and ensured that the home was running smoothly. My father, on the other hand, was always away, we were brought up to be seen and not heard. On the days he came home early, we would run and hide in our makeshift bedroom — part of the living room that had been divided using clothing.

On weekends my mother would spend as much time as she could with us and would teach us how to cook, clean, launder clothes, and all the chores associated with women in the African context as homemakers and caregivers. As we grew older, my mother would sit back and observe us carrying out household chores and make corrections where necessary. My brothers were not obligated to do household chores, and it almost felt like they were not required to lift a finger to help around the house. This would always bring a lot of conflict and fighting because we always felt that my brothers were more special than us. My brothers had more freedom, authority, and agency around the house. They would play until nighttime and my mother would not be worried of their whereabouts.

I developed a close relationship with my paternal grandmother throughout my childhood. I was her favorite granddaughter and every time schools closed my father would take us upcountry to help with the farm work. She was well known in the village as "Nga' Syuma" — the iron lady — because she was very hardworking, smart, and would be called to settle disputes in the village. In the many times I went upcountry, she would make a special place for me to sleep while the rest of my siblings would sleep on the couch. We would wake up at five am, pray, take breakfast quickly and, armed with our digging gadgets, head out to the farm. This is where we would spend the rest of the day, under the hot, scorching sun tending the crops. As the sun set, we would pass by the river and fetch water for dinner before heading home to clean up and settle for the evening.

My grandmother was an avid storyteller. Before calling it a day, she would tell me stories of her time. She got married to a tall, handsome army man — my grandfather. In those days, she fought to take her daughters to school while everyone was up in arms telling her that girls amount to nothing, they would get married and forget about her, and that she was wasting her time. My grandfather was of the same opinion, but my grandmother would tell me she knew she was doing the right thing. She was also a business woman. Her crops would yield so well and on market days — most of which I accompanied her — she would have the healthiest sweet potatoes, the biggest and juiciest mangoes and oranges, and would sell out as soon as she put down her merchandise for sale.

My grandmother never went to school, but she knew her math well. She would negotiate prices with her clients and would step aside and take a moment to think before settling the deal. She could count her pennies and notes so well that no one would take a single coin off her. It is during these moments that she would talk to me and urge me to go to school and get good grades. Having been brought up during the colonial era and having a husband who was an army officer, she was passionate about women standing on their own two feet. With much sadness, she would narrate how she brought up her children without the help of her husband because he was always at work. After my grandfathers' retirement, my grandmother would not stop talking about how he had received nothing for serving his country and that he came home a poor man. She would describe the colonizer as a *user* and often warned us not to associate ourselves with anything foreign.

My siblings and I had a close relationship. We learned how to survive from a very young age because we grew in an environment full of challenges. As a result, we never spoke much about our aspirations. My parents were more focused on us completing school and getting into employment as soon as we could. School opening days were usually stressful, finances were strained, and more often than not I would be sent home from school for failure to pay school fees on time; but once home, I enjoyed having the television to myself.

Television had a significant influence on me. I often wondered if the places and the people I saw on television from affluent countries were real. I did not know much beyond where I lived, where I went to school, and our farm. I was fascinated just by the sheer thought that maybe I would have a chance to visit some of those Western countries one day. Living abroad, especially in North America, is a well-understood privilege in my country of origin. Anyone who lives abroad belongs to a special class. They are admired and seen as successful, advanced, and lucky. I would listen to stories of friends who lived abroad, and I would have the deepest desire to do whatever it took to visit. Success stories of ease in employment, house purchase, cars, and a laid-back lifestyle sounded unreal to anyone who had not experienced that life. The euphoria surrounding life abroad was enough motivation for me to do anything I could to have a piece of that life, even though I understood well that the process of successfully getting a visa was almost impossible.

The thought of securing a better future for myself was quite motivating. I really wanted to help out my parents, build them a big house and give them a comfortable life before they grew too old. I wanted the same for my grandparents and my siblings. I became obsessed with this thought. It occupied my whole being every single day. My grandmother on the other hand did not like this idea and would often try to talk me out of it.

My father was strict and ran the home with a firm hand. On the days he came home early from work, I would take off and hide when I heard his voice. When my father needed to communicate with me, he would send my mother; he only spoke to me occasionally. I thought this was normal because I never saw my father carry out friendly conversations with any of his children. My father never liked the idea of his children going abroad. He always said that we had everything we needed, and Western countries were not ideal for people of African descent. He firmly believed that the white man exploits anyone who does not look like him. “Look what they did to us. They have nothing to offer you back in their countries other than give you the jobs that

no one wants". This is what sparked my curiosity. My dad's perceptions of the Western world were contradictory to what I had seen on television. I saw clean streets, well-dressed women and children, beautiful homes with white picket fences, and I could not wait to shop in the expansive malls. Was this a real world? Was it possible that one day I could see this for myself?

After high school, my parents could not afford to put me through college. Luckily, I found employment in the city centre, and I worked as an underwriter in health insurance where I worked for a long time. I met my husband during this time, and it was a perfect match because we both wanted to live abroad. On many days we would discuss our stagnant careers and once, after our apartment was broken into by thieves, we knew we had to proceed with our plans to leave the country. I always felt that I could do more and be more. Most of my applications to secure a better, well-paying job were futile. The frustration of knowing that I was overqualified and not moving upwards pushed me to start seriously looking into other countries for better job opportunities before thinking of starting a family.

In 2002, my husband and I submitted our first application to the Australian embassy as skilled immigrants. A few months later, we received a letter that we did not meet the qualifications. This was not the news we expected, and we felt very frustrated. We shared the information with a family member who suggested that we could try to immigrate to Canada as skilled workers but cautioned that the application process was rigorous and that we would probably need the help of an international immigration consultant. I was committed to the process, but I also had concerns about fees.

Finding a genuine immigration lawyer is quite a challenge. It is common to lose money through fraudulent lawyers. Getting a referral or accessing a review on a search engine such as Google was not as advanced as it is today, and we did not know of any Kenyans who had outsourced the services of an immigration lawyer. This was a risky undertaking, but either way, we were careful to vet the lawyer we chose. We took a chance and solicited the services of one lawyer. The initial meeting was to verify if we would meet the minimum requirements before accepting us as clients.

Organizing and preparing all documents for submission is a strenuous, frustrating, time-consuming, and quite an expensive process. I would get time off work to visit my schools to request for transcripts that had to be certified by a lawyer as true copies. This was a day off work because online services were not available. I remember waking up so early one morning to line

up for the application for police clearance certificates. The line-up was already too long on arrival, and I knew I would spend considerable time waiting my turn. The process is also cumbersome as fingerprints are taken manually by the officers. Now, this is not a straightforward process as one would expect. If you do not have police connections, the process can be frustrating because it is delayed on purpose, and you have to go again the following day until you give up and give a bribe, to be pushed up the line and have your certificate processed. The police clearance certificates have a waiting period that can exceed six weeks and are only valid for six months, after which you have to re-apply.

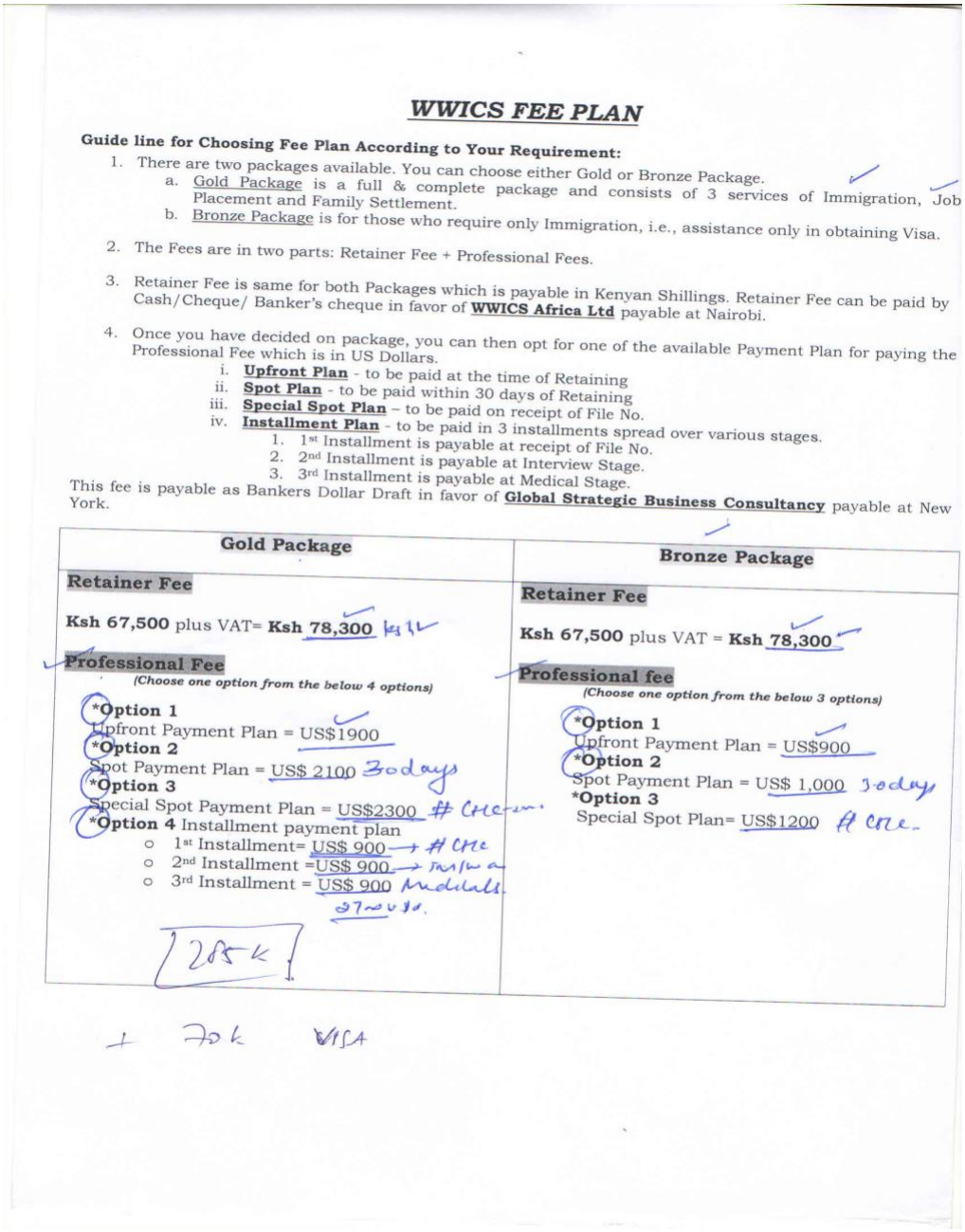
The examining body for the English exam in Nairobi is the British Council. The appointment to sit for the English exam usually has a long wait list of up to two-three weeks and is quite expensive. Once all the primary documents are obtained, a letter of confirming employment must be submitted followed by evidence that there is sufficient savings in the bank account.

Once all these documents are obtained and verified, there is filling of various application forms. The language in these forms is obscure and can be quite intimidating. Choosing to use the services of an immigration lawyer was a good idea, and our application was finally submitted. The Canadian Embassy at Gigiri (Nairobi) is very clear on rules regarding any enquiry regarding Permanent Residence applications. Any questions regarding the application status will not be addressed and that applicants or the respective agency must wait for the Consular to contact them. In our case, the Consular never contacted us between 2002-2006.

We opted to engage another immigration agency since we did not know what was happening and we had just been told that our initial immigration lawyer had moved back to Canada. The new immigration agency informed us that all applications before 2006 had been suspended due to a back-log of applications and that we needed to submit a new application if we were still interested on immigrating to Canada as skilled workers. Receiving this news was heartbreaking. We lost a lot of money in compiling all the requirements and in submitting the first application. The lack of a channel to communicate or advise us that there was a backlog and that our case required re-submission was a huge setback. Determined not to give up, we sought the services of another immigration firm. We started the process again in October 2006.

First came the assessment process whereby the agency scheduled an interview to determine if we would have sufficient points to apply for permanent residency successfully. We

were asked a series of questions that included our level of education, employment history, skill set, and relationship status, all of which were awarded points. After determining that we had a good chance of admissibility, we were advised to open a file and assigned a caseworker to help us with the application process.



WWICS FEE PLAN

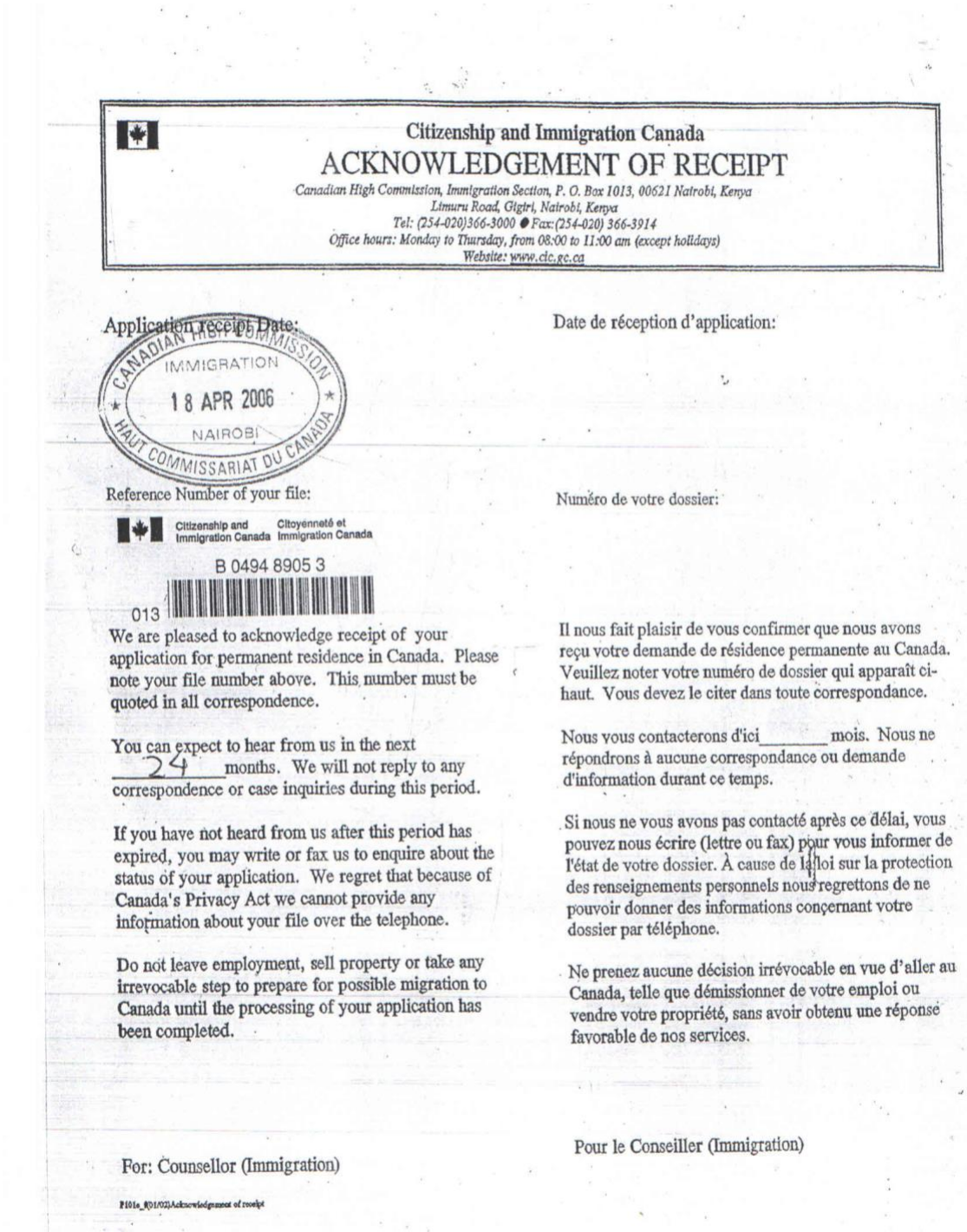
Guide line for Choosing Fee Plan According to Your Requirement:

1. There are two packages available. You can choose either Gold or Bronze Package.
   a. Gold Package is a full & complete package and consists of 3 services of Immigration, Job Placement and Family Settlement.
   b. Bronze Package is for those who require only Immigration, i.e., assistance only in obtaining Visa.
2. The Fees are in two parts: Retainer Fee + Professional Fees.
3. Retainer Fee is same for both Packages which is payable in Kenyan Shillings. Retainer Fee can be paid by Cash/Cheque/ Banker's cheque in favor of **WWICS Africa Ltd** payable at Nairobi.
4. Once you have decided on package, you can then opt for one of the available Payment Plan for paying the Professional Fee which is in US Dollars.
   i. **Upfront Plan** - to be paid at the time of Retaining
   ii. **Spot Plan** - to be paid within 30 days of Retaining
   iii. **Special Spot Plan** – to be paid on receipt of File No.
   iv. **Installment Plan** - to be paid in 3 installments spread over various stages.
      1. 1st Installment is payable at receipt of File No.
      2. 2nd Installment is payable at Interview Stage.
      3. 3rd Installment is payable at Medical Stage.

This fee is payable as Bankers Dollar Draft in favor of **Global Strategic Business Consultancy** payable at New York.

Gold Package	Bronze Package
Retainer Fee **Ksh 67,500** plus VAT= **Ksh 78,300** **Professional Fee** *(Choose one option from the below 4 options)* ***Option 1** Upfront Payment Plan = US$1900 ***Option 2** Spot Payment Plan = US$ 2100 ***Option 3** Special Spot Payment Plan = US$2300 ***Option 4** Installment payment plan ○ 1st Installment= US$ 900 ○ 2nd Installment =US$ 900 ○ 3rd Installment = US$ 900	**Retainer Fee** **Ksh 67,500** plus VAT = **Ksh 78,300** **Professional fee** *(Choose one option from the below 3 options)* ***Option 1** Upfront Payment Plan = US$900 ***Option 2** Spot Payment Plan = US$ 1,000 ***Option 3** Special Spot Plan= US$1200

Figure 5.1 The immigration lawyer payment plan (2006)



Citizenship and Immigration Canada

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

Canadian High Commission, Immigration Section, P. O. Box 1013, 00621 Nairobi, Kenya
Limuru Road, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: (254-020)366-3000 ● Fax:(254-020) 366-3914
Office hours: Monday to Thursday, from 08:00 to 11:00 am (except holidays)
Website: www.cic.gc.ca

Application receipt Date:

CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION
IMMIGRATION
18 APR 2006
NAIROBI
HAUT COMMISSARIAT DU CANADA

Date de réception d'application:

Reference Number of your file:

Numéro de votre dossier:

Citizenship and Immigration Canada / Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada

B 0494 8905 3

013

We are pleased to acknowledge receipt of your application for permanent residence in Canada. Please note your file number above. This number must be quoted in all correspondence.

Il nous fait plaisir de vous confirmer que nous avons reçu votre demande de résidence permanente au Canada. Veuillez noter votre numéro de dossier qui apparaît ci-haut. Vous devez le citer dans toute correspondance.

You can expect to hear from us in the next 24 months. We will not reply to any correspondence or case inquiries during this period.

Nous vous contacterons d'ici_____ mois. Nous ne répondrons à aucune correspondance ou demande d'information durant ce temps.

If you have not heard from us after this period has expired, you may write or fax us to enquire about the status of your application. We regret that because of Canada's Privacy Act we cannot provide any information about your file over the telephone.

Si nous ne vous avons pas contacté après ce délai, vous pouvez nous écrire (lettre ou fax) pour vous informer de l'état de votre dossier. À cause de la loi sur la protection des renseignements personnels nous regrettons de ne pouvoir donner des informations conçernant votre dossier par téléphone.

Do not leave employment, sell property or take any irrevocable step to prepare for possible migration to Canada until the processing of your application has been completed.

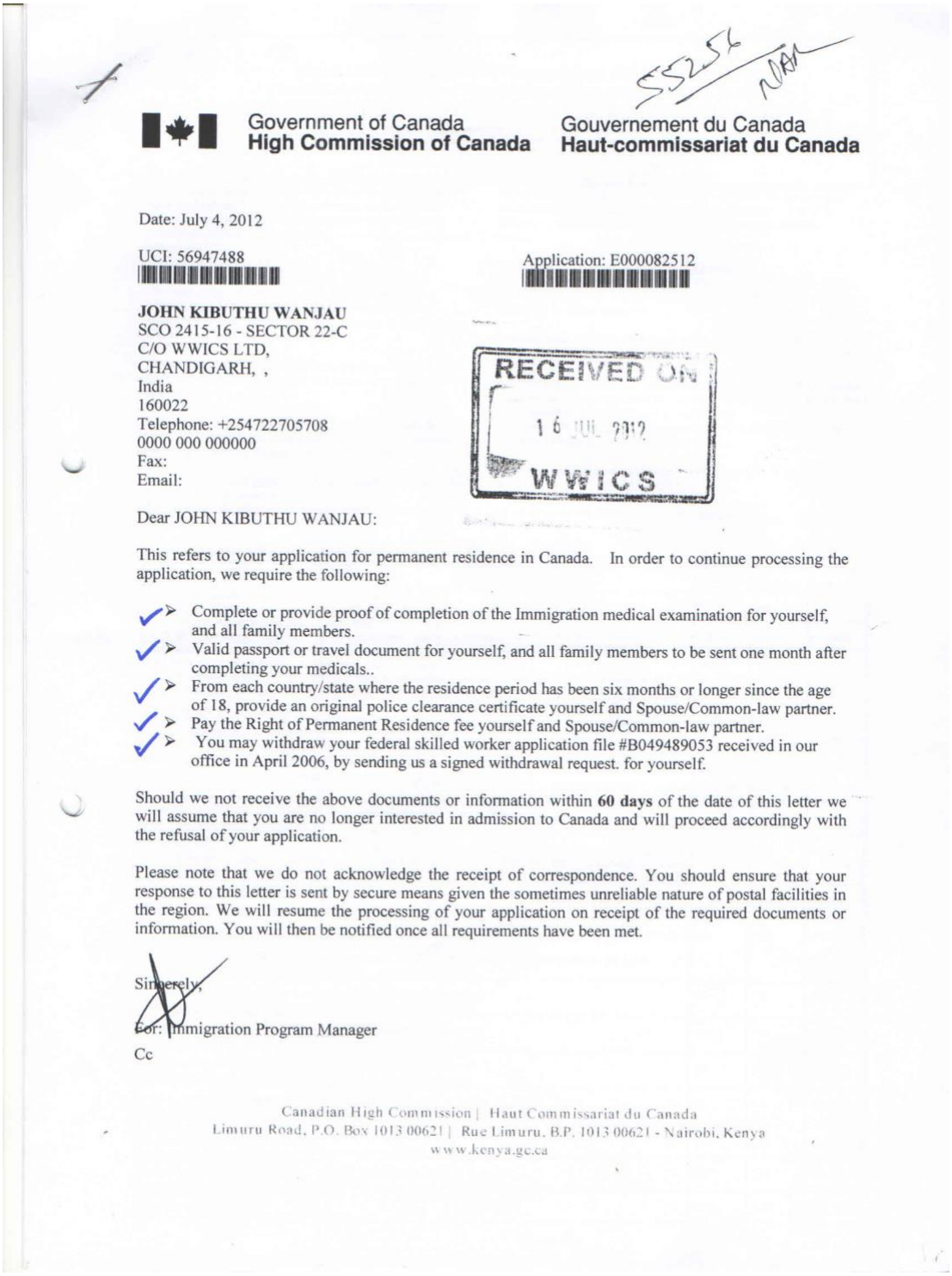
Ne prenez aucune décision irrévocable en vue d'aller au Canada, telle que démissionner de votre emploi ou vendre votre propriété, sans avoir obtenu une réponse favorable de nos services.

For: Counsellor (Immigration)

Pour le Conseiller (Immigration)

P101a_E(01/02)Acknowledgement of receipt

Figure 5.2 Second Application for PR



Government of Canada
High Commission of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada
Haut-commissariat du Canada

Date: July 4, 2012

UCI: 56947488

Application: E000082512

JOHN KIBUTHU WANJAU
SCO 2415-16 - SECTOR 22-C
C/O WWICS LTD,
CHANDIGARH, ,
India
160022
Telephone: +254722705708
0000 000 000000
Fax:
Email:

RECEIVED ON
16 JUL 2012
WWICS

Dear JOHN KIBUTHU WANJAU:

This refers to your application for permanent residence in Canada. In order to continue processing the application, we require the following:

- Complete or provide proof of completion of the Immigration medical examination for yourself, and all family members.
- Valid passport or travel document for yourself, and all family members to be sent one month after completing your medicals..
- From each country/state where the residence period has been six months or longer since the age of 18, provide an original police clearance certificate yourself and Spouse/Common-law partner.
- Pay the Right of Permanent Residence fee yourself and Spouse/Common-law partner.
- You may withdraw your federal skilled worker application file #B049489053 received in our office in April 2006, by sending us a signed withdrawal request. for yourself.

Should we not receive the above documents or information within **60 days** of the date of this letter we will assume that you are no longer interested in admission to Canada and will proceed accordingly with the refusal of your application.

Please note that we do not acknowledge the receipt of correspondence. You should ensure that your response to this letter is sent by secure means given the sometimes unreliable nature of postal facilities in the region. We will resume the processing of your application on receipt of the required documents or information. You will then be notified once all requirements have been met.

Sincerely,

For: Immigration Program Manager

Cc

Canadian High Commission | Haut Commissariat du Canada
Limuru Road, P.O. Box 1013 00621 | Rue Limuru, B.P. 1013 00621 - Nairobi, Kenya
www.kenya.gc.ca

Figure 5.3 2012, confirmation to proceed with medical test after 6 years wait

We were given a window to have the necessary medical tests done and submitted; failure to meet the deadline meant we would lose our spot and have to start the process all over again. The medical tests were run by appointed medical facilities and as one can imagine, immediate appointments are not available. The tests are expensive, intense, and the payments are upfront. We passed all the requirements and after an eight-year application process we got our permanent residence visa and boarded the plane to Pearson Airport Canada in July 2013.

Figure 5.4 July 2013. Our last day in Kenya with our Nanny

We arrived on a beautiful summer evening in July 2013. I felt in my heart that life would be different. As newly landed economic immigrants, we were processed at a separate section at the airport. The immigration officers double-checked our travel documents, and later we were handed a few flyers welcoming us to Canada. Some of the flyers had a variety of information on

organizations that could assist with language, job search, and other settlement services, all of which I found overwhelming. We were cleared and now on our own. We booked a nearby hotel for a few days as we did not have friends or family that we could call. We hoped that these few days would be sufficient for us to find an apartment.

My stay at the hotel was a mix of emotions. Here I was, having achieved my dream, yet I felt anxious and totally out of place. I did not know where to start. Having no place to call home throws everything off balance. Living off a suitcase, box lunches, and wanting to get going yet you cannot, was paralyzing. The search for an apartment was taking longer than I thought. The cost was too high in some neighbourhoods. At times when we called, communication was difficult. Sometimes we were told that there was no vacancy even with evidence of a vacant space.

After numerous phone calls and house searches, it was clear that we could not get an apartment that would meet our budget, so we decided to take up whatever was available and look for jobs as soon as we could. Coming up with the rent and a month's deposit was not the issue. Landlords also wanted proof that we were in full-time jobs and needed references. The immigration consultant agency that we invested so much money in for our application and an overview of settlement services completely forgot about us and efforts to reach them were futile.

A relative from the US eventually introduced us to a friend in Toronto through a contact. She assisted us in moving into her apartment in the Malvern area, Scarborough. We took over her lease since she was planning to move to another province. Malvern is a predominantly black neighbourhood, with many high-rise buildings and government-assisted housing projects which are subsidized. The landlord's office was very accommodating so long as we could pay rent monthly and deposit the first and last month's deposit. I was happy that we were no longer living in a hotel since we were depleting our savings. The two-bedroom apartment was on the fifth floor. I immediately noticed the heavy infestation of cockroaches and the murky smell. We had no choice but to move in eve' though the conditions were not desirable. The apartment building was conveniently located near a shopping mall, making it easy to purchase our groceries as we did not have a car. There was also an elementary school right across the building. Yet, I was appreciative that we had a place to call home conveniently located with all the amenities within reach.

Figure 5.5 Codi Wilson, CP24.com Published Sunday, December 21, 2014

I started looking for employment as soon as we settled in our new apartment. My son was three years old, and I thought he would go to school like back home, but on enquiry at the nearby school, I was informed that he would not start school until he was four years old. As I continued looking for a job, I approached a few of the daycares in my area, hoping that I could leave him there while at work. I quickly realized that I could not afford the services of a daycare. It was more complicated than I thought. One, the space for intake is not readily available, and I had to apply to several daycares to be put on the waiting list and, after that, apply to the city for subsidized daycare since we could not afford the total monthly fees. The situation was further complicated due to the fact that we did not have steady, full-time jobs. We had just arrived and, as such, could not provide evidence of employment and a steady income.

I would stay at home and take care of our son, and my husband would continue to work part-time as a salesperson for a local media company. We were slowly depleting our savings and so I decided to look for a part-time job. I pulled out one of the brochures from the YMCA and scheduled an appointment for a job search workshop. I was referred to a language centre to sit for an English exam before attending the workshop. I remember feeling upset that I was required to prove that I could read and write English. The exam was easy for me, and I finished way before time and got everything correct. After that, I attended a recruiter's conference; I remember several companies offered factory packaging jobs, line assembly workers jobs, PSW

jobs, and retail store opportunities. All employers were offering minimum wage jobs, and interviews and recruitment was on site. I was desperate to get a job, so I chose a job that had a schedule that I could get off work early.

Working in a used clothes factory twenty minutes from my apartment allowed me to report to work early in the morning and leave just in time to pick my son from an informal daycare. The work was exhausting, stressful, and the constant pressure to sort as many clothes as possible with two fifteen-minute breaks and a one-hour lunch break broke my back. I often wondered if this was what I was worth and disliked every moment I had to work. During this time, I would leave my son with a neighbor who was kind enough to charge an affordable fee. Every night after tucking my son to sleep, I would sit late at night applying for jobs, with no luck. At one time, my husband was invited to sit for a typing test for a job interview, and I went along with him and requested to sit the test with him. I was allowed. Luckily after the test I was recruited to perform clerical duties. I was happy to quit my factory job.

With the new clerical job came childcare challenges. The job was demanding as I had to report to work as early as 8 AM and leave at 4 PM. My commute was one and a half hours by bus. Many a time, we were required to stay overtime to beat deadlines. I was still on the waiting list for daycare space and therefore had to look for someone to help take my son to school, pick him up, and stay with him until I got home from work. I was introduced to a lady who ran a childcare in her house. It was not city-approved, but her services were affordable, and she lived near my apartment. City-approved childcare costs up to $60 per day; I could not afford this on minimum wage. Even with this arrangement, there were days that she was not available, and I had to look for alternate places to drop my child.

I realized that having a demanding job and the need to put in extra hours to afford daycare was hurting my family. I would leave for work at 6.30 AM and would come back home at almost 8 PM just in time for a quick dinner, quick bath, and then quickly tuck my son to sleep as I needed to catch up on my house chores. I must admit that I seriously thought of sending my child back to my home country on several occasions. This was not what I expected as a newcomer. I spent time with my child only on Sundays, and the other days I had to work. He was too young to understand that times were hard, and I needed the extra hours to make ends meet. I met a few friends from the Kenyan community that advised me that having a child as a newcomer and trying to establish yourself in the first years was an uphill task and that a majority

of them had sent their children back home until they were old enough to take care of themselves. I was worried and felt trapped. I needed to think and come up with a solution that would not involve sending my son back home to live with my family.

The demands of my contractual clerical job, my commute, and challenges finding a reliable and affordable childcare facility made me realize that I needed to re-evaluate my career choices. I decided to enroll for my undergraduate degree, upgrade my credentials, and hopefully build a solid social network that would help me get a good job. At the end of my contract job, I enrolled for my undergraduate degree at York University.

The excitement of starting an academic journey quickly faded as I came to the realization that school was another different culture shock. As a mature student, I carried my insecurities with me. Here I was amongst a majority of young, intelligent, outspoken students. I was intimidated and must admit that this affected my confidence; I never raised my hand to answer or ask a question. The day I did, the professor did not understand a word I said, and all the students looked at me, or rather, focusing on my intonations. I always thought I had a good understanding of English. However, English is not my first language; this was my instructional language in elementary, high school, and college. In the first few days, when I went to the store, I noticed that the grocery clerks struggled to understand my English. It was even more problematic when I tried making several phone calls to daycares looking for space for my son. I could hardly understand what the person on the other end was saying, and they could scarcely hear a word I said. In the weeks to come, my confidence quickly eroding, I realized that I could not match up the English skills and accent. I felt uncomfortable when required to speak and explain myself and had to think about what I was going to say before opening my mouth. In school, the scenario was different and challenging. Every time I wanted to contribute to a discussion, I noticed that there was more attention to my accent either by first being asked where I come from or to repeat and speak slowly. I would always be asked my country of origin. My ability to hear and understand the Canadian pronunciation has improved, but I still struggle at times to get my point across in conversations.

Having family and friends around is essential for emotional and physical support. I made good friends in some of the classes I attended at York University, but once the semester was over, I did not do an excellent job at keeping in touch. As I write my story, I also reflect on my friendships back home and realize that these friendships were built over a long period of time

and my absence has had a great impact. The friendships have slowly faded away. It is just not the same. I feel empty in ways that are hard to explain. Back home, we were always surrounded by the love of our families and communities. We lived for each other, which is different here; life is busy, and everyone is trying to make ends meet. It is difficult mentally not to see family and friends over long periods of time. I gradually feel more and more detached from my siblings. It is almost as if I do not belong back home in Kenya, and at the same time I do not feel like a Canadian.

The lack of social support has immensely transformed how I view my support system. I have found a place of belonging in community groups, and I actively volunteer in a majority of these groups because I know their importance. Kenyan community groups provide a space that is relatable, accommodating, and accepting. We share memories of back home. We enjoy speaking our language even for a few hours, and our children play together for the short periods of time available. These community organizations provide culturally relevant resources such as referrals for housing, where to buy certain foods, community events, and support programs for our community members.

5.1 African Women Advocacy Group at York University

The African Women Advocacy group is an informal organization founded by the Interdisciplinary director, Dr. Kymberley Bird. Dr. Bird has observed that most students of African descent in academia face numerous challenges related to academic support, social support, networking, and mentorship. From this observation, she has brought together black continental alumni students, present students, and staff for monthly conversations to mentor, inspire, support, and encourage each other. The groups' objective is to create an inclusive and supportive academic space for African women students. Members of the group network and enjoy talks from alumni guest speakers once a month. It also inspires and ensures that academic experiences are well supported and advanced.

Most black students from Africa do not have family and friends in Canada. Their world can be quite lonely and more often than not, in an institution as big as York University, they feel lost and do not know where and how to ask for help. In addition, navigating the school system for resources critical to their education journey can be an uphill task. Peer support and encouragement go a long way in easing these anxieties. The feeling of being misunderstood, not

belonging, factors such as language barrier and racism can result in a lack of confidence which can affect students' outcomes. It is for this reason that Dr. Bird felt the need to organize for a culturally relevant group that would not only inspire but also support, provide a safe space of belonging and create a community where other students could openly talk about their personal experiences and get support from those that have been there before them. This framework has been essential in ensuring that academic life becomes a little bit easier and manageable for black African women students at York University.

In my role as the social convener in the year 2020-2021, we effectively identified and coordinated over ten workshops and seminars and circulated relevant information to black African women at York University. In the midst of COVID-19, attendance has been virtual. The one-hour, monthly conversations invite a speaker — preferably a black African alumni student — to speak about their academic journey, their work, and they wrap up with words of encouragement. This would be followed by a question-and-answer session from group members. The group also actively offers peer-to-peer academic support and mentorship from alumni students.

Dr. Getrude Mianda, the director of the Harriet Tubman Institute was one of our distinguished guests. She spoke about her struggles as a black immigrant student and mother. Through her life experience she narrated hardships associated with juggling motherhood, academia and at the same time adjusting into a new culture. She also expounded on the misconceptions associated with black immigrant mothers in terms of traditional roles and cultural values, sexism, racism, and classism noting the importance of being aware of these limitations. Dr. Mianda encouraged members by stating that even though it is not easy being a black woman in a foreign land, the importance of community participation is crucial in building both social and cultural capital which are important for one's success.

Dr. Alpha Abebe, one of York University's alumni student and now an assistant professor at Mc Master University, has remained a vital resource for group members. She has tirelessly assisted students with their academic work, stepped in to help struggling students and has been a great cheerleader to all members.

Building culturally relevant groups that address the needs of African women within academia can only be successful if we actively listen to personal life stories. Narratives of everyday experiences contain nuggets rich in knowledge and can be vital in understanding how

racialized and marginalized communities negotiate everyday challenges unique to them. Through these narratives we can better understand their vulnerability and find ways in which they can be supported.

There in an inaccurate assumption that the expectations of an academic institution are well laid out, and that students are aware of what they sign up for before enrolment. Some students come from different backgrounds and different education systems and might have significant challenges that could hinder their participation in academia. It is only fair that the desires of these students to succeed academically are fully supported. Equity in education dictates that the needs of all students are met. The student population is diverse, with each group of students unique in how they consume education. It is possible that minority student populations can be overlooked because of a lack of disaggregated data which would break down the various distinct and diverse compositions of students. Therefore, attending to students' needs ensures that even the most vulnerable and invisible students are not left out in the equal distribution of resources. Immigrant women of African descent are a category of student that require extra academic support, special accommodations, and/or more time with professors. Black students in white campuses are not homogenous. They are diverse with different needs. First generation black African parents, black single mothers, second generation black students, black students with disabilities, and the black youth are examples of the composition of the black student population in institutions of higher learning. Black students continue to face significant challenges, including but not limited to, racism, overt and subtle discrimination, and financial constraints. Scholars argue that limited literature on black African immigrant women is an indication that there is need to offer more scholarships and encourage studies in this area. The small percentage of black women in schools should not restrict their accessibility, recognition, and agency.

The expectation from family and friends for black African immigrant women to perform well in school and succeed is immense. There is pressure to prove that they can perform well and show that the negative stereotypes associated with black African women are not valid. Going back to school is usually a hard and expensive decision. There is the consideration of balancing home and schoolwork and the expenses associated with advancing ones' education. The tuition fees in institutions of higher learning are quite high which means that loans are usually necessary to complete studies. It is for this reason that failure is not an option.

The AWA is founded on the premise of positive change. It recognizes the challenges that black African women students face and encourages solution-based discussions. It is a safe space for women of African descent to express their feelings on their everyday interactions in academia, talk about how their roles in the family are affected by studies, and find ways to work around those challenges through a supportive alumni students and professors. African students can see and listen to stories of other students who have faced similar challenges and get support and encouragement. AWA's concept is practical, relatable, and has established a good network community for its' members.

5.2 Our Story: Carrying on Ubuntu Legacy (Women Investing Together)

I have met wonderful friends in my community. Most of the time we would meet either in church or at community functions. Some of the families have now become more than just friends, but a close-knit family. We have created a special bond that filled the void of being away from home. These interactions inspired me to reach out to some of the women that had now become part of my life to discuss how we can advance ourselves economically. Most of us struggled to save enough money to put a down payment on a house, some have already been through that process, and some of us generally need help with our children to work extra hours on the weekend or looking for job opportunities. I approached the women who I had a close friendship and floated the idea of forming a "chama" — or self-help group — which operates on the ideal of pooling our resources (Christoffersen-Deb et al., 2015) on a monthly basis to make capital investment. My vision was that these accumulated funds would be put in an investment property which would appreciate over time and give us a head start in generational wealth.

The dream finally came true with much support and input from all nine members. Women Investing Together (WIT) is a provincially registered organization established in September 2020. We are a group of nine black Kenyan mothers living and working in Toronto and the GTA. WIT's framework was born out of the idea that together we are more robust and can accomplish more, faster. The group's main objective is to economically empower its members to build a legacy for their families by collectively pooling our resources and investing in various profitable ventures. We also promote social inclusion and networking by hosting various African-themed events to celebrate our culture.

As black immigrant women, we embrace the challenges we face as a minority racialized community and seek to explore how we can positively and actively create change narratives of who we are and how we see ourselves. Our stories as black African immigrants are similar; each theme has a message of resilience and hope. We aim to establish social capital, empowerment, and strengthen and develop our business by pooling our resources while supporting each other.

We came together to fill a void, establish a support system for ourselves, and uphold some of the cultures we value from home. We do not all have our siblings here in Canada. In forming the group, we laid a foundation that would create friendships and sisterhood and allow our families to know each other, especially our children. Our monthly meetings also allow us to enjoy our traditional foods, songs, dances, and enjoy the company of interacting in our language. Our children also get to know each other, have a sense of their identity, and affirm their belonging.

The group is built on the foundation and values of Ubuntu. Together united by our common country of origin Kenya, we have established an extended family that provides the support and friendship we miss so much from our country. Through this group, we can attend our children's birthday parties, baptism, and should any of the members have challenges with daycare or are just in need of extra help with the children, we step in. The concept of "Harambee" is a Kenyan philosophy similar to Ubuntu that means we *pull together*. It advocates for teamwork, the importance of collaboration and working together towards a common goal.

The Harambee concept has gained popularity in Kenya, and women especially have successfully empowered each other through this initiative. The word commonly used for this form of organization is "chama". Chama is the formation of a group primarily women who come together and contribute an agreed amount of money either weekly or monthly. When these funds are put together, they are given to one group member to invest in a venture of their choice. It is a lump sum of money loaned to each member on a rotational basis. The chama ideology has gained popularity in Kenya and is now not only restricted to women or men but a variety of different group compositions. Unlike the common "chama" groups back in our home country where each member contributes an agreed amount of money every month and thereafter the money is given to one member monthly, our group collects each members contribution, and the money is deposited in a bank account until such time as a decision is collectively made to invest on an agreed project.

This idea has its challenges. Opening a bank account was a significant hurdle as the banks did not understand its concept. With over three months delay in opening the account and endless trips to the bank to explain this idea, we finally opened the account and have since continued to make our contributions. We have purchased two properties, a beachfront space that we hope to build luxury apartments that will generate income, and an apartment that we hope can rent out, all income-generating opportunities.

We hold monthly meetings to review our projects, look at new proposals, and assess our financial position. We also check on each other, especially since we are in the middle of a pandemic and some work in the health care system. We celebrate our small wins by having a glass of wine together. We attend community functions together and support other community members, and most importantly, we look out for each other.

Chapter 6 Findings from Collected Accounts

6.1 Findings

In this chapter, I will discuss the responses from the participants regarding their immigration and settlement process. These accounts present the challenges of newcomers in their first years after arrival and their stories also provide us with a lens to understand the difficulty of being in a new country with limited and ineffective transition support services from the government.

The road to immigrating to Canada is long and frustrating, right from the application submission in their home countries. There is the long processing time, lack of communication from processing offices, and the uncertainty of not knowing the progress of applications.

At the onset of the application process back in their home country, all participants expressed their frustrations with the progression of their application for permanent residence. The consensus was that the process was highly rigorous with long waiting times, as Zainabu noted: “My application to relocate under the skilled worker program was a long, frustrating wait.”

The accounts submitted by the participants strongly suggest that there is a disconnect between expectations pre-arrival and the reality of life in the first few years of settlement in Canada. Misconceptions of a welcoming country, highly sought-after careers and employment prospects, and fair and equitable opportunities remain a myth that blinds most immigrants. It is evident that in addition to cultural differences, factors such as racism, discrimination, classism, and gender disparity in the labour market remain central and must be addressed in post-arrival support programs.

There is a lack of effective and efficient settlement programs for immigrants to Canada, as expressed by all participants. Employment, housing, and lack of friends and family were the top three challenges experienced in the first few years of settlement. The struggle to find jobs commensurate with one’s skills and expertise is frustrating. Volunteer and internship opportunities are not available and are dependent on a good referral system, which most African immigrants lack. With bills to pay and families to feed, many end up settling for survival jobs, which are highly recommended by organizations that are charged with settlement programs for

newcomers. Zainabu felt the support programs were not well designed for skilled immigrants as they did not attend to her needs:

> I registered for the newcomer's government-sponsored five-day job search workshop that would equip and prepare me to understand the Canadian employment culture and launch me into being ready to start applying for work. I went ahead and completed that along with other newcomers and this was helpful, but really there is not much you can get by attending a five-day workshop. (Zainab)

Participants wrote extensively of their disappointment of not being able to get jobs in their professions on arrival as newcomers. De-skilling is defined as settling for a low-wage job that is not proportional to one's skills and education. Skilled immigrants leave their countries of origin and relocate, holding on to the promise that better jobs await with fair compensation and equity in employment being achievable; however, the labour market in Canada ranks high in employment discrimination (George, 2002). Fahari explains that her education and skills did not qualify her for a good position despite enrolling in a bridge course:

> The question of Canadian experience came up quite often, and even more frustrating was the question about industry certifications. The program at YorkU was clearly not well set up to address the needs of immigrants like myself who did not need to bridge language or basic office skills. (Fahari)

In addition, the lack of "Canadian experience" came up with all the participants and was expressed as the number one reason for employment rejection. Akinyi shared the same sentiments on challenges of employment as a skilled worker:

> We knew we were qualified and had work experience in our professions, but we kept being told by most employers in Canada that we did not have "Canadian work experience." We had to settle for factory jobs and manual jobs to ensure that we had food and that the bills were paid. (Akinyi)

In her account, Akinyi talked about the frustration of gaining employment even after attending a course to improve her skills:

> I graduated with a certificate that was completely inapplicable to the workplace and at some point I stopped mentioning it on my resume as it raised more questions than answers. The certificate has not paid off career wise. (Akinyi)

The ability to rent or purchase a house is dependent on one's economic capability. Housing in Canada is expensive and, for new immigrants, finding affordable housing is hindered by the inability to find stable and reliable employment. Issues related to tenants' rights, exploitation by landlords, and discrimination also make access to housing complicated. Fahari's immigration account reiterates the complexity of finding housing for newly landed skilled immigrants:

> We did not have a network of people at the time we moved here, but we were introduced to a friend of a friend who housed us in her one-bedroom basement apartment for our first year. This was a less than ideal situation for a family of 5 but since we did not have a credit history to allow us to qualify for a lease, we stuck it out until we found a landlord on kijiji who was willing to take a chance on us. (Fahari)

Farahi confirmed that lack of social capital, lack of a good network of friends or family, further complicates access to housing. It is impossible for landlords to accept tenants who cannot provide proof employment and very few are willing to take the risk of accepting tenants who are new immigrants and do not have jobs to pay for their rent.

Akinyi further elaborated on the housing situation:

> Most landlords or apartment owners were requesting us to show a letter of employment in Canada, yet we had none at the time as we had newly moved to the country and were beginning to search for employment. Other landlords were asking us to pay off monthly rent for a whole year and that would help to secure a house. Others were asking for a guarantor or a referral of a person who lives in those apartments. Basically, if one does not have a family member or a friend to host you, it is inundating. (Akinyi)

The majority of skilled immigrants do not have family or friends when they move to Canada. The social support of close family, steady employment, and housing is no longer available. When they arrive in Canada, affordable accommodation is quite a challenge because there are no prior subsidized housing arrangements. Immigrants need a place to stay while they settle in and look for jobs.

Discrimination is prevalent in housing, just like employment (George, 2002). It is well documented that landlords have been selective in who rents a house based on race (Danso & Grant, 2000) and language accent discrimination is nothing new when it comes to house hunting over the phone; accents which are easily identifiable over the telephone as 'different' may be

enough to prevent a landlord from taking a chance on a tenant. African immigrants have been denied rental space in some neighborhoods even when the spaces are clearly advertised as available.

As mentioned by Fahari, the lack of a social support system hits hard on Kenyan immigrant women. The high cost of daycare in the first years for newcomers with children is beyond reach for most families; coupled with inaccessibility to affordable housing and a lack of job opportunities that match one's skills, these are significant factors that make settlement challenging.

Employment, housing, childcare, and the emotional toll of moving to a new country are overwhelming. The government has failed to provide the necessary foundation for a highly stringent program in its application process and lacks the capacity to support successful settlement and integration.

It is important to note that all participants agreed that their lives had significantly changed since their move to Canada. Even though they agree that the first few years were extremely challenging, they report a general improvement in their lifestyle and do not regret their decision to immigrate to Canada.

> Generally speaking, my journey here in Canada has worked well. I live here with my family, and I am a champion for that hoping to relocate to Canada under this same program which I know has changed a bit from how it used to be back then. I have never looked back or ever regretted my decision. (Zainabu)

Akinyi agreed with Zainabu's statement: "I am still happy to call Canada home and hopeful the next 10 years will be better than the last; if not for me, then at least for my children who are slowly adopting to life here."

Generally, even with improved lifestyles, there is an incredible extended period of struggle in the first years of arriving in Canada. It is a clear indication that there is need for a complete overhaul in the settlement programs. An audit is necessary to identify areas that are not impactful, and a re-direction of resources is necessary to ensure that skilled immigrants are well supported and are well aware of the support systems available, where and how to access them.

Chapter 7 Discussions and conclusion

In my literature review, I examined when and how the first black immigrants came to Canada and how the immigration policies have changed over time. The 1962 immigration policy is central in the admissibility of racialized populations into Canada today. We now see that the current point system places value on the human capital and immigrants' contribution to the Canadian economy. Its primary goal is to ascertain that any potential skilled immigrant will greatly add value to the country's growth. That said, there is a disconnect between the expectations of the government and the support extended to skilled immigrants, compared to other classes of immigrants, who have to prove beyond reasonable doubts that they are worthy. It is clear that the government has not even scratched the surface of attending to the needs of black African skilled women.

What has the government done to ensure that skilled African women integrate easily into the labour market? The government-funded settlement programs have failed to deliver on the promise of employment, housing, and issues related to racism and discrimination. Indeed, the efficacy of these support programs raises various debates ranging from misleading political agendas to outright exploitation and brain drain of so much talent. I cannot forget to mention that nuggets of discrimination in the immigration process such as intense scrutiny leading to longer waiting times, and the lack of culturally relevant, impactful settlement programs, are responsible for the challenges experienced.

The positionality of black immigrant women and their history has always been precarious. Black abolitionists escaping slavery from the South were hopeful that Canada was a safe place to settle and prosper in their endeavors. They desired to settle and establish a future for their families in a safe inclusive environment. In retrospect, they were met with hostility. All the promises of fertile lands, jobs, and a welcoming community were a fallacy. How is this different from today? The promise to secure jobs, improved livelihood, and a conducive environment is elusive. As evident in this study, I have demonstrated that the process of attaining a permanent resident status is brutal. The least the government can do is to ensure a smooth transition especially for the racialized, gendered, and marginalized communities. The lack of accountability and disaggregated data is an indication that the government is oblivious to this groups'

predicaments. Settlement stories of black continental skilled immigrants are limited in academia, and as such, not much is known about how they negotiate everyday life.

Black continental women's ethnicities are diverse. They experience a new culture differently. The challenges they experience have an adverse impact on their health. Stressors such as racism, sexism, classism, and other factors that are overlooked such as language accent, name discrimination, and a lack of recognition in the society can have a profound effect on their overall well-being. There is a need to re-think how black continental women are presented to the community, especially the perception that they should be grateful that they live in an affluent country, having been pulled from abject poverty. Allowing continental black women to write their stories and express their views on everyday life gives them agency to change negative narratives. It all starts with efficient support programs that are designed to target specific needs for newcomers. Culturally relevant services, inclusive communities, and facilitation of social capital through networking within the community are great starting points.

The voices of continental black women need to be amplified as their populations' increase. There is a need to increase research opportunities and provide academic support by making resources accessible and scholarships available. Easing transition and creating an empowering, inclusive and welcoming environment should also be prioritized. This study has not been exhaustive. A further exploration of African family dynamics and the impacts of these transitions on their health overtime should be explored. Social determinants of health for continental women in Canada, understanding their complexities in relation to nutrition and its outcome is significant. Anxieties of parenting black African children in relation to neighbourhood locations, racism and classism remains an essential topic for in-depth study. Lastly, black African women who choose to take their children back to their countries of origin to ease financial pressures and its association with the mental wellbeing speaks volumes to the burden of being black, foreign, and vulnerable in Canada.

Finally, we see the power of women organizing and formation of solidarities that transcend their hardships. These organizations inform the need to find answers to an obvious complicated position through shared interests, common values and collective practices (Mwiti & Goulding, 2018; Komen & Ling, 2021). They provide a safe space and allow for transformative interactions within the groups.

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Appendices

Participant Leaflet

This Leaflet is for participants

Study title: Amplifying the Voices of Kenyan Women in Canada: The Implicit Contradiction of the Federal Skilled Worker Program

Tell me your immigration experience.

Are you a woman between the age of 25 -60?

Have you recently immigrated to Canada under the Federal Skilled Worker Program the last 10 years)?

Are you from East Africa?

If you have answered yes to the above question and would like to participate in a research study kindly contact below:

Why is the Research being done?
I came to Canada seven years ago as a spouse of a Skilled Immigrant Worker. My journey has not been easy, and I realized that as an African woman I faced far more challenges socially, economically, and politically as I negotiated my daily life and adjusted to a new culture. My curiosity led me to interrogate literature and what scholars have written about women from my culture. Unfortunately, there is limited literature on immigrant women from East African origin. The aim of the study is to challenge insufficient support by the government and to champion revision of policies of immigrants who come under the FSWP. I would like to not only generate knowledge and create awareness of our experiences as immigrant women but also further mobilize our voices to engage key stakeholders by generating awareness and visibility to a marginalized group in order to create positive change.

Who is going to participate?

All women between the ages of 25-60 who recently immigrated to Canada under the Federal Skilled Worker Program (Recent refers to the last 10 years). Only women of East African Origin who meet the mentioned criteria are invited to participate. You will be requested to submit a short story about yourself and how you have experienced life in Canada. Do not include any personal information. You are welcome to talk about your journey from back home to Canada and how this experience has shaped you. I hope you will enjoy taking part in this study, but should you get upset or feel uncomfortable, you can stop and let me know that you are not willing to proceed.

You are welcome to request a copy of this report after the research study.

Will doing the research help me?

Participants will enjoy being part of a study that will engage conversations that give voice to women, create awareness and advocate for support in our communities.