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Writings of Lions: Narrative Inquiry of a Kenyan Couple Living in the U.S.

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In this study, we told the story of a Kenyan couple, B. and F., who has left Kenya and moved to Southern California. We followed a narrative inquiry framework, using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) guidelines. We delineated core components of narrative inquiry research, as well as related the journey of B. and F., who have created dual lives in both Kenya and the United States. As part of the interpretive analysis process, we integrated the first author's experiences, both in interviewing the couple and in volunteering in Kenya in previous years. The final product is an intersection of Kenyan and American life that weaves back-and-forth between B. and F.'s and the first author's chronicle, and between the past and the present. *Keywords: Narrative Inquiry, Kenya, Qualitative Research, Cross-cultural*

Using a narrative research framework, we as *researchers* (perhaps better described as *storytellers*) embark on a journey that will bring you, the reader, to Kenya and back. Kenya, a country in East Africa, has had its fair share of politics disrupted by corruption, tribal conflict, violence, and death. Kenyan families face these challenges daily. Some of them wait it out, hoping for things to improve. Some leave for good, wiping their hands of their old country. There are some families, however, who migrate and yet maintain their roots in Kenya. What happens when such a family leaves? How does the family take on the cultural values of the adopted country? What do they choose to hold on to and what do they choose to let go? This story will let us peer into the lives of one family, who has made sense of their cross-cultural life experiences as they weave back and forth between two countries.

In this study, we employed the method of narrative inquiry to present the story of a family that has left Kenya and moved to Southern California. We followed Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative research framework. Based on the idea that people organize experience and make it meaningful through stories, narrative researchers examine personal experiences, family rituals, and beliefs (Daly, 2007). Over time, human beings have told such stories through orations, through pictures, and eventually through written words. The telling and retelling of myths and historical stories create a narrative. The process of listening to and re-storying these narratives is narrative inquiry. The goal of this qualitative method is to understand how people construct their storied experiences within the context of their lives (Daly, 2007). We maintain the assumption that creating stories helps people understand their lives; therefore, narrative inquiry is an effective method of understanding families' realities (Daly, 2007).

Rationale

Although research on Kenya was not hard to find, it is limited largely to deficit-based, medical and health studies. If you would like to know how Kenyans have been affected by the AIDS epidemic, there are over 175 resources in the PsychInfo database alone. Domestic

violence? Over 30 articles found. However, these large-scale studies and even the smaller ethnographic studies do not focus on the personal experiences of families—the lives of resilient people negotiating both challenging and quotidian contexts. This gap keeps the perception of Kenyans narrow and incomplete. It also prevents mental health practitioners, researchers, anthropologists, and sociologists from seeing the faces and hearing the stories behind the often-discouraging statistics.

Though one story cannot speak for all of Kenya, it can begin to reveal new ideas, perceptions, difficulties, and achievements that people may be having as they leave one life for another. This concept of applying one Kenyan family's narrative to similar situations is reminiscent of *transferability*. The degree of transferability is how "the study's findings will be useful to others in similar situations, with similar research questions or questions of practice" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 252). It is important that the researcher provide thick descriptions of the time, place, context, and topics in order to situate the data (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It is also helpful for the researcher to demonstrate clearly how models and concepts guided the design, collection of data, and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). We performed this task by following Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry design.

In this study, we created space for the voices of one family to begin promoting ideas, conversations, and questions about how individuals formulate and ascribe meaning to their experiences, and how culture and context shape these stories. We hope that this research will be one of many stories.

In this article, we will first flesh out the narrative inquiry approach, and then we will tell the story of a couple from Kenya who has moved to the United States. As part of the interpretive process, we juxtaposed the first author's experiences interviewing the participants (B. and F.), as well as her perspectives from volunteering in Kenya. Through this presentation, we aim to enlighten the reader regarding the intersection of cultural rituals and practices, as well as the immigration into a new country. Having a firsthand account of the implications of these various issues—immigration, life in Kenya, Kenyan families, living in the United States—lays the foundation for mental health practitioners, researchers, and sociologists to understand and help families through the migration process, as well as to assist immigrants in negotiating cross-cultural issues. Through the narrative, we hope to give voice to what multiculturalism really means to people who are living it. By exploring the personal life experiences of B. and F., we hope to open up space for others to reveal and examine their own narratives so that they can begin to make sense of their experiences and become more curious about the stories the world is telling.

Research Question

In this narrative inquiry, we followed a primary, guiding question: *What story does this family have to tell about the experiences they had?* In this case, we had the family address that broad question by beginning to answer a more concrete question: "Can you tell me about your move from Kenya to California?" The question is basic, but it left room for the storytellers to relate their particular experiences.

Methods

After receiving IRB approval to recruit participants for her research, the first author enlisted B. and F. (they wanted to be called by their first initials) through flyers posted at their faith organization. B. shared his interest in wanting to participate following the announcement. The first author explained further details about what the interviews would

entail, that his family (specifically, his wife) would also participate, that more than one meeting would be needed, and that she would either travel to them or meet them somewhere of their convenience to conduct the interviews.

Procedure and Data Collection

The first author arranged to meet a few weeks later with B. and F. at the church office. Both of the interviews took place at this location. Before the interviews began, B. and F. reviewed and signed the informed consent, Subject Bill of Rights, and the consent-to-audio/videotape forms. Interview time included a formal, videotaped interview, in which a back-and-forth dialogue occurred. The first author did not have a pre-set list of questions; instead, she invited the couple to discuss aspects about their experiences in moving from Kenya to California they believed relevant. She then encouraged them to elaborate on dominant topics that would arise, such as differences in the food. For the first author, this process was like “being in the midst of a temporal, storied flow” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 65). The stories and information shared changed as time moved forward and the other stories informed what was going to be told next. In addition, all informal discussions and observations that were noted by the author were also included as part of the research texts. The first author ensured that she collected enough information to place the story in the intended context. Similar to story writing, the author would ask questions of ‘who?’, ‘what?’, ‘when?’, and ‘why?’ in order to create the “setting” of narratives. Both of the formal interviews took 120 minutes each. The second interview took place three weeks after the first. In between the first and second meeting, B. and F. re-read the entire transcripts of the first meeting. The second meeting then allowed B. and F. the chance to share additional narrations they felt should be included. The first author gave them the opportunity to revise anything they said from the first interview. Including participants in this process is part of *relational responsibility* in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Relational responsibility encompasses how narrative researchers negotiate boundaries, anonymity, and ethical considerations with participants. In this study, B. and F. chose to use only their first initials, and they decided not to include more personal stories in this narrative.

After the two interviews, the first author proposed future meetings to continue the evolving narrative. She stated, however, that the couple could decline to meet for any reason. At the time of this writing, no additional interviews had taken place. However, subsequent emails and phone communication had occurred in order to adhere to relational responsibility.

In addition to gathering verbal communication, the first author noted any observational data and visual data (Polkinghorne, 2005) that was necessary to communicate the context of the story. She recorded observations when possible during the interview, or she wrote down reflections immediately following the meeting. Polkinghorne (2005) noted that the use of memos, that is the observational data written down, could also serve the purpose of discovering additional questions and ideas that the researcher could integrate into the next interview in order to develop a comprehensive narrative.

All interviews were video recorded. After each interview, the first author transcribed the sessions verbatim. She then analyzed and *re-storied* the transcript to include all information gathered during the entire process (as detailed in the following analysis section). The first author sent transcriptions back to B. and F., as well as to the second author. The second author reviewed the manuscript for flow and narrative structure, as well as to ensure accountability and ethical regard.

Ethical implications and integrity are part of any research study or article. Given that the narrative constantly changes, so is the approach to ethics. Several ethical dilemmas are raised as a narrative inquiry begins. Even after ethical approvals have been met by a review

board, one must consider relational ethics that conspire between the participants and the researcher. Confidentiality and using pseudonyms is common in research, but what happens when the participants initially want to remain nameless then desire to be identified as they become more situated in their own story? Clandinin and Connelly (2000) speculated about the inclusion of events or conversations that participants asked not to be included but still had an effect on the researchers themselves (who are also part of the grand narrative). For purposes of this article, although identifying content information was omitted, I still included my experiences around information being revealed and the thoughts, feelings, and dilemmas I experienced by not including the information.

Probably the most common question of ethics is: Who owns the story? Is it me, the researcher, the one compiling article? Is it the family whose stories were told, and made the research wholly possible? If there is joint ownership, then do the participants get to dictate the order, plot, and inclusion of my experiences? Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that writers become less concerned about ownership and more about "relational responsibility" (p. 177). Relational responsibility refers to the standards by which the researcher must decide what is included to best tell the story, but what must be kept as memory in order to protect the person who may not want it told. Relational responsibility then can be a joint venture in which both participant and research can co-construct the narratives that are told about their experiences, both in relation to each other and not.

Another ethical consideration is the exiting of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Though what an exit will look like cannot be predicted, it is important to anticipate how one might manage leaving the field after being so immersed. A narrative inquiry inherently brings a deeper inclusion into the field, as the researcher hears personal stories and develops personal relationships. My exit from B. and F.'s lives was not a leaving behind but a role change. There was not an abrupt ending to the entry I have gained with this family. Instead, I moved from researcher to friend, even being invited to dinner with their whole family. I was fortunate to continue to hear stories of this family's life and they came to know some of my experiences outside of this particular work. I welcomed the shift from researcher to friend, but also respected the distance that was established from this work.

There were no personal artifacts collected during the interviews, per B. and F.'s request. Final documents produced from this research made every attempt possible to ensure the confidentiality of B. and F. The first author deleted identifying information, and the couple requested to use the monikers B. and F. The couple also had authorship to the final product to determine if the researchers had accurately represented their stories and had preserved their confidentiality. The second author also reviewed the documents to ensure that the first author had maintained confidentiality. The first author destroyed the videotaped interviews after the completion of the research study.

Analysis

After the first author completed the transcriptions, she met with the second author in order to determine the best format to present B. and F.'s stories. We used a white board first to draw out the chronological and literary ordering (e.g., the migration process as the climax). We also wrote out a list of stories that seemed more privileged: either B. and F. talked at length about certain narrative threads or the first author had dug more deeply into a specific topic. While looking at what we had placed on the board, we discussed the format we had seen other narrative inquiries take, from letters back and forth between researcher and participant to ones that read as autobiographical short stories. We both loved the creativity we saw between each piece of work. We brainstormed several possibilities until the second author suggested a narrative as *guide.* We decided to construct a guide in order to navigate

the stories the couple had about their lives. In a parallel process, writing it would include the experiences the first author remembered as they told their stories. In the background, it would be a guide to narrative inquiry. The word guide felt appropriate as *travel guides*, for example, often lead readers to cross-cultural destinations but then allow people to explore the place further, without help. The guide ultimately lets the reader create adventure.

Crafting the Guide

With this idea in place, the first author used the following process. First, she combed through the transcripts and picked a story that B. and F. had told about Kenyan life. Second, she again looked through the transcripts for concepts around that certain idea, value, or experience (e.g., stories about cooking or being in the kitchen). Third, she took additional field notes as inserted experiences and thoughts surfaced. The first topic the first author included in the guide was *eye contact*. She wrote about this one first because she had so clearly remembered the feeling and thoughts she had when B. and F. shared their experiences. Additional topics then formed as the transcripts and her notes merged to tell stories of both participants and researcher.

We formatted the guide to make literary chronological sense. For example, death rituals should appear near the end, stories regarding employment should come before retirement experiences, the migration experience should occur in the middle as the climax, and stories about looking towards the future should wrap up the guide. Following this chronological idea then helped situate the various topics into a cohesive narrative guide. B. and F. then read the final written story to determine if their narratives had been accurately represented. The couple requested small changes, and stated they felt their stories emerged in the way they wanted them to be heard.

B. and F.'s Timeline

In the following pages, you will read the chronicles of B. and F., a Kenyan couple living in America, trying to assimilate to American culture while maintaining their Kenyan heritage. The couple in their mid-fifties resides with their five children in Southern California. In addition to living in California, they maintain a home in Kenya. At first, B. migrated to the United States in 1972 in order to advance his education. F. followed shortly after with their young son. Since that time, the couple has travelled back and forth between the two countries in order to fulfill the commitments of their lives in both places. The couple has graciously granted us permission to publish this story.

The Written Story

Foreword

My intentions for this guide are not to make you an expert in either Kenyan or American culture. It is my hope that through these stories, anecdotes, and sometimes-embarrassing mistakes, you can get a better sense of what it is like for two cultures to converge. Through the expertise of my Kenyan friends B. and F., my experiences with them, and my own journeys to Kenya, I hope to provide some valuable lessons (along with a few laughs) for the next time you travel to new worlds or welcome friends from afar.

Throughout this guide, you will hear my stories as well as interviews from B. and F. trying to assimilate to American culture while maintaining their Kenyan heritage.

The Guide

I (first author) arrived at the Kenyan church with some trepidation. The one-story building, situated on a dusty plot of land in Southern California, was unassuming. Walking through the front door, I saw three sections of pews which seated approximately 300 people. I also noticed that I was one of two individuals with white skin. Just as it had been during the few times I had travelled to Kenya, I felt unease with being the minority. I knew only a few words of the language, and my very light complexion and blond hair glaringly contrasted the shades of mahogany, chestnut, and ebony. Regardless of my different status, the church members enveloped me into the warmth of the Swahili praise songs. Throughout the service, however, I felt nervous about my presence. My stomach clenched when I thought, "I came to church to complete my research—this is so inappropriate!" Somehow, it felt that mixing the two—business and pleasure—was wrong. Was I taking advantage of this group by coming here with my own pretenses in mind? My insides continued to churn after the service, but then B. walked up to me and invited me into his office. The small room contained only a desk, which was bare except for a few papers, and several metal folding chairs. The sweltering heat from outside could not be cooled by the small, wall air conditioner. B. called to his secretary to bring us bottled waters. He also called to his wife, F., to join us.

B. began the conversation by interviewing me. He seemed interested in hearing about some of my experiences in Kenya. I had the sense that he was situating himself into what sort of understanding and assumptions I had about Kenya and Kenyan people. My answers must have been good enough to take me to the next round, as he then passed me off to his wife. F. began to inquire about what stories I expected to hear. I attempted to be vague, in hopes of creating an open space for them to share any stories they chose. F. looked to B. and the two began to recall memories and weave narratives. I felt like the proverbial fly-on-the-wall. For several moments, the couple seemed to forget I was there and reminisced. I jotted down what I described as "topics" to explore further.

I was listening intently, curious as to what similarities and differences we would explore. I looked B. directly in the eyes, nodded my head as he spoke. I even took notes without looking down so that he would know he had my full attention. I can recall that I was even consciously trying to focus. Leaning forward, eyes ablaze, I listened as he spoke:

> According to African culture, someone who is respectable or older than you, when you talk to them, you are not supposed to look right in the eye, as a sign of respect. Of course, you can talk and look at them, but not gazing at the person, as a sign of respect. So this is part of the culture that we find we have there that is different than over here.

Oh my! I immediately started shifting from looking down, to the side, to in his eyes. I was so embarrassed! My thoughts raced: What do I do now? Do I look away? Do I stay the same? Does he think I am an idiot?! I decided to dart my eyes all over for the time being, to be safe. My unease must have been apparent because his wife, F., continued:

> Now that we have come, we have found the way it is supposed to be here. [Looking at people] right in the eye has its own significance. When we have found out, then it forced us to learn to look you right in the eye. Because we knew by so doing, you are showing the person there is some friend-fullness, there is some confidence, that you are applied in what you are saying. So we know this is an important area . . . . We corrected ourselves with whomever we met. Like they say, when you go to Rome, do what Rome does.

Ok, I sighed a little. Maybe they understood my eager eyes. I wanted them to feel respected, so I was doing, as I knew to do. They wanted to get respect so they adjusted to American life. F. continued:

> But back home, we just look down. Here, when we came and looked down, they looked at us as if we didn't know, as if we were unsure of what we are saying. So when we discovered that, we said, "Oh no. That is not what we mean." We corrected ourselves with whomever we met.

I became curious about what other differences B. and F. had encountered as they attempted to acculturate to a new life. After hearing F.'s statement, I recalled a custom in Kenya regarding "bubble space," the typical distance one puts between themselves and another while in conversation, standing in line, or while in a crowded space. F. told me, "According to our African culture, we have a three radius space." I laughed to myself because when I was visiting a post office in Nairobi, the capital city, I actually thought the opposite about Kenyans. I was waiting in line to buy some postage when a Kenyan man joined the line behind me. When I could feel his breath on the back on my neck, I scooted up a bit. He scooted too. I looked around and saw everyone was standing so near to one another that their bodies were touching! I am not sure if it was the anticipation to get what he had come there for, or maybe the "three radius space" meant only three centimeters!

As our conversation continued, F. enlightened me to a struggle many woman seem to have: other women around their significant others. F. revealed her efforts to assimilate to American culture and the issue of space as it applied to her relationship with B.:

> We know to respect people, we shake hands. We will not advance any further than that. As a process, when we came here, let's say shaking hands, but you also give a hug. This is here. To us that was very difficult, especially with the opposite sex. It just felt like, 'This is not right'. We felt immoral. We felt some moral implication because we weren't used to it. So if I go hug a person, especially of the opposite sex, who is not my husband…Oh no way! My God! Eventually we have come to learn that is part of the culture. Even up to now, some people find it difficult, especially those who have not traveled abroad.

I asked how long it took to get used to the idea of touch, especially hugging. F. made the following statement:

> For me, the space took me some time. Even when somebody would hug my husband and it was the opposite sex! It took me some time to come and appreciate the space. I knew someone's space is always there and to not interfere. But the close space gave me a hard time. I think my husband went through it quick!

Later that afternoon when I was leaving B. and F.'s office for the day, F. followed me outside, touched my arm, learned close, and said, "Oooh, that hugging thing. That's taken me a long time to get used to." I leaned close to her and told her that I grew up in this culture and I still have a pang of suspicion when I see an unknown woman hug my partner! I had to wonder then, was this "a culture thing" or a gender issue? We were generations' apart, cultures apart, but we were both women. The more I reflected, I realized that B. did not have much to say in the conversation. Was the lack of space easier for men to accept, especially when it moves them closer to women? Was it the universal challenge of women fearing

losing their men to other women? Regardless, I felt a kinship with F. and we "girl talked" about that uncomfortable feeling. I began to wonder about what values might be "a-cultural."

In Kenya, men are not traditionally found in the kitchen. B., who grew up with four sisters, actually reveled in the fact that he had never even learned how to cook until he was married. B.'s lack of kitchen experience reminded me of my last visit in Kenya. While visiting friends Peter and Ann, my boyfriend wanted to make dinner for them. Ann could not contain her giggles. Peter would walk by the kitchen with curious glances, but not step into the kitchen. Ann exclaimed her excitement at seeing a man cooking in the kitchen as Peter sheepishly explained how he did not want others to see him in the kitchen, at risk of being run out of town! Peter and Ann commented on how they were at a loss as to what to do when Ann was out of town and their children needed meals, leaving Peter to cook for the girls. In an effort to compromise this burden, we bought a loaf of bread, a jar of peanut butter and a jar of jam. We brought peanut butter and jelly to the Kenyan countryside. Peter and Ann expressed surprise by its sweetness, but agreed "it would do" when desperate. When I recounted this story to the husband and wife F. reminisced how, as a couple, they have compromised,

> Now, he will come to the kitchen and say "My dear, show me what I can do." Because he knows I am coming from work, I am tired, and he is not expecting me to cook again. It is true, he was a quick learner. He learned very quickly how we do some of our dishes.

F. proudly talked of B.'s *ugali* and *chipati* (traditional Kenyan dishes) skills. She also discussed her thankfulness at having the extra help when she is too busy or too tired. She referred to B.'s help not as an expectation, but as "*flexibility*", they had maneuvered: "So when it is only you two, you have to learn to do something to support each other. If you be flexible, life will be a little bit easier for you."

Afterward, when reviewing their video and reading their transcripts, I thought more about the flexibility that was mentioned. I wondered if it was something they had always had, or was it forced upon them as they entered this new world? I had to think that the flexibility B. and F. acquired was more out of a need to find a place and identity in the new culture they were living in. Did it always feel flexible? Were there times when this change (e.g. having to cook) was not always welcomed? What shifted for B. and F. that traditional gender roles were given permission to be flexible? When they go back home to Kenya, who does the cooking?

B. and F. went on to speak of Kenyan family values. First F. examined marriage by making the following statement:

> We want them [their kids] to preserve how our marriages are conducted and how they are preserved. 'Cause when we [entered the country], we were told "over 50% [of marriage ends in] divorce.' So we wanted our children not to lose the value that [says] "once you are married only death will [separate] you.

I noted that the couple had been married for quite some years, and it appeared they had a strong relationship. I wondered in what ways it had been tested before and how did they stay strong through those tests? B. was quick to provide the following answer:

> Of course our commitment to Jesus Christ. That is what makes our lives strong. When we got married, we committed to each other. Through sickness, through poverty, through riches, through it all we will stick to one another,

> support one another. Of course we have passed through some testing health-wise. But God has held us together financially. God has held us together. We are committed to be together 'til the end.

Their faith seemed to be a fundamental foundation to how they viewed their relationship and their roles in it. Was it just their faith that kept them together or was there cultural ideas about marriage that held them together as well? Or had B. and F. acquired these ideas about marriage more out of a need to find a place and identity in this new culture? F. admitted they had another secret: monthly outings to a hotel. F. smiled as she told me how B. would take her for one night a month (though she wished for two nights sometimes), every month, for all the years of their marriage. F. added that he now uses the "date night" in his church sermons. He tells his parishioners to use this monthly outing as a way to review communication within the relationship and to focus on some of the ideals in their families. B. was adamant to find ways to "Renew your love." He stated how important it was to continuously rejuvenate this romance and commitment. He added, "Without that, we are history." He noted that the "enemy" to marriage was the lack of time they actually were able to spend with one another. They each made a vow to cut work hours in order to be together more as a family. In their 38 years of marriage, they had learned the amount of dedication they needed to have in order to make their marriage work.

I kept thinking to myself the role wedding gifts play in building the foundations of a strong and successful marriage. F. told me how gifts have certain significance:

> The gifts the parents give would not be the same, as everyone else would give. They would have to give some specific, profound gift to their children. But the general public, they can give anything. But the parents have to play a different role in giving the gifts. Every gift has to have a meaning. If you gave this, this is what you meant. Every gift has to have a communication. For example, if my husband and I gave our daughter a gift, I would give a tapa, like a piece of cloth. What I would mean is that when she will be working around the home, this is something she can tie around herself so that she can be covered. She is working; she is bending, in the kitchen, everywhere. So this is covering. She is not exposing her body. My husband will say, when he gives a gift to a man he will give something like a hat or a walking stick to show that he is the head of the home.

Given the thoughtfulness of the giving tradition, I was curious if B. and F. have kept this custom while living in the United States. They admitted they had become "very Americanized," even consulting a store's gift registry from time-to-time, but there was one event that remained in the Kenyan tradition:

> If it is a wedding, we still are strict on what to give as gifts. For example, Kikuyu (a tribe in Kenya) would give their traditional gifts. We as Luhya, our tribe, would give from the traditional way of giving. We would not even have to explain because one would know the meaning. So I think that tradition of gift giving has stayed.

B. had mentioned there were both Kenyan values and tribal values they wanted to preserve and pass down to their children. B. believed that the value of respect to the parents was a trait Kenyan culture valued more than American culture. Children in Kenya are taught to obey their parents and elders; not to do so risks shame and isolation.

Kenyans love to socialize. B. and F. want their children to know that "no one is an island." F. recalled her concern about coming to American, as she had been told, "In America it is one-on-one. When you are 18 it is over. You have to build your own." F. frequently felt anxious about her children's future. She grew up in a strong, interdependent, traditional country, and she wanted to maintain many of these values. F. was happy to acknowledge that her children, now all adults themselves, have successfully navigated their independence while remaining a family stronghold.

B. admitted that it has been easier for him and F. to hold onto the Kenyan culture than they had originally anticipated. Their children, on the other hand, have become "a mix" of values. Two of their five children can speak Swahili and their tribal language. The three of their children born in the United States love to eat hamburger, which B. and F. found particularly amusing.

Given the cultural differences, I inquired what brought Kenyans to America. F. quickly responded, "education and prosperity." B. followed, "land of opportunities." I thought of the school I had volunteered at in a rural village outside of Nakuru, Kenya. It was similar to the ones B. and F.'s older children had attended. Forty or more little bodies crammed onto wooden benches to learn the day's lesson. Looking at the eager faces, I could not help but think about opportunity, privilege, and motivation. From where I was standing in that primitive classroom, the classic Western view of opportunity and privilege seemed unattainable.

I asked what were "the better chances" B. and F. thought would be available to their children. B. reiterated the value of education. He noted that opportunities in Kenya are not always available due to the population and resources. I cannot fathom B. and F.'s world of leaving everything they knew, with just a bit of money in hand, based on a dream of a better education. It seemed like such a gigantic roll of the dice. B. and F. were not poor; they had some resources. Did they somehow not have the opportunity they needed for their kids to attain decent education in Kenya? Was an American education more valuable than a Kenyan one?

These questions lingered as I listened to B. and F.'s story of their migration process, fraught with its own difficulties. B. and F. had prayed often to come to the United States. It was a surprise to them when the opportunity came in 1972 for B. to attend school on a scholarship. However, the United States government required that a visitor have sufficient funds in order to prove he or she could return to the home country after the stay. B. and F. had just had their wedding—money was not an issue, but only for one. F. was pregnant with their first child. The couple agreed B. must take advantage of the opportunity. B. admitted the experience was difficult, especially because his son was born while he was away. B. did not see his first born until his wife and son were able to join him in the States. His little boy was 13 months old.

In June 1974, B. and F. left the United States and returned to Kenya for the next 14 years (see Table 1 for the back-and-forth moves of B. and F.). Their second return to the United States in 1988 proved more difficult now that their family was larger. They requested financial assistance from different community and church members to return to the U.S.. B. and F. felt the $17,000 they received "was a miracle of God." Unfortunately, it was not enough. They returned to the U.S. Embassy to obtain their visa. This time they were denied, based on, what they were told, the couple's lack of money. The couple had enough to pay for their visas and plane tickets and other incidentals, but they could not show they had enough money for the length of their stay. B. shook his head, still baffled as to how much they were expected to have, as no one told them. They left confused and without a visa. B. and F. returned to the Embassy six months later, with the same information and same amount of

money. This time they received approval, with no clear reason why this time things were accepted! F. half-joked about the "mighty miracle":

> If you asked anybody issuing the visa at the embassy, they will tell you it is even easier to end up in Heaven! Ask them why! To end up in Heaven you only need repentance and confession. God is willing and able to forgive. But at the American embassy it takes more than that!

B. and F. returned to the United States for B. to complete his degree at a seminary. They brought only a few belongings in hand: some clothing, Kenyan tealeaves, Kenyan cocoa, and *Roiko* (cooking spice). They also transported some small animal figures that they wanted to give to churches they would visit. B. had assumed that the seminary where he would be attending had arranged a home for them. When they arrived at the airport, the seminary had not made such arrangements. However, by the "grace of God," the daughter of their bishop greeted them at the airport and offered her one bedroom apartment to the couple and their five children.

B. and F. shared that their assimilation into American culture had its ups-and-downs. They often wondered what the motive was behind some of the comments made to them by Americans. For example, they are often asked, "When you are going back?" or "What brings you here?" B. stated they wondered why people ask these types of questions. F. added that such inquiries implied that they were not accepted: "We feel like we are not accepted or maybe the person is going to see us as a burden to them. Like that's why they want to know when we are going back. We feel it is not kind."

B. and F. travel back and forth between the United States and Kenya. Given that they own homes in both places, I queried, what do they consider *home?* I had heard them use the word interchangeably. In her eloquent way, F. explained the dual meaning of home for their family:

> This home is both. It is both because we have a home with the roots and a home with the branches. Kenya is a home with the roots and America is the branches. Why? Because some of our relatives are still there. Kenyan people are family oriented. Even when we are here, with my husband and children that is not it. We still cherish our aunts, our uncles, our mothers, and so forth. That is how we balance it together: roots and branches.

B. and F. remain under permanent residence status. The couple's desire to return to Kenya to retire, eliminating their need for citizenship. I inquired about their feelings about their children obtaining citizenship. B. and F. shared that, for their children, citizenship would provide them with more opportunities. F. went on to add the following comment:

> Hey! That is freedom! But for us, we looked at our age. We looked at our times of retirement here. We looked at what support. The way the system works here with retirement. Back home, we have our community.

As we spoke of their Kenyan home, B. reminisced about the relatives and community members they missed there. F. then moved to talk about how these people would be crucial in how B. and F. came to think about their future, including retirement: "So if we retire at home, we have some support system." B. and F. envisioned themselves retiring by age 65. B., being a church minister, added that he will never technically "retire." He will continue to provide his spiritual service by giving advice, wisdom, guidance, and direction.

Our discussion of retirement naturally flowed to the end of life. In the United States, the funeral is relatively short. Often it consists of a wake or viewing of the body, the memorial service, and then a burial service. Death is not a celebration; it is a time to mourn. I was intrigued, then, as B. and F. informed me about death and funeral practices in Kenya. As B. and F. recalled their back-and-forth movements between the States and their country-of-origin, it became clear that many of their returns were to honor the dead. I inquired about these "honorings," as they were calling them, given that this sounded quite different from the funerals I knew. B. recalled how they had returned for F.'s brother's funeral. According to the Luhya culture, when a person dies, the body remains at home for two to three days. The body is to stay at home for at least two days before the burial takes place in order for family and friends to gather around the deceased, remembering their life and mourning with others. People build a large campfire, and all stand around it. If a male has died, they slaughter a bull. When there is a woman's death, they kill a cow. The funeral service consists of family and friends gathering to sing songs and give prayers, much like an American funeral. The *big occasion* is the memorial service, which occurs on the one-year anniversary of the death. Family, friends, and community members join in this special service. The service occurs after the first year in order to look back upon the year that has passed without the person. F. noted that it also gives the family time to save money for the celebration. B. excitedly recalled, "Yes. This is a celebration; this is not a sad time." F. added, "Most don't shed tears. It is a celebration. At that time, we say 'We are closing.' We say 'It is over. May he rest in eternal peace. He is now with God. We will see him on the other side." Burial occurs on their own land. B. and F. both noted that burial on your land symbolizes the wholeness of one's life. The home was often the place where one was born, had lived, was married, raised one's own children, and then died. B. guffawed at the idea of a cemetery plot. He would return to his homeland.

Even as B. and F. yearned to return home, they wanted to make known those blessings they had received while in America. As B. recalled these "miracles," he turned to F., and I seemed to disappear from the room. I was standing as a witness to their remembering. B. looked to F., asking if she recalled the time when they had no food in the home. A woman then entered their life and bought them a month's supply of food. F. then asked him if he remembered the time an elderly woman stopped her and asked, "How do you survive here?" F. stated, "We just survive." The woman then handed F. one thousand dollars. There were similar stories where a church pastor had helped with the rent or when a missionary gave them a Ford Torino car. F. and B. simultaneously rang out, "It was a very strong car!"

B. and F. had moved back-and-forth between two lives. I wondered what advice they had for other Kenyans coming to the United States. B. emphatically stated that one should be involved in a church. He also emphasized the need to stay connected to other Africans, as a way to preserve culture. F. added, "When they come, not to assume. Not to assume when I [arrive] in Los Angeles [that] the angels are there with their hands open." B. reiterated that flexibility would allow one to "do anything!" F. wanted people to know how much they love Americans. I knew I had fumbled many times while coming to appreciate the Kenyan culture. I wondered how B. and F. had viewed these missteps that *muzungus* (White people) often made. I thought of the many people and organizations that often want to give money to "save the African orphans." B. assured me that they welcomed this generosity as long as it came from a place of curiosity and a willingness to learn. F. recalled a version of the old proverb, "If possible, give the child a fishing rod, and not only the fish."

As my time with B. and F. ended, I felt it was important to acknowledge to the couple how our meetings were only a glimpse into their lives. This story ends and is cemented in time, yet their lives keep going. Their stories continue long after this narrative ends. When I mentioned this to B., he told me, "We have just given you what you have asked," I realized

that my questions had shaped the story. F. shared how the couple had deliberately kept their stories "on the positive side." I wondered about this statement. B. and F. did not want an exposé on their lives. F. also acknowledged, "This is only about me and my husband. It doesn't include our children. . . . we would be invading their privacy if we told their stories without including them."

Summary

As part of the interpretive analysis process, we integrated the first author's experiences, both in interviewing the couple and in volunteering in Kenya in previous years. The final product is an intersection of Kenyan and American life that weaves back-and-forth between B. and F.'s and the first author's chronicles, and between the past and the present.

In this paper, we used a narrative inquiry framework to tell the stories of B. and F., who related how they negotiated dual lives in Kenya and the U.S. Employing an interpretive analysis, we overtly wove in the first author's perspectives of interviewing the couple, as well as her travels to Kenya to volunteer. The resulting narrative is a tapestry of stories, with intersecting threads of reference. Even though in this writing we captured a moment in time, their narrative history continues forward. This narrative represents a temporal transition, determined by the past and influenced by a perceived future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). By the time, the audience reads this story, the plotlines will have moved into different storylines. Above all, it is important to remember the fluidity of these stories and how our privileged positions of telling of it not only affected what they shared, but how we presented it. As the Kenyan proverb goes, "Until lions start writing down their own stories, the hunters will always be the heroes."

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