



# METROPOLIS BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity

## Working Paper Series

No. 08 - 13

October 2008

### **Integration of Young Francophone African Immigrants in Francophone Schools in British Columbia**

**Marianne Jacquet, Danièle Moore,  
Cécile Sabatier, and Mambo Masinda**

Series editor: Linda Sheldon, SFU;  
Krishna Pendakur, SFU and Daniel Hiebert, UBC, Co-directors

# **Metropolis British Columbia**

## ***Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity***

MBC is supported as part of the Metropolis Project, a national strategic initiative funded by SSHRC and the following organizations of the federal government:

- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA)
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Canada Economic Development for the Regions of Quebec (CED-Q)
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)
- Canadian Heritage (PCH)
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)
- Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor)
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSD)
- Department of Justice Canada
- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)
- Public Safety and Canada (PSC)
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
- The Rural Secretariat of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (Rural Sec't)
- Statistics Canada (Stats Can)

Metropolis BC also receives funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD) of the Government of British Columbia. Grants from Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria provide additional support to the Centre.

Views expressed in this manuscript are those of the author(s) alone. For more information, contact the Co-directors of the Centre, Krishna Pendakur, Department of Economics, SFU ([pendakur@sfu.ca](mailto:pendakur@sfu.ca)) and Daniel Hiebert, Department of Geography, UBC ([daniel.hiebert@ubc.ca](mailto:daniel.hiebert@ubc.ca)).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	5
INTRODUCTION	6
BACKGROUND	8
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
METHODOLOGY	16
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	20
• <i>From Africa to the Pacific</i>	20
• <i>Integration in the francophone minority context</i>	28
CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS: INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RESOURCES OF STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY	44
REFERENCES	45



# METROPOLIS BRITISH COLUMBIA

Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Diversity

## Working Paper Series

### **INTEGRATION OF YOUNG FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCOPHONE SCHOOLS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**Marianne Jacquet, Danièle Moore, Cécile Sabatier,  
and Mambo Masinda**

Department of Education, Simon Fraser University

The first three authors are the principal investigators for this RIIM/MBC funded project, entitled Mapping and Assessing African Students' Educational Needs and Expectations (2005– 2007). We would like to thank Mambo Masinda and Louise Jenkins, the research assistants on the project. We would also like to thank the CSF for its support for this research, and everyone who kindly placed their trust in us and shared their time to participate in our study.

## ABSTRACT

The demographic profile of francophone schools in the anglophone provinces of Canada has shifted dramatically. These schools now serve a diverse urban population with a wide range of linguistic and cultural origins. Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to an education in French for children who have at least one parent (or sibling) who received instruction in that language. The recent arrival in Vancouver, British Columbia (BC), of families from a number of African countries has transformed the academic landscape. The purpose of this exploratory study is to provide a demographic portrait of the francophone African newcomers and document the impact of the arrival of students from sub-Saharan Africa in a number of the schools in Greater Vancouver's *Conseil scolaire francophone* [Francophone Education Authority] (CSF) so that the needs of the various academic partners can be assessed. The study shows the complexity of the situations that exist, for example, in terms of the migrants' status, origins, languages and cultures and their previous social and academic experiences (families who have come from refugee camps or have been victims of genocide, child soldiers, etc.).

The research aims at documenting and assessing the needs of African students attending schools in the *Conseil scolaire francophone* (CSF) of British Columbia. This newly expanding immigrant population of students is eligible to enrol in French schools because their families were educated in French prior to arrival in British Columbia (BC), although they may speak a variety of African languages at home. A qualitative methodology based on interviews with different key partners, such as the CSF (administrators, principals, teachers), families and community partners (Immigrant Services Society, Mosaic, La Boussole, Multicultural Family Centre, Fédération des francophones

de la Colombie-Britannique) provides the multiple perspectives needed to understand the dynamics of student integration from diverse perspectives in homes, schools and communities. The findings are documented against the background of demographic data gathered in schools, Statistics Canada, and Community Airport Newcomers' Network.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to identify the needs and expectations of francophone African students enrolled in schools operated by the Conseil scolaire francophone [Francophone Education Authority] (CSF) in order to facilitate their academic and social integration, adapt teacher training to meet the needs of teaching in a multi-ethnic francophone context, and adapt the school system's policies to address these new issues. The specific objectives are:

- (1) to collect sociolinguistic and socio-cultural data that can be used to prepare a detailed portrait of francophone African students attending the 38 schools run by the CSF province-wide, and their families
- (2) to analyse the students' needs and expectations, by comparing them with what is reported by the various partners involved in the academic process
- (3) in partnership with the CSF and community organizations, to make recommendations on ethical and pedagogical approaches in order to support the leadership required to implement and promote an inclusive professional practice in a pluriethnic and democratic society.

The need for a portrait of the needs and expectations of francophone African students attending CSF schools in British Columbia is clear. First, all academic

and social partners are unanimous in identifying the numerous linguistic, cultural, academic and identity difficulties facing francophone African students in their process of academic and social integration. While French is the common linguistic denominator of students in francophone schools in minority communities, the multiplicity of African languages and cultures presents a challenge to the traditional vision of francophone identity, and more specifically, to the stated mission of francophone schools: to reproduce *one* language and *one* culture. The presence of African students in CSF schools is thus a direct challenge for the capacity of those schools to adapt to the diversity of needs, from a standpoint of inclusion and equity.

To our knowledge, no research has been done in BC to date on the integration of students from francophone sub-Saharan Africa in francophone minority communities. This study was therefore an opportunity for us to identify the complexity of the challenges that all academic partners—school administrators, teachers, community workers, and students’ parents—are facing. It contributes to the development of knowledge about a population with triple minority status that has largely been marginalized at the national level (see Statistics Canada 2003), while examining the unique elements of the BC context. This study may also offer an opportunity for comparison with the results of research currently being done or already completed in other provinces, such as Alberta (Moke Ngala 2005) and Manitoba (Bahi 2007).

This contribution will focus on:

- (1) describing the contextual and theoretical frameworks for the analysis
- (2) describing the methodological approach taken in this exploratory study
- (3) describing the general characteristics of African migration

- (4) identifying the main lines of analysis that emerged from the discourse of the various partners involved in the research, and particularly the community partners

We will conclude by recommending avenues for future investigation.

## BACKGROUND

The 2001 census data indicate that 294,705 individuals in Canada reported African origin, including all ethnocultural origins, and 51 percent of those individuals stated that they were “black” or simply “African” without giving further details. In BC more specifically, 25,000 individuals reported African origin, and an even smaller number, 9,400, identified African origin and black ethnicity (Statistics Canada 2007). Beginning in the 1980s, the number of people who are members of communities with francophone African origins rose significantly, although that phenomenon is relatively small in scope when compared with growth in immigration from anglophone Africa.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty of determining the characteristics of the *black African* and *francophone* populations, in absence of exhaustive and reliable statistics, is immediately apparent. The BC government’s statistics on immigrants do not enable us to identify the number of francophone immigrants by country of origin. The statistics compiled at Vancouver International Airport by the Community Airport Newcomers Network (CANN 2005) give only a partial picture, because CANN only compiles data about newcomers who transit the International Airport, and does not count interprovincial migration or migration from the United States. Based on that agency’s data, however, in 2005

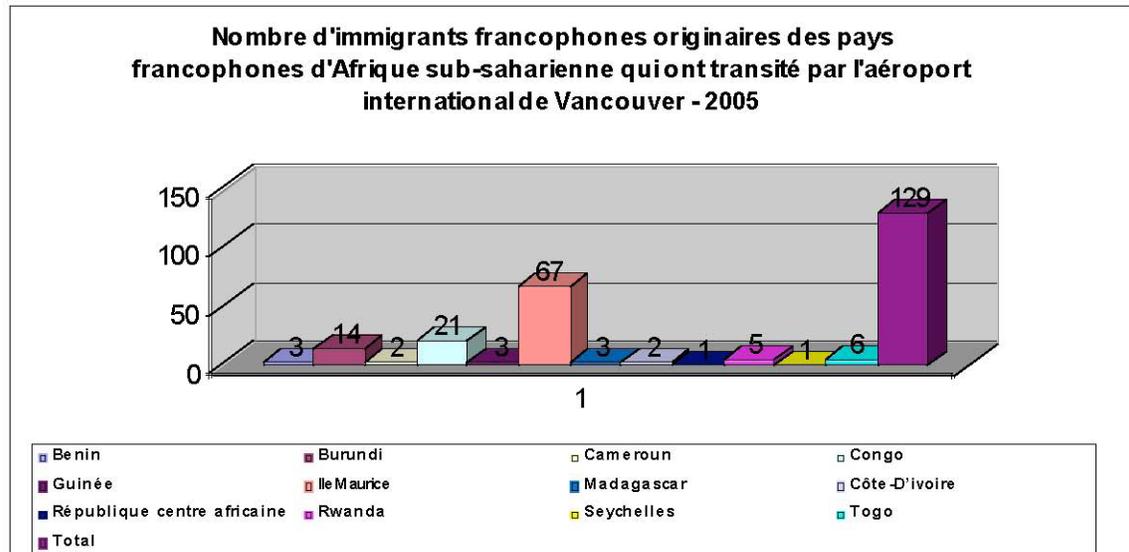
---

<sup>1</sup> Given that the francophone countries comprise half of the African nations (*The Canadian Encyclopedia* 2007; Tanaka 2005).

alone, francophone African newcomers from sub-Saharan African came from some 15 countries:<sup>2</sup>

## CHART 1

### FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRANTS FROM FRANCOPHONE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHO TRANSITED THROUGH VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2005



[Chart legend: Benin, Guinea, Central African Republic, Total, Burundi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Cameroon, Madagascar, Seychelles, Congo, Ivory Coast, Togo]

The diversity of contexts, in linguistic, cultural economic and socio-political terms, is immediately apparent from the geographic regions of origin shown. Other indicators reveal even more complexity—first, in terms of migration within Africa, in that wars and armed conflicts are a perennial part of the political landscape in certain African countries; and second, in terms of status on entry to Canada. Some newcomers enter Canada with political refugee status, others are economic immigrants, and others come as sponsored immigrants.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Data compiled from information provided by CANN.

<sup>3</sup> Sponsored immigrants have come to Canada under sponsorship programs.

A final factor that must be considered in embarking on an examination of the specific factors influencing the integration of this population in BC is the high number of young school-aged immigrants (Statistics Canada 2007). Because education is seen as a key factor in integrating immigrants, particularly young people, questions arise regarding the way in which the CSF school system can adapt to diversity and meet the complex needs and expectations of these young people while preserving its mission to promote French language and culture (CSF, projet *Pédagogie 2010*, 2006).

The CSF was created in 1995 and became autonomous in 1997 when the BC School Act was amended. Its mandate is to offer academic programs in French for the francophone minority in BC, which had a population of about 64,000 in 2007. The francophone program is offered only to francophone rights holders under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and is currently delivered in a network of 38 elementary and secondary schools serving the populations of 78 communities located throughout the province in a range of environments (urban, semi-urban, rural). The francophone communities appear to be extremely heterogeneous among themselves. Some, for example those in Vancouver, reflect a wide variety of languages, cultures, religions, and so on. Others, for example those outside the major urban areas, are more homogeneous and are home to a school population that is traditionally of French-Canadian origin.

The question of the academic and social integration of young francophone Africans is therefore one that arises in a francophone community that is itself a minority within BC, but is also in a state of flux as a result of the arrival of new groups who are the embodiment of international Francophonie.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the students in these groups who were enrolled in Greater Vancouver’s francophone schools in the 2005 school year. While there seems to be relatively few of them, considering all of the students enrolled in those schools, and given the complexity of the sometimes traumatic and often chaotic lives and experiences (as will be seen later in our portrait of African migration patterns), the presence of these students is nonetheless highly visible in the local structures responsible for their education.

**TABLE 1: FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRANT STUDENTS FROM SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN GREATER VANCOUVER—2005**

SCHOOL	TOTAL STUDENTS	IMMIGRANT STUDENTS FROM	
		SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	%
School A	411	24	5.8%
School B	325	02	0.6%
School C	290	19	6.5%
School D	178	02	1.1%
School E	73	01	1.3%
School F	61	02	3.2%
Total	1,338	49	3.6%

The integration process for these students therefore involves creating and preserving settings for learning and working that are adapted to the diverse social and cultural needs of the various communities served. It would seem crucial that research efforts be coordinated among each of the partners involved in the young people’s education—the family, social and academic communities—since the school plays a role in the development of their cognitive structures, their self-image and their understanding of the world, and in social mobility and equality (Alitolppa-Niitamo 2004; Hohl and Normand 1996).

While some researchers assert that little attention has been paid to African immigrants in general (Kamya 1997), a study done of young Ethiopian immigrants living in Israel (Berhanu 2005) shows that schools as institutions find it difficult to understand how students and their parents construct their identity

and belonging and how they assign meaning to their experiences. Moke Ngala (2005) notes, in a study of young Africans enrolled in francophone schools in Alberta: [translation] "the school...does not seem to be adequately equipped, in terms of human and material resources, to meet the needs of this new clientele" (p. 3). In addition, there is nothing that prepares these young people for learning, negotiating and embracing new meanings in an academic environment that is organized around an academic culture different from the culture or cultures they were familiar with in their country of origin or transit:

[translation] These young immigrants, and in particular those who arrive in Canada as adolescents, are therefore facing problems unique to themselves: having to deal not only with a new school system, but also with a new academic culture. They must also make new friends, learn English, get used to the variety in Canadian French, and even learn standard French. Many of them come from refugee camps or war zones, so their education has been seriously disrupted. Their experiences in their country of origin often do not seem to them to be relevant to their new situation. Their lives are often chaotic, particularly when some schools and school staff are not remotely prepared to receive them and provide them with the help they need. (Moke Ngala 2005: 16)

Understanding how families construct their own educational experiences through their relationships with the school, understanding how the educational institution (school administrators and teachers) perceives those relationships, understanding how community partners perform the role of advisers within the family-school relationship, and understanding where young people see themselves in these relationship interfaces will therefore enable us to decompartmentalize the research being done by taking a closer look at the ideological, socio-political, linguistic and cultural dynamics underlying these various situations.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual and theoretical framework for this study is therefore organized around, first, the research conducted and theories developed in urban sociolinguistics and in language teaching; and second, the research and theories associated with ethnic relations in education and the management of linguistic and cultural diversity in schools in minority and minoritized contexts.

Our analysis is connected with several conceptual and epistemological frameworks. The first lies in the field of educational sociolinguistics, which focuses on the study of bilingualism and plurilingualism and on the study of linguistic and cultural diversity and explores contacts and transmission of language within the family and in the school, and examines the academic cultures adopted within families and institutions (Moore 2006). The school must always look differently at diversity in the classroom in order to examine its contribution and how the school's public engages in linguistic, culture and identity construction in the context of plurilingual and pluriethnic societies (Sabatier 2006). Identity describes the way in which individuals understand their relationship with the world around them, how that relationship is constructed in time and space, and how they understand the construction of their future and represent it to themselves. Recent studies on the discursive construction of identities are also based on a post-structural theory (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004) that regards identity as dynamic and multiple and also holds that individuals use speech to negotiate their social position and integration into new communities (Dagenais 2003; Heller 2000; Norton 2000).

The second framework draws on the fields of studies of ethnic relations in education and multicultural/intercultural education, which focus on how educational systems address (or fail to address) the questions of the social, cul-

tural, linguistic and even religions integration of immigrants (Jacquet 2007a; McAndrew 2001; Bourgeault et al. 1995) and the arrangements made to address those needs. One thing the studies do is to put into perspective the complex interaction of difference markers such as origin, culture, language, and social class, which express the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the school (Ladson-Billings 2004; Ghosh and Abbi 2004; Ghosh 1996). The intersection of these dynamics crosscuts and structures power relationships, majority/minority relationships, and the official minority's relationship with its own minorities (Heller 2002). A critical approach to multicultural and intercultural education situates the construction of difference within unequal social relationships and in particular points to the structural changes that need to be made in the school, as in society at large, to support the development of a just and equitable society.

From the standpoint of examining the construction of a critical analysis of diversity management in a francophone minority context, the studies investigate the role and missions of the school in pluralist societies, how content is defined, curricula, the objectives to be achieved, the goals of evaluation processes, and the training provided for the individuals and organizations involved in actions and decision-making relating to education (Jacquet 2007b; Gérin-Lajoie 2002; Alidou 2000). Noteworthy is the scarcity of research in French in relation to diversity management in the schools in linguistic and cultural minority contexts in Canada (Langlois and Lapointe 2002: 38), and in particular in situations where conflicts of norms or values arise between the Canadian school and the family (Jacquet 2002).

By integrating sociological, sociolinguistic, intercultural, pedagogical and educational knowledge about the general issues associated with schools in linguistic and cultural minority contexts with knowledge derived from re-

search into diversity management in education, it is possible to construct a holistic theoretical framework that can be used in the initial and continuous training of all the partners and actors involved in integration, and in relation to the social participation of young immigrants and the transformation of their experience.

The final concept that will be called on is integration.<sup>4</sup> We are familiar with the terminological problems that this concept generates and with the danger of using a term that is now [translation] “a constant political issue” (Schnapper 1991: 96). Here, we are referring to a sociological conception of the term that addresses individuals’ and/or groups’ modes of participation in the community and society. From that perspective, integration is a process that involves forming and maintaining a collective entity and the relationships between an individual and a group, and reflects the capacity of the various actors and the social structures within which they act to maintain social cohesion and/or to adjust to it. This mutual reciprocity process assumes that [translation] “individuals and groups can be integrated by a variety of means. Participation in the community is neither uniform nor equal for all groups; it does not follow a single path, and it can never be complete” (Schnapper 1991: 98). Thus, participation in the community’s structures cannot be understood as a linear progression; it must be seen, rather, as a function of characteristics that allow room for different modes of integration.

While the school is a key element in social cohesion, rather than identifying the mechanisms that tend to ensure cohesion, our vision of integration is more concerned with the complexity of the transformations and adjustments that the various groups present must reciprocally engage in, and the

---

<sup>4</sup> We will not examine the lexical and epistemological paradigm raised by the concept of integration. See, for example, Pietrantonio et al. (1996), Juteau (1991) and Juteau and McAndrew (1992) for a discussion of this concept in the Canadian context, and Schnapper (2007) for the European context.

linguistic, cultural, socio-economic and other dimensions of those transformations and adjustments.

In ideological terms, integration is a means of managing relationships between majority and minority groups that is different from the assimilationist model in that a central role is assigned to the symbolic and actual recognition of minoritized groups and their participation in the construction of the society. Multiculturalism policy in Canada thus represents an ideology that is concerned with defining a pluralist vision of the national community (Juteau 1991). This federal policy provides the general framework to base and construct policies for managing diversity in the schools (intercultural, multicultural and anti-racism policies, etc.).<sup>5</sup> In BC, the Ministry of Education has developed a conceptual framework for managing diversity (Ministry of Education 2004), for both anglophone and francophone school boards, and is creating educational and cultural environments whose ultimate objective is integration of the young people enrolled in its schools.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this study is based on an ethnographic, sociolinguistic and anthropological approach and on collaboration between researchers and partners in the educational system (Lecompte, Preissle and Tech 1993). Specifically, it was developed in collaboration with the CSF, which gave the researchers access on the ground. This qualitative study is the first of its kind to be done in the francophone African population in BC. It is still exploratory in nature and makes no claim to be exhaustive or representative.

---

<sup>5</sup> The intercultural perspective in Quebec has developed as a reaction to Canadian multicultural policy, which some saw as a federal strategy designed to [translation] "divide and conquer" (McAndrew 1995).

The study methodology includes a literature review undertaken in order to get an overall picture of both African migrants and their migrations, in Africa and in Canada. It also involves questionnaires<sup>6</sup> modeled on the tools developed by Héran, Filhon and Deprez (2002), which were sent to a sample of African families with children enrolled in the francophone schools, in order to produce a profile of the families. The questionnaires sent to the families, some translated into three African languages (Kinande, Lingala, Swahili), were conducted orally by the researcher, who filled out the questionnaires and recorded any responses and discussion they may have generated. The purpose of the questionnaires was to identify family composition, languages used, cultural and religious practices, countries of origin, countries transited, any mobility within Canada, migrant status, citizenship, family members' socio-educational profiles, work life, involvement in the community, contacts with family who remained in the country or countries of origin, contacts with family members who have settled in other provinces in Canada or in the United States or France, reasons for choosing to educate the children in French, and a statement of needs and expectations.

We also conducted semi-directed individual interviews (with administrators, community partners and parents) and group interviews (with teachers and children), each lasting about an hour and a half. Through those interviews, we were able to gather the opinions of 37 volunteer participants:

- 7 school administrators and principals
- 7 teachers (including a speech pathologist)
- 6 fathers and 1 mother

---

<sup>6</sup> The results of analysis of the questionnaires will not be presented here, since they will be the subject of systematic analysis at a later time.

- 9 francophone African students
- 7 community partners representing various organizations involved in receiving and integrating immigrants (Immigrant Services Society, Mosaic, La Boussole, Multicultural Family Centre, Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique), all of whom came from the francophone African community (including one Moroccan).

The interviews were conducted over a two-year period and took place in the participants' workplaces, in their homes or in the university research office, for parents who preferred, and in two classrooms made available for the students.

The group interviews with the teachers were conducted at two school sites and document the impact of the arrival of these students, in their classrooms and on classroom practices. These group interviews identify the arrangements made (or not made) and the perception of how well those arrangements meet teachers' real needs. The topics in the interview guide were organized around the following broad themes:

- (a) students from the African community: reception, fears, problems
- (b) knowledge of the African community
- (c) relations with parents and the community
- (c) human and material resources to be developed (in terms of initial and continuous training, leadership, pedagogical materials, etc.)

Analysis of the interviews involved analysing discourse and content to identify the needs and expectations of the various actors involved in the teaching relationship (L'Écuyer 1987).

The individual interviews with community partners related to:

- (a) general information
- (b) services offered to the francophone African community
- (c) interactions with the school community
- (d) identity construction among young francophone African immigrants

The interviews with CSF school principals and administrators related to:

- (a) general information about the participants
- (b) description of the academic context (curricula, teachers)
- (c) assessment of the needs of African students
- (d) relations with families and the francophone African community
- (e) arrangements made for taking needs into account (strategies, resources, collaboration)
- (f) diversity management policies and teacher training policies in place and/or to be implemented

A discursive and content analysis was also done of all of this discourse.

Although collecting data relating to the discourse of students enrolled in CSF schools was one of the structuring focuses of the study as a whole, this could not be completed in full within the framework of this initial exploratory study. The wealth of data collected from the other partners did result in our pursuing the first data analysis further. Targeted examination seemed to be a necessary and unavoidable prerequisite to understanding the full complexity and overall dynamics of the process of inclusion/exclusion within which the academic and social integration of young francophone African immigrants takes place. As a result, only two group interviews<sup>7</sup> have been conducted to date.

---

<sup>7</sup> One group of two students preferred that the interview not be recorded.

Those interviews, with francophone African students enrolled in a secondary school, provided an opportunity to make initial contact with the students and to establish that they would collaborate in the research. Preliminary information relating to their migration, the languages they speak, and their experiences with integrating into the new academic and social environment was gathered during the interviews. More in-depth individual interviews are planned for research to be done at a later date.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *From Africa to the Pacific*

#### Refugees, displaced persons and internal migrations

Africa has nearly 870,685,307 inhabitants living in an area covering 30,206,704 km<sup>2</sup>. It is composed of 57 francophone, anglophone and lusophone countries. Life expectancy is 52 years, with a birth rate that remains very high: 38 per 1,000. The mortality rate is also very high: 15 per 1,000; and even higher among children: 89 per 1,000. The sub-Saharan continent is a mosaic of peoples, languages and cultures, and bears the imprint of a complex colonial history. Over 2,011 languages are spoken, and all of the major religions are practised (Naidoo 2005).

From a political standpoint, the African states are young, with their existing borders a legacy of colonization. There have been three major phases in African political history in the last 40 years:

- (1) the wars of independence and political upheavals that followed after countries achieved independence
- (2) dictatorial regimes

- (3) the wave of democratization that began on the continent in the 1990s

Most African states achieved independence in the early 1960s, a decade that is regarded as an historic period that marked the mobilization of the African peoples against colonization. From north to south and east to west, one after another, countries liberated themselves from the colonial yoke. In some, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Ghana and Guinea Conakry, independence did not involve lengthy conflict. On the other hand, other parts of the continent endured long wars of independence, as was the case in Zimbabwe, Namibia and Mozambique.

Most countries instituted political systems that adopted liberal democracy shortly after independence. However, a combination of complex factors, including manipulation by foreign interests (Amin 1976), the political immaturity of the African elites (Young 1980), the colonial legacy (inadequate borders, forced population movements, etc.) (Mamdani 1996), ethnic manipulation (Prunier 1999), and the geopolitics of the Cold War served to justify the institution of strong dictatorial regimes whose goal, at least tacitly, was to allow for the construction of homogeneous nations and to avoid allowing the countries to fall into the ideological orbit of other countries (Masinda 2004).

For more than three decades, there was relative calm in some countries, like Tanzania and Zambia, while others, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Chad, lived through never-ending civil wars fuelled by grievances relating to political exclusion, regional economic imbalance, the locations of borders, and the hegemony of one ethnic group over others.

In the early 1990s, a tide of democracy began to rise as a result of a combination of factors internal to the African states and factors associated with the end of the Cold War. Internally, mismanagement of public affairs (Bayart 1993) caused the breakdown of the social contract between state and people, prompting the people to find allegiances by falling back on ethnic, religious or regional identities. Internationally, the great importance Africa enjoyed during the Cold War faded as economic considerations alone began to prevail. In this context of fragility, and deprived of the financial and military support of the West, African political elites had to bow to public pressure and the demands for greater emphasis on political freedom and economic justice.

The difficult and uneven transition from dictatorial regimes to democracy ultimately led to fratricidal wars, the most atrocious being the ones that ravaged the populations of Rwanda, Burundi and Congo in the late 1990s (Sada 2003; Prunier 1999). These armed conflicts led to forced population movements within the African continent and also to Europe and North America. The figures and the tables presented below show the various statuses assigned to displaced populations by international organizations: refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and voluntary intra-African migrants.

The International Organization for Migration (OIM) (2005) reports that a consistent characteristic of international migration in Africa is the significant proportion of *refugees*. The OIM states that in 1990, refugees accounted for 33 percent of the total number of international immigrants on the continent. That proportion has dropped since 2000, but it still accounts for a significant share (UNHCR 2005). Under the initial articles of the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who,

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Table 2 shows the numbers of refugees in certain African countries.

**TABLE 2: ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND OTHER PERSONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (HCR) IN CERTAIN AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN 2004**

Djibouti	18,035
Eritrea	14,589
Ethiopia	116,027
Kenya	249,310
Uganda	252,382
Somalia	18,760
Sudan	845,867
South Africa	142,907
Angola	105,145
Benin	5,855
Côte d'Ivoire	119,832
Burundi	152,992
Democratic Republic of Congo	213,520
United Republic of Tanzania	602,256
Chad	260,064

Source: UNHCR (2004)

At the end of 2004, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) counted nearly 1,257,700 refugees in the world, including 770,500 refugees in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, and 465,100 refugees in West Africa.

The second category of displaced populations is *internally displaced persons* (IDPs). This category is important for our study in that some of the young immigrants who enter francophone schools in BC may have experienced dis-

placement within their own countries before arriving in Canada. Displaced persons are

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border (Boutros-Ghali 1992).

Table 3 shows the extent of the phenomenon of IDPs. Africa continues to be the continent most affected by that phenomenon. The Norwegian Council for Refugees (2004) estimated that there were about 25 million IDPs around the world, with Africa alone accounting for nearly 13 million. The three countries in Africa most affected by internal displacement are Sudan (4 million), the Democratic Republic of Congo (3.4 million) and Uganda (1.4 million).

**TABLE 3: COUNTRIES WITH THE MOST INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS**

COUNTRY	ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF	
	DISPLACED PERSONS	DATE
Afghanistan	153,192–200,000	August 2004–September 2005
Algeria	1,000,000	2002
Angola	91,240	August 2005
Azerbaijan	575,000	January 2004
Burundi	117,000	May 2005
Colombia	1,580,396–3,563,505	March 2005–July 2005
Côte d’Ivoire	500,000	Nov 2005
Democratic Republic of Congo	2,170,000	June 2005
Ethiopia	150,000–265,000	December 2004–April 2005
Kenya	381,924	August 2005
Sudan	5,355,000	August 2005

Source: Norwegian Council for Refugees (2004)

The last category refers to people called *voluntary intra-African migrants*, a category composed of people who have been living for many years in countries other than their country of nationality and who do not enjoy the protec-

tion of the UNHCR. Africa has nearly 16 million intra-African immigrants. In 2003, 42 percent of those immigrants were living in West Africa, 28 percent in East Africa, 12 percent in North Africa, and 9 percent in Central and Southern Africa (Zlotnik 2003).

More specifically, it is estimated that Ghana received about 600,000 foreigners in 2000 and that Nigeria received about 750,000 in the same year (UNHCR 2004). Gabon, which is also relatively rich in natural resources, received over 100,000 international migrants in the early 1990s. The economic crisis of the 1990s, however, led to draconian laws being applied in 1995 that compelled foreigners to pay a residence fee and resulted in over half of them being expelled (OIM 2000). In South Africa, the mining industry recruited migrant workers from neighbouring countries every year, for a total of nearly 308,000 people in the early 1970s, but the numbers fell to nearly 200,000 in the 1980s and early 1990s (Global Commission on International Migration 2005).

The feminization of African immigration has been observed for some years now (Zlotnik 2003). In 1960, Africa had the lowest rate of women immigrants (42 percent) when compared with the countries of Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia (46 percent). Comparative data at the regional level also show that 49.6 percent of all refugees in Africa are women and that 45 to 55 percent of them are under the age of 18.

Children also account for a large number of refugees and displaced persons. In 2001, for example, nearly 56 percent of the refugees in Central Africa were under the age of 18. In some refugee camps, the proportion of children is extremely high. For example, in refugee camps in Angola, children represent 69 percent of the populations, and they account for 64 percent

in Togo, 62 percent in Burundi, 60 percent in Sudan, and 61 percent in the Democratic Republic of Congo. These figures can have significant implications for extra-continental immigration. In 2003, for example, out of 12,800 unaccompanied children received in Europe—the United Kingdom (2,800), Austria (2,050), Switzerland (1,330), the Netherlands (1,220), Germany (980), and Norway (920)—nearly 45 percent came from Africa. The 2001 census indicates that in Canada, 49 percent of individuals of African origin, counting all national origins, were under the age of 25, as compared with 33 percent of the population as a whole (Statistics Canada 2007).

### Education in crisis

Considerable efforts were made with respect to education in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. In about the mid-1970s, the economic crisis brought with it the destructuring of the educational systems that were just getting off the ground. Compared with other parts of the world, Africa is still lagging behind. For example, school attendance rates are 94 percent and 97 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively, while the rate is 74 percent in Southern Asia, and only 59 percent in sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF 2005).

The gulf is particularly apparent when we consider the sex of the individuals in question. There is a wide discrepancy between school attendance by boys and girls. Girls are generally disadvantaged in relation to both admission to elementary school and enrolment overall, while their repetition rate is approximately the same as for boys (Hartnett and Ward 1993). More recent statistics show that there has been little change in this regard, although the number of girls attending school is continuing to rise overall.

There are also regional and national peculiarities in terms of the efforts devoted to education in Africa. For example, according to UNICEF (2005),

Eastern and Southern Africa improved their net school enrolment/attendance rates by 0.9 percent per year, on average, between 1980 and 2001, while the rate for Western and Central Africa is only 55 percent, in spite of an average increase of 0.8 percent per year since 1980. The latter region has more than a third of the 21 countries in the world where the net elementary school attendance rate is lower than 60 percent, probably because of the multiple wars raging there. Eastern and Southern Africa include countries where elementary education for everyone is virtually a given. Some examples in this regard are Mauritius, the Seychelles and South Africa, which in 2001 had net school enrolment/attendance rates above 90 percent overall. For the same year, in Africa, Eritrea had 42.9 percent of children enrolled in school, Ethiopia 30.6 percent, and Somalia only 10.8 percent.

Young people sometimes are also involved in multiple migrations that can affect their academic integration. A young person may have been an IDP or lived in a refugee camp for several years before arriving in Canada. In each situation, he or she may not have had an opportunity to receive an education on an ongoing basis. In some countries, as well, education has become a luxury to which few children have access, a situation that is particularly problematic in relation to school attendance by girls, who are already penalized to the boys' advantage.

It is therefore not unusual for young francophone African immigrants who arrive in British Columbia to have experienced forced displacement, sometimes within their own country and then to another country before arriving in Canada. In those circumstances, the education they may have received, which is often described as education in situations of crisis or emergency, was often not continuous, and the learning that was accomplished is often far from equivalent to the academic knowledge that is the focus in the receiving

country. A majority of the studies that have examined emergency or crisis education have focused on the relationship between education and conflict, on the assumption that education can be a tool for transforming mentalities in order to prevent future conflicts. Sinclair (2004), for example, considers education in crisis situations to have psychological benefits for young people in distress, while the knowledge they acquire can help in the process of reconstruction after the crisis and in preventing conflicts. This is why international humanitarian organizations want to ensure that displaced persons or refugees continue to receive an education. Few studies, however, have documented the impact of crises on young people's academic performance (Masinda and Muhesi 2001). A better understanding of the long-term impact of education in crisis situations is therefore essential to better identify special problems that young francophone Africans experience in the process of academic and social integration in the receiving country and in order to develop appropriate support measures.

### *Integration in the francophone minority context*

#### Triple minoritization: Migrant, African and francophone

The triple minoritization process that leaves its imprint on young African students (who are immigrants, francophone immigrants and francophone African immigrants) prompted us to focus on this community, it being visible but invisible in terms of numbers, access to power and resources. Our research shows that there is a shared concern among the partners involved in their education about including students from the francophone African community, but that there is a disconnect between the various spaces where representation occurs, which relates to [translation] "the construction of social relationships based on difference and inequality" (Heller 2002: 150). These diverging

movements then create tensions between the centre (the francophone community) and the margins (the African communities) and redraw the borders of a Francophonie where everyone can symbolically invest in its legitimacy. The growing diversity of francophone voices has led to attention being given to the polyphonic element, to study plural identity construction in diversified contexts and focus on what it means to be African and francophone in Vancouver in a doubly imagined francophone African community (Sabatier, Jacquet, and Moore 2007).

### Transmission of francophone identity

When asked about preserving francophone identity, the parents of African students enrolled in francophone schools all said that it is important to them to retain this identity. That affirmation of francophone identity is in fact a crucial concern, as **Ro** says:

**Ro:** [translation] It is really fundamental because I am a francophone first. I am in a bilingual country where French is one of the official languages ... For me, in any case, it's ... it's a concern.

For the parents who were interviewed, enrolling their children in a francophone school is therefore part of a strategy for transmitting francophone identity, which is regarded as valued and valuable social capital. Being francophone means affirming one's belonging to one of the linguistic groups officially recognized in Canada, but also, as we see with **Fa**, it means being part of a more fluidly delineated francophone community, the international African Francophonie. Identity affirmation is thus reflected through a commitment to education in French, and [translation] "mirrors Canadian bilingualism and African Francophonie" (Moore, Jacquet, and Sabatier 2007):

**Ro:** [translation] What I would say is that it is very important to have my child in a francophone school. That is really important.

**Fa:** [translation] I believe it is important. First, obviously, French is our identity, although it is not our mother tongue ... It is as if it were, because at home we speak only French with the children. I was born in a different environment; I learned French at school. That is the only language they have. My mother tongue—OUR mother tongue—they don't know it, they are francophone. They truly are francophone, and for that reason alone they have to retain it. Not to mention that it opens a lot of doors for them, if they can retain their French; they will be able to communicate with the francophone world as a whole. It would be unfortunate if they were to lose something they have in their blood.

**Fa** differentiates, however, between his identity and his children's, whom he considers to be essentially francophone—by blood!—while his own identity is somewhat hybrid, rooted in his culture and his mother tongue and the French identity to which he seems to be deeply attached.

The community workers have the same take on the situation as the parents when it comes to the role of school in maintaining francophone identity. For example, **Bo** states:

**Bo:** [translation] Yes, I think that, for the parents of francophones here in BC, it is a priority to send their children to a francophone school, because that's what they do. When the mother arrives here, the first thing she says is, I want... because my children were educated in a francophone system, and because their father was francophone and I understand and speak a little French myself, I want my children be able to study in a francophone school like they did before.

In a majority anglophone context, the identity issue is a central sociopolitical issue for the francophone minority community in BC, because of the fragile position that French and francophone culture is in, and because of the imbal-

ance of power between the anglophone majority and the francophone minority (Heller 2002). The African parents reiterate that fragility. **Fa** put it this way:

**Fa:** [translation] I can't imagine a francophone who would say no. Can someone not be proud of who they are? I think English keeps pushing further and gaining more ground, research is being done more and more in English and less and less in French ... But we have to keep doing research in French to promote francophones' pride in the future.

That parent associates his pride in being francophone with what he is, but he is also expressing his fear of seeing French lose ground.

When we asked about young people's identity, the community workers expressed concern about preserving that identity. In **Bo's** view, young francophone immigrants are frustrated when it comes to their identity. On that point, **Bo** said:

**Bo:** [translation] Yes, I think they are frustrated when it comes to their identity and they are lost because they have a hard time identifying as francophones because they are not accepted by either anglophones or francophones.

**Bo's** comment illustrates a certain uneasiness in the system for receiving young African immigrants. **Bo** expresses the feeling that young African immigrants have that they are adrift in their francophone minority community. They feel as though they belong to neither the francophone community nor the anglophone community, because there is no francophone framework that would guide them in integrating into that community, and because they lack the English language skills that provide access to the anglophone community. **Pa** also cited the identity tension felt by young francophone Africans, one cause being the unequal relationships within the francophone minority community:

**Pa:** [translation] There is all this confusion. There is some francophone identity, but also, as I said, there is tension, a francophone identity that is, I'll

say it in English, *challenged by ...* from all sides, because we are in an anglo-phone environment.

In short, the double minoritization of young Africans (immigrants and francophones) and the power imbalance between anglophones and francophones filter the identity experience of young Africans in their new integration context. The discourse of the community partners thus reveals an identity that bears the imprint of disruption and discontinuity—a transitory identity, between two worlds, subject “to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall and du Gay 1996; Hall 2000). The discussion of identity reflects the visibility/invisibility dynamic that seems to play out through a gradual distancing from francophone identity. Further analyses will be required, however, in order to give a voice to the young people themselves and to parents and community partners on the issue of identity.

### Choosing the language of education

There is a strong link between the ability to find work and immigrant parents’ choices to have their children educated in a francophone or anglophone school. To some parents, knowledge of both languages is a tool for social mobility, while to others, trying to learn both languages does not provide young francophone immigrants with the fluency in English that they see as the primary tool for social success in their new environment. Parents who were educated in French and have a high level of education tend to enrol their children in francophone schools. Parents with less education, on the other hand, tend to leave the choice of language of education up to their children, who have often had some initial contact with French, or to make the choice based on what their friends advise.

For example, **Pa** says:

[translation] For parents who were educated in French, they have French. They value their francophone heritage highly and are very attached to it. There are young people who come here who were educated in a francophone setting and whose parents are not educated, and for them, it is the child, rather, who decides to go there. But, I know that for parents who grew up in a francophone education system, who spoke French, they are going to value French more ... But also, I know there is pressure for the child to also be ... in the anglophone environment. I know there is tension, if the parent is francophone the parent will want the child to learn French.

**Ma** says:

[translation] I have talked to parents about this on several occasions. Some parents think that instead of wasting time going to francophone schools when they will then go to an anglophone school here, it is better to prepare them right away to deal with the anglophone community 100 percent.

This opinion suggests that the parents think that educating their children in a francophone school is a hindrance to integration because the young people run the risk of being unable to cope with the language and culture of anglophone Canada, and thus of losing the opportunity to achieve greater success in life.

Because choosing the language of education for young immigrants involves a combination of several factors, including pride in their identity and efforts to achieve social mobility, it can lead to identity tension or, in some cases, to the construction of a more complex bilingual and bicultural identity, an anglo-francophone added value. This hybrid identity (Hall and du Gay 1996), which is characteristic of the negotiation of difference in a migratory context and of the new dynamics that emerge as a result, is apparent in **Ro's** comments.

**Ro:** I think it is both, in any event ... they are inseparable. First, for social mobility, the mere fact that someone ... if someone is bilingual, they will

have more opportunities, more chances, certainly, and you're francophone ...  
in any case ... You are proud to be. In any case, I am proud to be.

### Difficulties in identification for young francophones

Community workers say that some children are not admitted to the schools because their parents do not speak French. When we dig deeper, we find that the question is more complex than simply not speaking French. First, what do we tell parents who were educated in French but at such a minimal level that they do not feel able to speak French fluently? Deep inside, they identify with the language and have always wanted to master it, and so have always thought of themselves as francophone. A variation on this theme must also be considered: the case of a parent who arrives in Canada with children and who does not speak French, but whose spouse was educated in French in Belgium before being killed in their home country. In that specific case, the children speak French but the surviving parent does not. By assigning the right to the parents rather than the child, the Canadian Charter is not equipped to deal with cases like these, because when young people are denied admission to francophone schools, the reason cited is section 23.

The denial of their francophone identity that is felt by the parents and young people is expressed in these comments:

**Bo:** [translation] This mother is a single woman who came here with seven children. Every time there was a problem, they needed an interpreter or had to send her to someone at school. So after three months they decided not to accept her children at the school. They said no, you do not belong here because your mother doesn't speak French. Obviously the mother did not speak French but the children's father is francophone and in fact was a member of parliament in Burundi.

The feeling of having been abandoned can be heard in the survivor's voice. The community worker expressed it in these words:

**Bo:** [translation] ... but the client told me, I feel abandoned, they have forgotten about me, I have been ignored, I am not going to English school, my children are not going to French school, and I don't know what to do.

The consequence of this denial of identity, to both parents and young people, in terms of school admission, could result in francophones defecting and numbers dwindling. For parents who come from a culture organized around the community and community life, it is common to consult other parents in the same ethnic group when making life choices, including choices about children's language of education. An experience that is as difficult for some parents as what is described in the comments above could discourage other parents, who would not want to risk suffering the same rejection. **Bo's** comments in this regard clearly illustrate why parents opt for the anglophone education system by default when their right to choose education in French is challenged:

**Bo:** [translation] I said fine, what's going on, what is the real problem? I investigated. I called the people on the francophone school board. I talked to school X, I talked to the people in charge, I talked to M. at the FFCB. And I didn't really get a good answer, a satisfactory answer. So because it was the children who were suffering, I thought it wasn't fair for them to be staying home and not getting an education. I got the children enrolled in English because the French school had rejected them. So we lost five children because the system is not organized. Why? Why isn't the system organized?

The community workers also stressed that the schools intimidate the parents of young francophone immigrants, and so the path to an education is still a source of anxiety:

**Bo:** [translation] From time to time, there are parents who are afraid, not even, hesitate to send their children to a francophone school. It isn't because they don't want to, it's because they are afraid. Listen, when I arrived

here I saw that so-and-so's child had started there but he was having problems, and the difficulties continued, so it wasn't worth the trouble of sending him any more. They do not trust the system any more. I think we have to improve the francophone school board system. They work better in English. In French, there is still a long, long way to go to improve it and to earn the trust of parents, so the parents can send their children to the francophone schools.

### Integration of young people into the schools

When francophone African students arrive in BC, they have to deal with multiple difficulties that affect their integration into the francophone schools. Some difficulties are associated with their pre-migration experiences, while others are more specific to the francophone school. Community workers and teachers report the academic and cultural disconnects as major obstacles to the integration of young people:

**Pa:** [translation] The young people have specific problems. In the cases of refugees, their education may not have been as sophisticated as education here. No transition; a young person, we look at his or her age, and we put him or her in the class that corresponds to the age, but we don't look at the disconnect ... not intellectual, because these young people are very intelligent. It is a disconnect from the academic system, and that is really a problem. It discourages the young people, and we have young people who ultimately drop out of school and become what they become. We can't even talk about it.

**Ma:** [translation] I think a second need is, in terms of academic catching up, some of them come in and are significantly behind, and I think one of the biggest challenges the francophone school system is going to have to address is allowing young francophones to catch up and have a normal academic life. I think this is an enormous challenge. Another challenge involves mental health ... I don't know whether we have to call it mental or ... some young people have come from countries where there was a war ... they have probably experienced terrible events, and ... are they going to become vio-

lent? Are they going to drop out of the school system? Will they be resilient enough to overcome the, I would say, the traumas they have had to face before coming here? I have no answers. I think the work has to be done immediately in terms of mental health.

Some parents, like **Ro**, also note the disparity in academic experiences. Children who attended public schools are less prepared than children who attended private schools:

**Ro:** [translation] To talk about specific cases, my case, to be specific, I did not notice much difference because according to his mother, and what we had heard, say, little discussions I had with him, the speed with which he adapted ... I think it went well. But for other specific cases ... I knew other children who had difficulties, who were in public schools in their country, and when they came here, they were at such a low level that they had difficulty getting ... let's say it was not easy to get them up to speed.

On top of the academic disconnect there is the cultural disconnect, which some respondents considered to be a major barrier to academic integration of young people, as illustrated in these excerpts:

**Pa:** [translation] It doesn't seem to me—because I think there are systems for youth at risk or students who have special needs—but I think that system has still not been adapted to deal culturally ... is not adapted to deal with the cultural disconnect and the disconnect in the system. And also, these are young people who have experienced traumas. Adapting to a new culture is really very, very difficult. These young people are already having a hard time.

The adaptation process for young francophone immigrants must therefore be contextualized; it must be seen in the context of a dynamic that calls for understanding a set of factors, all of which must be taken into account to identify solutions to the problems they present. This also applies to adapting structures in the school system to the needs of young francophone African

immigrants. This is an important dimension of an inclusive approach to differences in education (Ghosh and Abbi 2004).

### Cultural competencies of teachers

Some parents, community workers and teachers associate difficulty in adjusting at school with a difficulty in adjusting to the culture. They believe that if the school can soften the cultural transition, adaptation should succeed. They are aware of the difficulties involved in cultural change and the frustrations that may accompany it, which must be taken into account in the academic adaptation process for young immigrants:

**Ro:** [translation] They really have an obligation to make an effort, maybe not to be familiar with every culture, but at least to know (inaudible) ... when there are gaps in adaptation or adaptation problems. Because this is at the cultural level and all. Teachers have to try to put themselves in the position of these children, too, who are coming from different environments. Their being Canadian, and having grown up here, and growing up in an environment they are familiar with, maybe they want the standards to be like that, but before the child can internalize those standards ... because I sometimes heard in the past, in the press sometimes, in discussions, sometimes children in certain communities are frustrated. They bring food that smells bad, things like that. The children ... where they were born, they grow up there, the eating habits, you know, some communities, it doesn't change much.

These concerns are shared by community workers and some teaching staff, whose discourse also describes the cultural disconnect between the students and the Canadian francophone school.

**FG-Teach.:** [translation] We are asking them to adjust to a way of life that includes the school but that is not just the school. We are asking them to adjust to a way of life in a period of time with very rigid demands. You have to be here at this time, you have to sit at your desk. I mean, that's why you're here. We ask them to hold the pencil like this. The toilet is at the end

of the hall. Very, very precise demands, with no transition period for these children, with no orientation period for these children. So, we don't have the time to welcome them in as we welcome other students, and I think this does these students a great injustice.

Community workers are of the view that teaching staff must be representative of ethnic diversity, to be sure there is someone there who can understand the needs and provide help and appropriate services for the young people. What they are asking for is consistent with a demonstrated desire on the part of several school boards where adjustment counsellors liaise between school and family and are part of an essential dimension of adapting educational institutions to the diversity of their populations. The following comments sum this up well:

**Bo:** [translation] They have to learn, for example, to seek out supervisors, educational consultants, and teachers and teachers' aides ... I think there are people qualified to do this kind of work. It's just that the problem is lack of awareness. We have to get them to see what the need is, because it really is difficult for the students, and also for the teachers, who are not familiar with the culture of children coming from Africa. I don't think that this is an easy job. I was a student in Africa myself. I am familiar with the problems of Africans. I was a refugee and I understand the problems of refugees. Now I am a Canadian, and when I have to reconcile the two it's easy, I have an easy answer.

A number of factors can be advanced to explain this cultural disconnect: first, there is the lack of experience and training on the part of teaching staff regarding diversity issues in the schools (Jacquet 2007a and 2007b) and in particular the lack of training about the African population (Alidou 2000); second, educational resources are not culturally adapted to the target population; and third, the accumulation of difficulties facing African students (and particularly refugees) increases the complexity of the educational process and also limits

its scope, particularly in situations where the difficulties encountered extend beyond the educational process, as is the case for students who have suffered major psychological traumas.

### School-family partnership

Moke Ngala (2005) points out how far African parents' expectations regarding their children's academic success are from being met, given that not only are some African students failing academically, but also their social integration continues to be a problem. In the author's view, the financial difficulties students experience, the lack of human and material resources in the schools to meet the needs of this new population and the difficulty the parents have—trying themselves to deal with a difficult immigration process—in helping their children learn, are all obstacles to the social integration of the students. On this point, the parents interviewed seem to be unanimous in believing that their role is important to the academic integration of the young people. In the words of **Ro**, [translation] "Absolutely, yes. The parents have an important role to play." However, some parents appear to be satisfied with their communications with the school:

**Ro:** [translation] I think we communicate very well with the school, I'm always aware of a lot of activities or situations that relate to my child. I think communications work quite well.

A community worker was just as spirited when discussing communications between school and parents:

**Pa:** [translation] Yes, yes, of course ... the school really tries to do the most ... in general, in general ... although there are students who ultimately have problems, they said that the school tried to involve the parents, and, well ...

Some community workers take a more shaded view, however. For example, **Bo** thinks that some schools communicate with parents better than others; as he put it:

**Bo:** [translation] The first thing is communication. The second thing is support. When the parents are still at work, the children have no support to help them with their homework; there is a lack of clear understanding between family and school. But in terms of transportation, I think it's fine. Some francophone schools are better organized than others, with laptops. I have had grade 10 students who have laptops, the children can use to learn how to expose themselves to new technologies. But other schools are having problems. The parents have no support. There are not enough school counsellors to keep the students, the school and the parents connected. I am going to hope, for example, that if the school has children ... when it has meetings, they can talk to us so that we can show them, look, these are the problems, these are the problems the parents are having.

### Partnerships between francophone schools and community organizations

A number of community partners report a low level of collaboration between the francophone schools and newcomer support agencies. **Bo** pointed out, for example, that anglophone schools use their cultural expertise while francophone schools do not.

**Bo:** [translation] I'm the one who calls, they don't call me. But some of the anglophone schools call me to tell me that so-and-so's child did not come to school, that the child is sick. They ask me, "Can you speak to the parents? Can you help us do that?" But the francophone school board never does that.

**Bo** went on:

**Bo:** [translation] I use this approach. I was humble, and I caught the child's interest, and the family's interest, and the school's interest, and the interest of the police. I put everything together and applied our culture to it, and it

worked. The child is now integrating better, is getting along better at school, and I think there is really nothing to worry about. There is also what we call cultural sensitivity.

Since the interviews were conducted with the community partners, liaison workers from various immigrant communities have been recruited by the CSF to facilitate the integration of young immigrants in the schools. The initiative was implemented at the start of the 2007 school year, and is undoubtedly an important first step in developing an educational partnership among the various social actors.

### Unmet expectations of parents

We wanted to know parents' perceptions of the quality of francophone instruction, as compared with anglophone instruction. Some parents thought that the two systems were equivalent; others thought that the children receive more guidance in the anglophone schools. This excerpt from the comments of one parent, who was asked about the quality of the guidance received by young immigrants in francophone and anglophone schools, demonstrates the absence of consensus on the question:

**Ro:** [translation] In discussions I have had with friends who have children in either francophone schools or English school, in all cases, actually, there are some who say the children who go to the francophone schools are less equipped than the ones who go to the English schools ... but personally, it depends on how hard each student works. But it's children who are exposed to ... I mean, they have to work hard to keep up their level of French, to retain their identity, because they are living in an environment where there is nothing but English ... it's only at school and at home ... everything else they do in English. In any case, myself, personally, I don't think those comments are justified.

One of the community workers felt the same way. He thinks the francophone schools are lagging behind in the guidance they provide for young immigrants. He said:

**Bo:** [translation] We have the same things in Canada. They have a thing they call homework help. Parents who have problems with their children's homework, they have a homework help system. Somebody who helps the children do their homework or understand and complete their work after school ... but it's organized for anglophones, and not in French.

**Bo** went even further and said that young francophone immigrants who are rejected by francophone schools because they do not have both the academic and the linguistic qualifications receive the appropriate help in the anglophone schools and end up integrating successfully:

**Bo:** [translation] No, the system is not well organized. I have found that the homework help is better organized for anglophones than for francophones. These children who were not accepted in French, they keep going in English, they get help with their homework, they have support for playing sports, they follow movies.

Because our research deals with the integration of African students in francophone schools, we are not in a position to verify those comments, particularly since Ministry of Education statistics are not specific enough to assess the academic success of francophone African students attending English-language schools.

**Ro** reports a number of factors that create differences among students:

- (1) the individuality of the young people
- (2) the francophones' academic environment, which is more demanding because of its minority status
- (3) the family at home

The inadequate resources provided for students could be added to that list. The question of what factors explain academic success among young immigrants remains open. However, the four factors mentioned, combined, are undoubtedly important, and they must be kept in mind when solutions are being sought to facilitate the integration of African students in francophone schools.

### CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS: INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE RESOURCES OF STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

The preliminary data as a whole, the first to date collected on the francophone African community in BC, are consistent with the results of the study done by Creese (2005) on the experiences of women from sub-Saharan anglophone black Africa with migration and integration, and the study by Moke Ngala (2005) on the academic integration of young francophone Africans in urban Alberta. These studies show the great complexity of the situations, in terms of the migrants' status, origins, languages and cultures and their previous social and academic experiences (families arriving from refugee camps, child soldiers, families that have been victims of genocide, etc.).

These complex situations show that the issues involved in adaptation by young francophone African immigrants must be contextualized, and viewed from a dynamic perspective that involves understanding and taking into account a set of combined factors in order to identify the issues and find solutions to the difficulties encountered by the young people in their process of academic and social integration.

The interviews were conducted with the stakeholders in the schools, a sample of parents and community partners, and then considering what they said in context it broadened, nuanced and supplemented our analysis of the

academic and social integration of young African francophones. It is essential that expertise be shared, in order to meet the challenges involved in the integration of young Africans in the francophone schools and in order to support the francophone schools in adapting to the ethnic diversity of their student populations. That adaptation involves, first, training the teaching staff in the complex issues involved in pluriethnicity in the school (Jacquet 2007a and 2007b) and the specific life experiences of African students (Alidou 2000), and second, greater diversity among teaching staff (Gérin-Lajoie 2002) and a thorough review of learning cultures, the concept of identity and the use of languages in a context of migration (Sabatier 2006; Moore 2006). In short, the complexity of the issues involved in the academic and social integration of francophone African students illustrates the crucial importance of building (inter)cultural competence among the players in the educational system, which is too often still sadly lacking, according to the administrators, teachers, parents and community partners who were kind enough to share their stories and first-hand experience with us.

As well, in light of the data collected, it would now seem essential that a transverse study be conducted involving all francophone African students enrolled in the CSF's schools and that a comparative perspective be incorporated by expanding the research to the provincial level.

## REFERENCES

- Alidou, H. (2000). Preparing Teachers for the Education of New Immigrant Students from Africa. *Action in Teacher Education* 22(2), 1-7.
- Alitolppa-Niitamo, A. (2004). Somali Youth in the Context of Schooling in Metropolitan Helsinki: A Framework for Assessing Variability in Educational Performance. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 30(1), 81-107.

Amin, S. (1976). *Unequal Development*. Hassocks, Eng.: Harvester Press.

Bahi, B. (2007). Redynamisation de la politique migratoire francophone au Manitoba : un aperçu de raisons profondes. Paper presented at the conference *Produire et reproduire la francophonie en la nommant*, Research Chair in Education and Francophone Identities, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, September 27-30.

Bayart, J.F. (1993). *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. London: Longman.

Berhanu, G. (2005). Normality, Deviance, Identity, Cultural Tracking and School Achievement: The Case of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 49(1), 51-82.

Bourgeault, G., F. Gagnon, M. McAndrew, and M. Pagé. (1995). L'espace de la diversité culturelle et religieuse à l'école dans une démocratie de tradition libérale. *Revue Européenne des migrations internationales*, 11(3), 79-103.

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). *An Agenda for Peace*. New York: United Nations.  
CANN (2005). *Statistics Annual Report*. Available online at <http://www.successbc.ca>.

British Columbia. Ministry of Education (2004). *Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework*. Consulted online on September 19, 2004, at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm).

Conseil scolaire francophone (2006). *Le projet Pédagogie 2010. Cadre conceptuel*. Consulted online on October 2, 2007, at [http://www.csf.bc.ca/projets\\_speciaux/pedagogie\\_2010.php](http://www.csf.bc.ca/projets_speciaux/pedagogie_2010.php)

The Canadian Encyclopedia (2007). Available online at <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>.

- Castellotti, D., D. Coste, D. Moore, et al. (2001). Le proche et le lointain dans les représentations des langues et de leur apprentissages. In D. Moore, ed.. *Les représentations des langues et de leur apprentissage*, (101-131), Collections Essais, Paris: Didier.
- Creese, G. (2005). From Africa to Canada: Bordered Spaces, Border Crossings and Imagined Communities. Paper presented at *Focus on Africa: Working Effectively with African Immigrants and Refugees*, Simon Fraser University, Surrey, November 19, 2005.
- Dagenais, D. (2003). Accessing Imagined Communities through Multilingualism and Immersion Education. *Language Identity and Education* 2(4), 269-283.
- Dagenais, D., and M. Jacquet. (2000). Valorisation du multilinguisme et de l'éducation bilingue chez des familles immigrantes. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 1, 389-404.
- Global Commission on International Migration (2005). *Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action. Report of the Global Commission on International Migration*. Available online at <http://www.gcim.org>
- Goffman E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Gérin-Lajoie, D. (2002). Le personnel enseignant dans les écoles minoritaires de langues française. In D. Mujawamariya and P. Boudreau, eds., *L'intégration des minorités visibles et ethnoculturelles dans la profession enseignante : récits d'expériences, enjeux et perspectives* (pp.167-181). Montréal: Éditions Logiques.

- Gérin-Lajoie, D. (1996). L'école minoritaire de langue française et son rôle dans la communauté. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, XLII (3), 267-279.
- Ghosh, R., and A.A. Abbi. (2004). *Education and the Politics of Difference. Canadian Perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Ghosh, R. (1996). *Redefining Multicultural Education* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Harcourt Brace.
- Hall, S., and P. du Gay, eds. (1996). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (2000). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In N. Mirzoeff, ed., *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews* (222-237). New York: Routledge.
- Hartnett, T. and H. Ward. (1993). *Statistical Indicators of Female Participation in Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*. AFTHR Technical Note No. 7. Africa Technical Department. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Heller M. (2002). *Éléments d'une sociolinguistique critique*. Paris: Didier.
- Heller, M. (2000). Bilingualism and Identity in the Post-Modern World. *Estudios de Sociolinguística*, 1(2), 9-24.
- Héran, F., A. Filhon, and C. Deprez. (2002). Language Transmission in France in the Course of the 20th Century. *Population & Sociétés*, 376, February 2002, INED.
- Hohl, J. and M. Normand. (1996). Construction et stratégies identitaires des enfants et des adolescents en contexte migratoire : le rôle des intervenants scolaires. *Revue française de pédagogie*, 117, 39-52.

International Organization for Migration (2005). *Intersessional Workshop: Mainstreaming Migration into Development Policy Agendas*. Series on International Dialogue on Migration. Available online at [http://www.old.iom.int/en/know/idm/iswmd\\_200502.shtml](http://www.old.iom.int/en/know/idm/iswmd_200502.shtml).

Jacquet, M. (2007a). La formation des maîtres à la pluriethnicité : pédagogie critique, silence et désespoir. *Revue des Sciences de l'éducation* 33 (1), 25-45.

Jacquet, M. (2007b). La gestion du pluralisme religieux dans les écoles publiques montréalaises : analyse de la prise de décision et ses fondements lors de demandes d'accommodements. In A.B. Baba-Moussa, ed., *Éducation, Religion, Laïcité. Des concepts aux pratiques : enjeux d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (pp. 401-423). *Éducation comparée*, 61, Lille, France: Association francophone d'éducation comparée.

Jacquet, M. (2002). *Analyse de la prise de décision des directions d'écoles lors des demandes d'adaptation des normes et pratiques scolaires à la diversité culturelle et religieuse*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Faculté des Sciences de l'éducation, Université de Montréal, Montréal.

Juteau, D. (1991). *Multiculturalisme, interculturalisme et production de la nation*. Paper presented at the ARIC congress on October 14, 1991, Paris.

Juteau, D. and M. McAndrew. (1992). Projet national, immigration et intégration dans un Québec souverain. *Sociologie et sociétés*, XXIV (2), 161-180.

Kamya, H. (1997). African Immigrants in the United States: The Challenge for Research and Practice. *Social Work* 42(2), 154-165.

- Kanno, Y. and B. Norton. (2003). Imagined Communities and Educational Possibilities: Introduction. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4), 241-249.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2004). New Directions in Multicultural Education. Complexities, Boundaries, and Critical Race Theory. In J. Banks and C. A. McGee Banks, eds., *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (2nd ed.), (pp. 50-65). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Langlois, L. and C. Lapointe. (2002). *Le leadership éducationnel*. Montréal: Chenelière/McGraw-Hill.
- Lecompte, M., J. Preissle, and R. Tech. (1993). *Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational Research*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- L'Écuyer, R. (1987). L'analyse de contenu: notions et étapes. In *Les méthodes de la recherche qualitative*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 49-65.
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Martin-Jones, M., and M. Heller. (1996). Introduction to the Special Issue on Education in Multilingual Settings: Discourse, Identities and Power. *Linguistics and Education*, 8, 3-16.
- Masinda, M.T. (2004). Impacts of Colonial Legacies and Globalization Processes on Forced Migration in Modern Africa, *Research Review*, 20 (1), 1-8.
- Masinda, M.T., and K. Muhesi. (2001). L'impact de la guerre sur l'éducation des enfants au Congo (RDC) : Le cas des enfants de la ville de Butembo. Psychosocial Working Group. Available online at <http://www.forcedmigration.org>

- McAndrew, M. (2001). *Immigration et diversité à l'école: le débat québécois dans une perspective comparative*. Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- McAndrew, M., M. Jacquet, and C. Cicéri. (1997). La prise en compte de la diversité culturelle et religieuse dans les normes et pratiques de gestion des établissements scolaires : une étude exploratoire dans cinq provinces canadiennes. *Revue des sciences de l'éducation*, XXXIII (1), 209-232.
- McAndrew, M. (1995). Multiculturalisme canadien et interculturalisme québécois : mythes et réalités. In M. McAndrew, R. Toussaint and O. Galatanu (with the collaboration of C. Cicéri), eds., *Pluralisme et éducation : politiques et pratiques au Canada, en Europe et dans les pays du sud, l'apport de l'éducation comparée* (pp. 33-52). Montréal: Publications de la Faculté des sciences de l'éducation, Université de Montréal.
- Moke Ngala, V. (2005). *L'intégration des jeunes des familles immigrantes francophones d'origine Africaine à la vie scolaire dans les écoles secondaires francophones dans un milieu urbain en Alberta : conditions et incidences*. Unpublished Master's thesis, Faculté St-Jean, Edmonton.
- Moore, D., M. Jacquet, and C. Sabatier. (June 2007). Traversées et rencontres identitaires : construire une communauté africaine francophone à Vancouver en Colombie-Britannique. Paper presented at the Plurifles international conference *Transmission/appropriation des langues et construction des identités plurilingues*. Université Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France.
- Moore, D. (2006). *Plurilinguismes et école*. Paris: Didier.

- Naidoo, J. C. (2005). Africans in Canada. The Canadian Encyclopedia. Available online at <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1AR TA0000055>.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity and Social Change*. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Norwegian Refugee Council (2001). *IDPs in Democratic Republic of Congo*. Norwegian Refugee Council's Global IDP Database at [www.idpproject.org](http://www.idpproject.org).
- Pavlenko A., and A. Blackledge., eds. (2004). *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Pietrantonio, L., D. Juteau, and M. McAndrew. (1996). Multiculturalisme ou intégration, un faux débat. In K. Fall, R.H. Moussa and D. Simeoni, eds. *Convergences culturelles dans les sociétés pluriethniques* (pp.147-158). Chicoutimi: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Prunier, G. (1999). *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sabatier, C., M. Jacquet, and D. Moore. (March 2007). Africains et Francophones à Vancouver : jeux de langues et voix/es identitaires. Paper presented to the conference *Francopolyphonie : langues et identités*. Institut de recherches philologiques et interculturelles, Free International University of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.
- Sabatier, C. (2005). Les Passeurs de frontières. In M.-A. Mochet, M.J. Barbot, V. Castellotti, J.L. Chiss, C. Develotte, and D. Moore, eds. (2005), *Plurilinguisme et apprentissages, Mélanges Daniel Coste* (pp. 183-194), Collection Hommages. Lyon: Ens-Éditions.

- Sabatier, C. (2006). Figures identitaires d'élèves issus de la migration maghrébine à l'école élémentaire en France. *Education et Francophonie* 34(1), 111-132.
- Sada, H. (2003). Le conflit ivoirien. Enjeux régionaux et maintien de la paix en Afrique. *Politique étrangère*. Consulted online on September 19, 2004, at [http://www.ifri.org/files/PE\\_2\\_03\\_sada\\_10.pdf](http://www.ifri.org/files/PE_2_03_sada_10.pdf).
- Schnapper, D. (2007). *Qu'est-ce que l'intégration?* Collection Folio, Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- Schnapper, D. (1991). *La France de l'intégration. Sociologie de la nation en 1990*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- Sinclair, M. (2004). *Learning to Live Together: Values and Attitudes for the 21st Century*. Geneva: UNESCO, IBE, Studies in Comparative Education.
- Statistics Canada (2007). The African Community in Canada 2001 – Profiles of Ethnic Communities in Canada. Consulted online on September 24, 2007, at: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-621-XIE/89-621-XIE2007010.htm>.
- Statistics Canada (2005). *Canadian Statistics – Immigrant Population by Place of Birth, by Provinces and Territories (2001 Census)*. Consulted online on March 15, 2005, at <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/demo34b.htm>.
- Statistics Canada (2003). *Ethnic Diversity Survey: Portrait of a Multicultural Society*. Consulted online on September 24, 2007, at <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=89-593-X>.
- St-Surin, R. (1997). *Les dimensions culturelles et psychologiques de l'échec scolaire chez les élèves d'origine haïtienne suivis en orthopédagogie*.

Unpublished Master's thesis, Faculté des sciences de éducation, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke.

Tanaka, M. (2005). *Francophone Visible Minority and Ethnocultural Communities in Canada – Diversity and Francophonie Conference*. Vancouver: Canadian Heritage. [http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/lo-ol/pubs/francophonie-2005/10\\_e.cfm#2](http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/lo-ol/pubs/francophonie-2005/10_e.cfm#2).

Thériault J. Y., ed., (1999). *Francophonies minoritaires au Canada. L'État des lieux*. Moncton: Les Éditions d'Acadie.

UNHCR (2005). *Rapport mondial sur les réfugiés dans le monde*. Consulted online on September 23, 2005, at <http://www.unhcr.fr>.

UNHCR (2004). *Rapport mondial sur les réfugiés dans le monde*. Consulted online on September 23, 2005, at <http://www.unhcr.fr>.

UNICEF (2005). *A Fair Chance: Attaining Gender Equality in Basic Education*. Consulted online on October 24, 2005 at <http://www.unicef.org>.

Young, C. and T. Turner. (1980). *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Zlotnik, H. (2003). *Migrants' Rights, Forced Migration and Migration Policy in Africa*. Paper prepared for Conference on African Migration in Comparative Perspective, Johannesburg, South Africa, June 4-7, 2003. Available online at <http://pum.princeton.edu/pumconference/papers/6-Zlotnik.pdf>.