

# Contrasting the Use of Kamba and Kikuyu Kinship Terms by Deaf and Hearing Individuals in Nairobi, Kenya: A Preliminary Study

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**Abstract:** This paper asks whether Deaf Kamba and Kikuyu use the same or differing kinship terms as their Hearing Kamba and Kikuyu counterparts. We seek to determine whether Kenyan ethnic kinship systems are used by their Deaf members and how the language barrier affects the use of kinship terminology.

## 1. Introduction

This study has been driven by the question of whether or not the kinship terms used by Deaf<sup>1</sup> members of ethnic groups will differ from the traditional kinship terms used by hearing members of the same ethnic groups. We applied this question to the Kamba and Kikuyu ethnic groups of Kenya. We understand that the Kamba and Kikuyu kinship terms are different, as are their languages (Kamba and Kikuyu, respectively), so we expected to elicit differing kinship terms from our hearing than from our Deaf Kamba and Kikuyu informants. We hypothesized that our Deaf Kamba and Kikuyu informants would give us similar kinship terms simply due to the fact that they share a primary language, *viz.* Kenyan Sign Language (KSL).<sup>2</sup> In their very recent book examining the idea of the Deaf<sup>3</sup> as a separate ethnic group, Lane, Pillard, and Hedberg (2011:33) point out: “For the Deaf child of hearing parents, socialization in the parent’s ethnicity is hampered by the language barrier”. We proposed a person’s Deaf identity and use of KSL as their primary language would have a greater impact on the terms they use for kinship than their ethnic group affiliation.

## 2. Biographical information

Shadrack Musyoki Kakui was born in 1977, in Machakos, Eastern Kenya. He is a hearing Kamba man who grew up with Kamba as his mother tongue. English, Kiswahili, Kikuyu and KSL are the other languages in which he is proficient. From birth until age thirteen, Shadrack lived with his parents and siblings in their home in Machakos. When he was thirteen he went away to high school but still considered his parent’s home as his permanent residence. It was not until he was 18 and went away to college that he officially moved out of his father’s house.

Shadrack obtained a Bachelor’s degree in Education, with concentrations in Mathematics and Chemistry, from Maseno University and a Master’s of Divinity from Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST). Two years ago, Shadrack began working for DOOR<sup>4</sup> International as a consultant in training; at that time he began learning KSL. He currently lives in

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<sup>1</sup>In this paper, Deaf with a capitalized “D” will refer to a person’s cultural identity, *viz.* their affiliation with the broader Deaf culture/community; deaf with a lowercase “d” will be used to refer to a person’s physiological state, *viz.* their loss of hearing.

<sup>2</sup>KSL is the official abbreviation for Kenyan Sign Language and will be used throughout this paper.

<sup>3</sup>We are using “the Deaf” to refer to the Deaf community as a whole.

<sup>4</sup>DOOR is an acronym for D.O.O.R. (Deaf Opportunity Out Reach) International, a non-profit NGO founded in 1983 which focuses on training of Deaf Bible translators and evangelists.

Ongata Rongai, Kenya, where he's resided for the past five years. He will wed his hearing Kamba fiancée this December.<sup>5</sup>

Alex Mbuthye,<sup>6</sup> a Deaf Kamba man, was born in 1980 to hearing parents in Nairobi, Kenya. He grew up in his parent's home with two sisters and a brother. They primarily spoke English in their home, although they also were exposed to Kamba and Kiswahili.<sup>7</sup> At five years old, Alex contracted measles which resulted in his becoming deaf. His family members developed their own home signing system<sup>8</sup> consisting mainly of gestures. Although his mother, older brother, and younger sister all use this home signing system to communicate with him, his father and elder sister still only communicate with Alex orally or through another family member acting as an interpreter. He is the only Deaf person in his family.

Alex went to Aga Khan, a hearing school which has an integrated education program for deaf children. The teachers would teach the students English first, by writing a word on the board, mouthing it and teaching the students to mouth the word. Only after the children had learned the English words orally would the teacher then teach them the sign for each word. At seven years old, Alex first began to learn KSL and use it to communicate with his deaf classmates. When he went to an all-hearing high school he took his classes with the assistance of a KSL interpreter.

After high school, he went to a technical training school for two years. Later on, he spent a year learning chronological Bible storying from a Deaf pastor with DOOR. Alex also spent one year obtaining an IT certificate from Deaf Aid. He considers English his first language because that is what his parents used to communicate with him, but he only rates himself as being able to comprehend about 45% of written English and only 20% of spoken English. Kenyan Sign Language is the primary language he uses on a daily basis to communicate with his wife, friends, and co-workers (the vast majority of whom are Deaf). Alex is married to a Deaf Tigrean woman from Ethiopia. They live and work at DOOR's Deaf Bible Training and Translation Centre in Ongata Rongai, Kenya.

Boniface "Bonnie" Mbari Ndung'u was born in 1977 in Ngure village, Gitar'u, Kikuyu, Kenya. He is a hearing Kikuyu man who grew up with Kikuyu as his mother tongue. Bonnie also has proficiency in Kiswahili, English, and KSL. During his formative years, he lived with his parents, siblings and a family friend in Gitar'u village. He continues to live in the same village today. Bonnie has a diploma in management of NGOs and works as an office manager at DOOR in Ongata Rongai. He is unmarried.

Bonnie learned KSL because of his passion to work with Kenya's Deaf community. This stemmed from his initial work with United Disabled Persons of Kenya and a feeling that Kenya needs to change its view and understanding of the Deaf community. Through his work with the Deaf, Bonnie has come to deeply appreciate their unique language and culture (D.O.O.R. International 2007b).

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<sup>5</sup>Chronological statements of this type were current as of October 15, 2011 (the date this paper was first written).

<sup>6</sup>"Alex Mbuthye" is a pseudonym, used at the request of the informant.

<sup>7</sup>Alex told us that he doesn't know any Deaf Kenyans who thoroughly understand Kiswahili. He attributed this to its complicated morphology and vocabulary, saying English is easier for them to learn.

<sup>8</sup>An estimated 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents. In many cases, the parents do not learn a standard sign language. However, the family may develop their own unique form of gestural language to communicate with the deaf child with meanings they have agreed upon amongst each other (which may or may not be understood by others outside the family). This is what we have referred to as a home signing system.

Peter Kariuki,<sup>9</sup> a Deaf Kikuyu man, was born in 1978 to hearing parents in Thika, Kenya. He was born hearing and grew up speaking Kikuyu as his first language, but also learned Kiswahili and English. He lived in Thika and Nakuru with his parents and siblings throughout his schooling years. When he was nine years old, he contracted malaria and lost his hearing. After becoming deaf, Peter went to Nyandarua Primary School for the Deaf and then on to Rev. Muhoro Secondary School for the Deaf. At these schools, he learned KSL and Signed Exact English (SEE),<sup>10</sup> which was used for teaching. His family does not know any sign language and communicates with Peter orally. Peter is the only Deaf person in his family.

After high school, Peter went to a vocational school called the Kenya Institute of Education for three months, and then spent a year getting Bible training from DOOR. He continued his education at Limuru Theological College for six months, then went on to teach Bible at Machakos School for the Deaf for three years. Peter is married to a Deaf woman of the Meru ethnic group; they have a two year old, hearing son. He and his family now live at DOOR's Deaf Bible Training and Translation Centre where he works in KSL Bible translation, pastors a Deaf church in the Nairobi area, and leads the Missionary Deaf Fellowship of Kenya.

### 3. Points of interest

#### 3.1 Hearing Kamba: Shadrack<sup>11</sup>

All of Shadrack's BS,<sup>12</sup> BD, ZS and ZD are called by the same kin term because they are considered the same as his own children. This is because all of the children — BS, BD, ZS, ZD and his own children<sup>13</sup> — would be on the same kinship level, -1. He has the same relationship with BS and BD as he does with ZS and ZD. Reciprocally, the children all look to Shadrack with the same respect they would give their biological fathers.

When Shadrack's father died, his oldest brother became the 'father' of the family. If the paternal grandfather was still alive then the family would have gone to him as the head male<sup>14</sup> of the family. Once Shadrack's father became ill and felt that he could no longer continue as the family head, he passed down the responsibilities to his eldest son. This son, Be, became known as *nau*, or 'father'. When Shadrack talks to him personally he still calls him *mwanaa mwaitu*, 'brother', and would never use *nau* when addressing him directly; it is only when Shadrack introduces his eldest brother to people outside of the family that Shadrack uses the term *nau*.

<sup>9</sup>"Peter Kariuki" is a pseudonym, used at the request of the informant.

<sup>10</sup>Signed Exact English, or SEE, is a manually coded form of spoken English. It was created to teach deaf children English in a manual-visual form. It is not a natural sign language. It would have been brought to Kenya by either Deaf or Hearing American NGO workers.

<sup>11</sup>All of the information provided in this section is taken from our Skype interviews and email communications with Shadrack Kakui.

<sup>12</sup>See Appendix A for a complete list of these relation definitions and kinship terms.

<sup>13</sup>If he had his own children.

<sup>14</sup>Typically when parents die, the children will go to the paternal grandparents. If that is not an option, then they will go to the FBe. Further research is needed to understand why the head male role was not taken on by one of FBe instead of being taken by Ego's Be.

### 3.2 Deaf Kamba: Alex<sup>15</sup>

When Alex's sister separated from her partner, their son stayed with her. This is mostly because the relationship was not a marriage, and also because the child was young. The father does not have rights to the son because there was no official marriage or bride price given.

Alex's brother had an official marriage and is now divorcing his wife. Once the divorce started, she was no longer considered part of the family. According to Alex, if they had had children, then the children would go with the wife and not to his brother.

There is a bit of confusion when it comes to Alex's father's family. Alex knows that his FF had three wives and that the youngest, or third wife is his FM; but he is unsure which FB and FZ are half or whole siblings to his father. There are only three FB that Alex personally knows and has relationships with. Although there are other FB and FZ that he knows of, he said he was not informed about how many there are or which FFW they belong to. Neither was Alex informed of the Kamba terms he would call FBW. All of their children as well as MZ children he signs COUSIN or would refer to them by their name; he does not know the Kamba terms. Because all of his MB are deceased, Alex did not know the terms for MB children.

As can be seen, Alex did not know any Kamba term other than his brother's Kamba proper name. In part, this is due to the fact that he became deaf at such a young age (five years old). The other measure relates to when his family communicates with him orally — not in their home sign system — they use English because he can lip read, as well as read and write, English.<sup>16</sup> Alex said that his parents only speak English and Kiswahili with him and his siblings, even though they are Kamba; however, we cannot be sure that his parents only speak English or Kiswahili with the immediate family members because he is unable to overhear or lipread all of his family's conversations with each other. He did, however, say that his parents do speak Kamba with each other.

Further research is needed with more Kamba people, mainly Deaf but also hearing, to determine their understanding of Kamba kinship terms. However, this preliminary research has given us insight into the cultural differences and the lack of communication between Kamba hearing and Kamba Deaf kinship understandings. Lane, Pillard, and Hedberg (2011:39), in their research on Deaf ethnicity and ancestry, maintain that “Deaf people ... participate in the wider society but there are limitations because lack of a shared language is a great barrier. Often the Deaf person's relations with hearing parents, siblings, and relatives, as well as people unrelated to the Deaf-World,<sup>17</sup> must be characterized as remote”. Through our interview, it was evident that Alex has good relationships with his hearing parents and siblings, but it is also clear that his understanding of his ethnic Kamba kin relations is remote.

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<sup>15</sup>All of the information provided in this section is taken from our Skype interview and Facebook communications with Alex Mbuthye.

<sup>16</sup>As previously stated, his lip reading comprehension is self-assessed at about 20% and his reading and writing comprehension at about 45%.

<sup>17</sup>Lane, Pillard, and Hedberg (2011) use the term “Deaf-World”, coined by North American, Deaf, American Sign Language users to refer to their unique culture.

### 3.3 Hearing Kikuyu: Bonnie<sup>18</sup>

During the interview, Bonnie was particular about certain terms and names, their meanings, value and/or origin. He explained to us that *maitu* is used by “deep Kikuyus” and *mami* is a term considered “corrupted with English” (Ndung’u 2011). It would be very disrespectful to call FB by their names and one should only use the term *baba*, ‘father’. The term for wife (*m’utumia*) literally means ‘the silent’ because women, especially wives, are expected to be silent.

If Bonnie’s brother had any children, then he would refer to them as *ciana ciakwa* meaning ‘my children’. He would consider them, treat them and be responsible for them in the same way that he would for his own biological children. In return, the children would look to him as a father-figure. The same relationship would exist between his own children and his brother’s. However, this would not carry over to his sister and her children. Because she will marry outside the family and into a different patrilineage, he would simply call ZD and ZS by their names.<sup>19</sup>

Kikuyu grandparents (FF, FM, MF, MM) often have very proud, jovial, joking relationships with their grandchildren (SS, SD, DS, DD). Bonnie has often seen them reciprocally refer to each other as *guka* and *c’uc’u*, meaning grandmother and grandfather. Thus, the grandparents would call their grandchildren the same term that the grandchildren call their grandparents. Part of this comes from the great love and respect that the grandparents had for their deceased grandparents, that is then placed onto their grandchildren. During the interview Bonnie was unsure if this was the “deep, proper Kikuyu” name for grandchild or just the joking relationship term (Ndung’u 2011). Later, in email communication, he corrected the terms and said that he would call his SS and DS *kaguka* and SD and DD *gac’uc’u*.

When dealing with adoption<sup>20</sup> they would call the child by the same term as the rest of the children in the family and in no way reflect on the fact that the child is adopted. “If you call them a term or point out that they are adopted, you can get in big trouble” because you are telling the child that he is not blood and therefore not truly family or wanted (Ndung’u 2011). Most of the time the child will not know that he was adopted; it is not discussed. Adoption happens more in well-to-do families without any sons because they need an heir.

Sons are of great importance in Kikuyu families because the sons carry on the patrilineage. Bonnie explained that you will find very big Kikuyu families with lots of daughters because they are continually trying to have a son. People who have sons right away will probably not have or want as many children. When a Kikuyu man and his wife separate or divorce, the children will normally go with their mother until they finish high school<sup>21</sup> and then they would go to their father. This is due to the fact that they are part of the father’s patrilineage. When Bonnie’s MZy divorced her husband the three sons went to their father. Bonnie said that this was an exceptional case.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup>All of the information provided in this section is taken from our Skype interview and email communications with Boniface Ndung’u.

<sup>19</sup>Bonnie was unsure if there was a proper Kikuyu kinship term for ZS or ZD.

<sup>20</sup>We would have liked to examine the area of adoption and fictive kinship within each of these interviews, but were unable due to time constraints. Bonnie is the only informant who we were able to elicit data on adoption from.

<sup>21</sup>This would be approximately ages 16-18.

<sup>22</sup>We would assume from this that the children were younger than 16 years old because of what Bonnie previously explained to us would culturally take place, *viz.*, the children would go with the mother until after schooling is completed.

Proper names were a point of great emphasis during Bonnie's interview. He continually wanted to bring our attention back to this because Kikuyu naming deeply reflects their patriarchal nature. The first son is named after the FF, the second son is named after the MF, the third son is named after the FBe and so on. The first daughter is named after the FM, the second daughter is named after the MM, and the third daughter is named after the MZe. However, this did not happen with Bonnie and his brother. Bonnie was named after his FF and his younger, twin brother was named after his FBe. This was done because they were twins and their father wanted to keep both names within the paternal side (although this did not happen without a significant amount of conflict within the family).

### 3.4 Deaf Kikuyu: Peter<sup>23</sup>

Peter's father has ten daughters and, because of this, Peter laughingly told us his father now has a lot of cows. He was given the cows as a bride price for each daughter before their marriage. The father eventually had to get more land to hold all of the cows.

Similarly to our Deaf Kamba informant yet to a different degree, Peter also did not know all of the Kikuyu kinship terms his family uses. In total, Peter believes that he only knows about 50% of the proper kinship terms. He explained to us that there might be other, deeper Kikuyu kinship terms but no one has ever shared them with him before; thus he feels that has never had the opportunity to really learn them. Peter specifically said that his mother does not share news or information with him. That is why he could not tell us how many siblings his mother has, or anything about them. All he knew was that there were more than 14 of them all together.

Despite all of this, he had a relatively clear understanding of the Kikuyu kinship system and orthography. Whenever he gave us a new term, he wanted to see us write it out and would continually correct our spelling. He was particularly aware of the apostrophes that come before certain vowels to affect the vowel quality, e.g. *c'uc'u*. We did notice that he appeared to overcorrect many of the vowels when compared to the data collected from Bonnie, our hearing Kikuyu informant.

## 4. Analysis of the Deaf kinship terms: comparison and contrast

Both Alex (Kamba) and Peter (Kikuyu) gave two different set of kin terms during our interviews. The first sets were the terms in their first spoken language,<sup>24</sup> and the second sets were the kin terms they use in KSL. We will focus on the KSL terms, as this is the primary language for both of them. For a complete list of Alex's kinship terms, see Appendix A; for his kinship tree, see Appendix E. For Peter's kinship term list, see Appendix B, and for his kinship tree, see Appendices G<sub>1</sub> and G<sub>2</sub>.

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<sup>23</sup>All of the information provided in this section was taken from our Skype interview and email communications with Peter Kariuki.

<sup>24</sup>It is important to remember that, although he is ethnically Kamba, Alex's first spoken language was English. He can only understand a few words in Kamba; and he did not know any of the official Kamba kin terms.

#### 4.1 Kamba kinship through Deaf eyes

Alex labeled all of his relatives, except for his +2 relations<sup>25</sup> (FF, MF, FM, MM), as well as his F, M, WF, and WM, with their spoken/written proper names. Furthermore, except for the case of his MB, MZH, FB, and FZH, for which he gave us the spoken/written term ‘Uncle’ and his MZ, MBW, FZ, FBW, for which he gave us the spoken/written term ‘Aunt’, he did not give us kin terms in English for any of his other 0, -1, or -2 relations. Rather, he told us they would simply be called by their proper names.

However, Alex did have KSL signs for every relation in his kinship tree, including his wife’s family members. There was continuity, however, in his use of proper names between his first language (English) and his primary language (KSL) for his consanguine relations on Ego’s 0 level: FBS, FBD, FZS, FZD, MBS, MBD, MZS, MZD, B, and Z. For all of these relations, Alex would use their proper SIGN-NAME.<sup>26,27</sup> This did not necessarily follow for affinal relations on Ego’s level, such as BW and ZH, or any of his wife’s relatives. One possible explanation for this could be Ego’s peer-interaction with his 0 level relations, as they would all be in the same age-set.<sup>28</sup>

Alex did not give us English kin terms for his wife’s relatives except for her parents, whom he calls by the same terms as his parents.<sup>29</sup> However, he did provide KSL kin terms for all his wife’s relatives. To do so, he linked other KSL kin terms together; for example, Ego’s WBW is called MY WIFE HER BROTHER HIS WIFE.<sup>30</sup> By doing so, Ego is able to clearly specify his exact relationship to his wife’s relatives. This is especially interesting to note when contrasted with Shadrack (our hearing Kamba informant) who could only give us the generic term *muthoni* for each of his wife’s relatives on his same generational level. While our hearing Kamba informant does not differentiate between these relations, our Deaf Kamba informant does with exacting clarity.

Another interesting contrast between our Kamba hearing and Deaf informants is in the realm of maternal and paternal aunts and uncles. Shadrack’s kinship terms differentiate between his consanguine aunts and uncles (FB, MB, FZ, MZ) and his affinal aunts and uncles (FZH,

<sup>25</sup>In our kinship trees (Appendices D-G<sub>2</sub>), we use the +2, +1, 0, -1, -2 numbering system to denote different generations.

<sup>26</sup>Sign Languages are unwritten languages and, because they are manual-visual, 3-D languages, it is difficult to find a system which captures them effectively. While there are a few writing systems which have been or are being developed, there is not yet any form of writing system which has been accepted by the Deaf community (neither in the United States nor internationally). Therefore, most sign language researchers use an English gloss in ALL-CAPS to denote a particular sign or sign phrase.

<sup>27</sup>A SIGN-NAME is a unique sign which is given to an individual to be used as their own personal name in that Deaf sign language community. As an example, three men named ‘Simon’ in Kenya will each have a different, personal SIGN-NAME. Many Deaf communities have their own parameters for giving a SIGN-NAME (e.g., Bethany’s American Sign Language SIGN-NAME, her Paraguayan Sign Language SIGN-NAME, and her Ethiopian Sign Language SIGN-NAME are all different and were created using the naming system for each language). A person’s SIGN-NAME must be given from someone within the Deaf community; it cannot be given to oneself.

<sup>28</sup>Alex did say that if he were speaking to someone who did not personally know his 0 relations personally, he would refer to them as COUSIN. This applies to his FBS, FBD, FZS, FZD, MBS, MBD, MZS, and MZD. See Appendix A.

<sup>29</sup>This is interesting when contrasted with Shadrack’s data. In hearing Kamba kinship, Ego’s wife’s parents would be referred to with a respectful term that differs from Ego’s terms for his own parents.

<sup>30</sup>While there are a limited number of kinship signs in KSL, these signs, when combined, can clearly and effectively indicate an even broader range of kin relationships. This is one such example where MY WIFE HER BROTHER HIS WIFE is translated literally to mean, ‘my wife’s brother’s wife’.

MZH, and MBW) except for his FBW, who would be called by the same term as his FZ (see Appendix A). Conversely, Alex does not differentiate between any of his consanguine or affinal aunts and uncles; they would all be called by the same KSL term UNCLE or AUNT.

Finally, there was an interesting contrast between Shadrack and Alex's kinship terms when it came to -1 level relations, *viz.* BS, BD, ZS, and ZD. Alex refers to all of these relations as NEPHEW/NIECE.<sup>31</sup> Shadrack, on the other hand, simply refers to all of these relations by their given names. He has no official Kamba kin term for them, but told us that, because they are all on the -1 level, along with Ego's own children, he would refer to them as he would his own children. Alex did not seem to have this same understanding and had a KSL kin term for them which differed from the terms he had for his own children (See Appendix A).

#### 4.2 Kikuyu kinship through Deaf eyes

As we mentioned before, our Deaf Kikuyu informant, Peter, told us he only knows about 50% of the Kikuyu kinship terms. In reality, he gave us more than 50% of the terms, both in Kikuyu and in KSL. However, the terms he seemed to have the most trouble with were those for his +1 affinal relations (e.g., FBW, FZH, MBW, MZH), of which he could give us neither the Kikuyu nor the KSL terms. Even though he referred to his wife's parents using the same Kikuyu kin terms as his own parents, he did have separate KSL kin terms for his wife's parents, whom he referred to as STEP-FATHER and STEP-MOTHER (see Appendix B). For his maternal consanguine +1 relations, Peter uses UNCLE for MB and AUNT for MZ. But, for his paternal consanguine +1 relations, he uses FATHER HIS BROTHER (or YOUNG-FATHER) for FB and FATHER HIS SISTER for FZ.

Peter uses the same unisex Kikuyu term *mwar'i witu* to refer to his B and Z. However, he has differing KSL terms for them with B as BROTHER and Z as SISTER (indicating their gender). For all maternal relations on Ego's level, he uses the Kikuyu unisex term *mwana wa mama* for MBS and MBD and *mwana wa tata* for MZS and MZD. Yet, for all four of these relation categories, he uses the same KSL unisex sign COUSIN. However, he did not know the Kikuyu term nor the KSL sign with which to refer to his paternal cousins. He said he knew the term used for his FBS and FBD would be different from the term used for his FZS and FZD (which he identified as being due to the fact that his FZ marries out of the family and her children would belong to the patrilineage of her husband). He also recognized that both terms for his paternal cousins would differ from the term he uses for his maternal cousins, but only remembered the maternal cousin term, which he gave us. He said he would not refer to his paternal cousins with the KSL sign COUSIN. However, he does use the KSL kin term COUSIN to refer to all his wife's 0 level relations (WB, WBW, WZ, WZH).

One curious finding in Peter's data was his use of the unisex KSL kin term NEPHEW/NIECE in reference to his maternal cousin's children (MBSS, MBSD, MBDS, MBDD, MZSS, MZSD, MZDS, MZDD). In English, we would refer to these -1 relations as his first cousins once removed. However, he considers them his nephews and nieces (See Appendix G<sub>1</sub>). In contrast, he would not use the unisex KSL term NEPHEW/NIECE for his BS, BD, ZS, or ZD; rather, his BS and BD are called BROTHER-CHILDREN, and his ZS and ZD are called SISTER-CHILDREN.

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<sup>31</sup>This is a unisex KSL sign.



## 5. Limitations and considerations

Our biggest limitation was time constraints due to the fact that this research was undertaken for a term paper. We had a limited amount of time to connect with our informants and gather enough data for analysis. Ideally, we would have liked to have a larger number of informants and more kinship trees to compare and analyze from all four of our informant categories: Hearing Kamba, Deaf Kamba, Hearing Kikuyu, and Deaf Kikuyu. But due to our time constraints and for the sake of simplicity, we interviewed only one male informant from each category.

The second major limitation was the fact that all of our interviews and communication with our informants were long distance. We were thankful that we had bandwidth to use audio/video Skype in order to communicate in spoken English with our hearing informants and signed KSL with our Deaf informants. However, it would have been much better to conduct these interviews in person without the time zone differences and technology limitations.

There were a couple of other considerations we took into account while analyzing our data, specifically in the area of language acquisition. Both of our Deaf informants were born hearing and became deaf after they had already started acquiring one or more spoken languages. They both considered a spoken language their first language, not KSL. Also, both of our Deaf informants were the only deaf people in their families and did not acquire KSL until they attended school. Within our limited timeframe, we were unable to interview any Deaf Kenyans who became deaf before they started acquiring a spoken language. It would have been beneficial to interview Deaf Kamba and Kikuyu individuals whose first language was KSL to determine if how they use kinship terms within their ethnic groups is the same or different as our other two sets of informants.

## 6. Conclusion

One of our goals for this project was to apply what we have learned in the social organization section of our Social and Political Organization class to our own original research, rather than to study previous research and summarize it in a paper. As far as we could find, this is not a topic that has been researched extensively before. Our goal is that this project will serve as preliminary research in this realm of Deaf kinship study and will serve as a springboard for more extensive research in the future.

“There is no more authentic expression of an ethnic group than its language” (Lane 2011:3). We proposed that a person’s Deaf identity and use of KSL as their primary language would have a greater impact on the kinship terms they use than their ethnic group affiliation would, be it Kamba or Kikuyu. Our research data tends to support this hypothesis, but more extensive research needs to be done.

Other ethnic communities whose Deaf use KSL as their primary language, e.g., Luo, Kisii, Meru, Maasai, etc., should be included in further research in order to determine if the kinship signs used are the same or different. This would also enable us to learn what is their understanding of the kinship terms in their spoken ethnic languages. Is there a standard kinship system within KSL? What is the typical understanding of spoken mother tongue kinship terms within the Kenyan Deaf community? There would need to be contrasting interviews with hearing Luo, Kisii, Meru, Maasai, etc. individuals to determine if the spoken terms are known, and

whether they relate to or influence the KSL kin terms used. There are many other questions that need to be answered, but these are our main findings.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to express our deepest appreciation for Shadrack, Alex, Bonnie, and Peter's willingness to flex their schedules to meet with us on such short notice in preparation for this project. Our interviews were conducted long distance through Skype, Facebook, and E-mail. All four of them went above and beyond in giving of their time and making sure we got the information we needed.

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## Appendix A: Kamba Kinship Terms (Deaf and Hearing)

row	etic definition	Hearing kinship terms	Deaf kinship terms [English gloss of KSL SIGN]	emic English gloss
+2	FF, MF	Umau	Grandfather [OLD FATHER]	grandfather
+2	FM, MM	Usua	Grandmother [OLD MOTHER <sub>2</sub> <sup>32</sup> ]	grandmother
+1	F	Nau	Baba [FATHER]	father
+1	FB, MB	Mwendw'au	Uncle <u>Name</u> [UNCLE]	uncle
+1	FBW	Ukulu	Aunt <u>Name</u> [AUNT]	aunt
+1	FZ, MZ	Ukulu	Aunt <u>Name</u> [AUNT]	aunt
+1	FZH	Mama	Uncle <u>Name</u> [UNCLE]	uncle
+1	M	Mwaitu	Mummy [MOTHER <sub>1</sub> ]	mother
+1	MBW	Inyiaa <u>Brother's Name</u>	Aunt <u>Name</u> [AUNT]	aunt
+1	MZH	Muume wa <u>Sister's Name</u>	Uncle <u>Name</u> [UNCLE]	uncle
0	FBS, FBD	no data	<u>Name</u> [COUSIN / SIGN-NAME]	cousin
0	FZS, FZD	Mwivawa (sg.) Evawa (pl.)	<u>Name</u> [COUSIN / SIGN-NAME]	cousin
0	MBS, MBD	Mwivawa (sg.) Evawa (pl.)	<u>Name</u> [COUSIN / SIGN-NAME]	cousin
0	MZS, MZD	no data	<u>Name</u> [COUSIN / SIGN-NAME]	cousin
0	B	Mwanaa mwaitu	<u>Name</u> [BROTHER / SIGN-NAME]	brother
0	BW	Inyiaa <u>Brother's Name</u>	<u>Name</u> [MY BROTHER WIFE]	sister-in-law
0	Z	Mwitu wa mwaitu	<u>Name</u> [SISTER / SIGN- NAME]	sister
0	ZH	Muume wa <u>Sister's Name</u>	<u>Name</u> [MY SISTER HUSBAND]	brother-in-law
0	W	Muka wakwa	<u>Name</u> [MY WIFE]	wife

<sup>32</sup>Kenyan Sign Language has two signs for "Mother". MOTHER<sub>1</sub> is signed by patting the cheek. MOTHER<sub>2</sub> is signed at the chest, denoting a breast. MOTHER<sub>2</sub> can be used alternately for generic WOMAN. MOTHER<sub>1</sub> is never used for generic WOMAN.

row	etic definition	Hearing kinship terms	Deaf kinship terms [English gloss of KSL SIGN]	emic English gloss
0	WB	Muthoni <sup>33</sup>	<u>Name</u> [MY WIFE HER BROTHER]	brother-in-law
0	WBW	Muthoni	<u>Name</u> [MY WIFE HER BROTHER HIS WIFE]	sister-in-law
0	WZ	Muthoni	<u>Name</u> [MY WIFE HER SISTER]	sister-in-law
0	WZH	Muthoni	<u>Name</u> [MY WIFE HER SISTER HER HUSBAND]	brother-in-law
-1	BS, BD, ZS, ZD	<u>Name</u> / kana <sup>34</sup>	<u>Name</u> [NEPHEW/NIECE (unisex sign)]	nephew/niece (unisex)
-1	S	Kana / kamwana	<u>Name</u> [SON]	son
-1	D	Kana / kelitu	<u>Name</u> [DAUGHTER]	daughter
-1	SW	Mukaa mwana	<u>Name</u> [MY SON WIFE]	daughter-in-law
-1	DH	Muume wa <u>Daughter's Name</u>	<u>Name</u> [MY DAUGHTER HUSBAND]	son-in-law
-2	SS, SD	Mwisukua	<u>Name</u> [MY SON HIS CHILD(REN)]	grandson/grand-daughter (unisex)
-2	DS, DD	Mwisukua	<u>Name</u> [MY DAUGHTER HER CHILD(REN)]	grandson/grand-daughter (unisex)
+1	WF	Athoni (sg.) / Muthoni (pl.)	Father [FATHER]	father-in-law
+1	WM	Athoni (sg.) / Muthoni (pl.)	Mother [MOTHER]	mother-in-law

<sup>33</sup>Muthoni used by Kamba informant generally for all in-laws. Doesn't differentiate between different in-law relationships.

<sup>34</sup>Ego's BS, BD, ZS, ZD called by their names. Ego has no real Kamba kin term for them. They are on the same level as all Ego's children. Ego would refer to them as he does his own children.

## Appendix B: Kikuyu Kinship Terms (Deaf and Hearing)

row	etic definition	Hearing kinship terms	Deaf kinship terms [English gloss of KSL SIGN]	emic English gloss
+2	FF	Guka	G'uka [OLD FATHER]	grandfather
+2	FM	C'uc'u	C'uc'u [OLD MOTHER <sub>2</sub> <sup>35</sup> ]	grandmother
+2	MF	Guka	G'uka [OLD FATHER]	grandfather
+2	MM	C'uc'u	C'uc'u [OLD MOTHER <sub>2</sub> ]	grandmother
+1	F	Baba	Baba [FATHER]	father
+1	FBe	Baba m'uk'ur'u (older father)	Mwana wa baba [FATHER HIS BROTHER] / Baba mumini [YOUNG FATHER]	uncle
+1	FBy	Baba munyinyi (younger father)	All deceased	uncle
+1	FBeW	no data	Doesn't know term/sign	aunt
+1	FByW	Tata	no data	aunt
+1	FZ	Tata	Mwana wa baba [FATHER HIS SISTER]	aunt
+1	FZH	Mama	Doesn't know term/sign	uncle
+1	M	Maitu / Mami	Mami [MOTHER <sub>1</sub> ]	mother
+1	MB	Mama	Mama [UNCLE]	uncle
+1	MBW	Tata	Doesn't know term/sign	aunt
+1	MZ	Tata	Tata [AUNT]	aunt
+1	MZH	Mama	Doesn't know term/sign	uncle
0	FBeS, FBsD	Mwana wa baba m'uk'ur'u (sg.) Mwana wa baba m'uk'ur'u (pl.)	Doesn't know term, but knows it differs from FZS and FZD	cousin
0	FByS, FByD	Mwana wa baba munyinyi (sg.) Ciana cia baba munyinyi (pl.)	Doesn't know term, but knows it differs from FZS and FZD.	cousin

<sup>35</sup>See footnote 31.

row	etic definition	Hearing kinship terms	Deaf kinship terms [English gloss of KSL SIGN]	emic English gloss
0	FZS, FZD	Mwana wa tata (sg.) Ciana cia tata (pl.)	Doesn't know term, but knows it differs from FBS and FBD. FZ has married outside of the patrilineage.	cousin
0	MBS, MBD	Mwana wa mama (sg.) Ciana cia mama (pl.)	Mwana wa mama (sg.) Ciana cia mama (pl.) [COUSIN]	cousin
0	MZS, MZD	Mwana wa tata (sg.) Ciana cia tata (pl.)	Mwana wa tata (sg.) Ciana cia tata (pl.) [COUSIN]	cousin
0	B	M'ur'u wa maitu	Mwar'i witu [BROTHER]	brother
0	BW	Muthoni	M'utumia wa <u>Brother's Name</u> [MY BROTHER WIFE]	sister-in-law
0	Z	Mwar'i wa maitu	Mwar'i witu [SISTER]	sister
0	ZH	Muthoni	M'uthuri wa <u>Sister's Name</u> [MY SISTER HUSBAND]	brother-in-law
0	W	M'utumia wakwa	M'utumia wakwa [MY WIFE]	wife
-1	BS, BD	Mwana wa m'ur'u wa mait'u (sg.) / Mwana wakwa (sg.) Ciana Ciakwa (pl.)	Ciana cia kariuki (pl.) [BROTHER CHILDREN]	nephew/niece (unisex)
-1	ZS, ZD	Mwana wa mwar'i wa mait'u (sg.)	Ciana cia njeri (pl.) [SISTER CHILDREN]	nephew/niece
-1	S	Muriu wakwa	Kahii wakwa [MY SON]	son
-1	D	Mwar'i wakwa	Kairitu wakwa [MY DAUGHTER]	daughter
-1	SW	Muthoni	M'utumia wa <u>Son's Name</u> [MY SON WIFE]	daughter-in-law
-1	DH	Muthoni-wa	M'uthuri wa <u>Daughter's Name</u> [MY DAUGHTER HUSBAND]	son-in-law

row	etic definition	Hearing kinship terms	Deaf kinship terms [English gloss of KSL SIGN]	emic English gloss
-1	MBSS, MBSD, MBDS, MBDD, MZSS, MZSD, MZDS, MZDD	no data	Mwar'i wa maitu <sup>36</sup> [NEPHEW/NIECE]	first cousin once removed / second cousin
-2	SS	Kaguka	Ciana cia <u>Son's Name/Ego's Name</u> (pl) [SON BORN CHILDREN]	grandson
-2	DS	Kaguka	Ciana cia <u>Daughter's Name/Daughter's Husband Name/Daughter's Husband's Father's Name</u> (pl) [DAUGHTER BORN CHILDREN]	grandson
-2	SD	Gac'uc'u	Ciana cia <u>Son's Name/Ego's Name</u> (pl) [SON BORN CHILDREN]	granddaughter
-2	DD	Gac'uc'u	Ciana cia <u>Daughter's Name/Daughter's Husband Name/Daughter's Husband's Father's Name</u> (pl) [DAUGHTER BORN CHILDREN]	granddaughter
+1	WF	Baba / M'uciari	Baba [STEP FATHER]	father-in-law
+1	WM	Maitu / M'uciari	Mami [STEP MOTHER <sub>1</sub> ]	mother-in-law
+1	WF*, WM*	Aciari	no data	parents-in-law
0	WB, WZH	no data	[COUSIN]	brother-in-law
0	WZ, WBW	no data	[COUSIN]	sister-in-law

<sup>36</sup>Deaf informant believes this is a unisex term for all his cousin's children on his mother's side. He also uses a unisex sign which would be translated into English "Nephew/Niece".

Appendix C: Kinship Key Chart

**Kinship Chart Key**

Lower case	First Spoken Language	Descent Line
UPPER CASE	KSL Sign	Hypothetical Descent Line
<i>Italicized</i>	Proper name	Siblingship
▲	Ego	Hypothetical Siblingship
△	Male	Unknown Siblingship Connection
○	Female	Twin Siblings
□	Unknown Sex	Marriage
△/	Deceased Male	Hypothetical Marriage
○/	Deceased Female	Divorce/Separation/Annulment
△/	Hypothetical Male	Marriage ended by death
○/	Hypothetical Female	Unwed Relationship
△/	No longer part of the family	Separation of Unwed Relationship

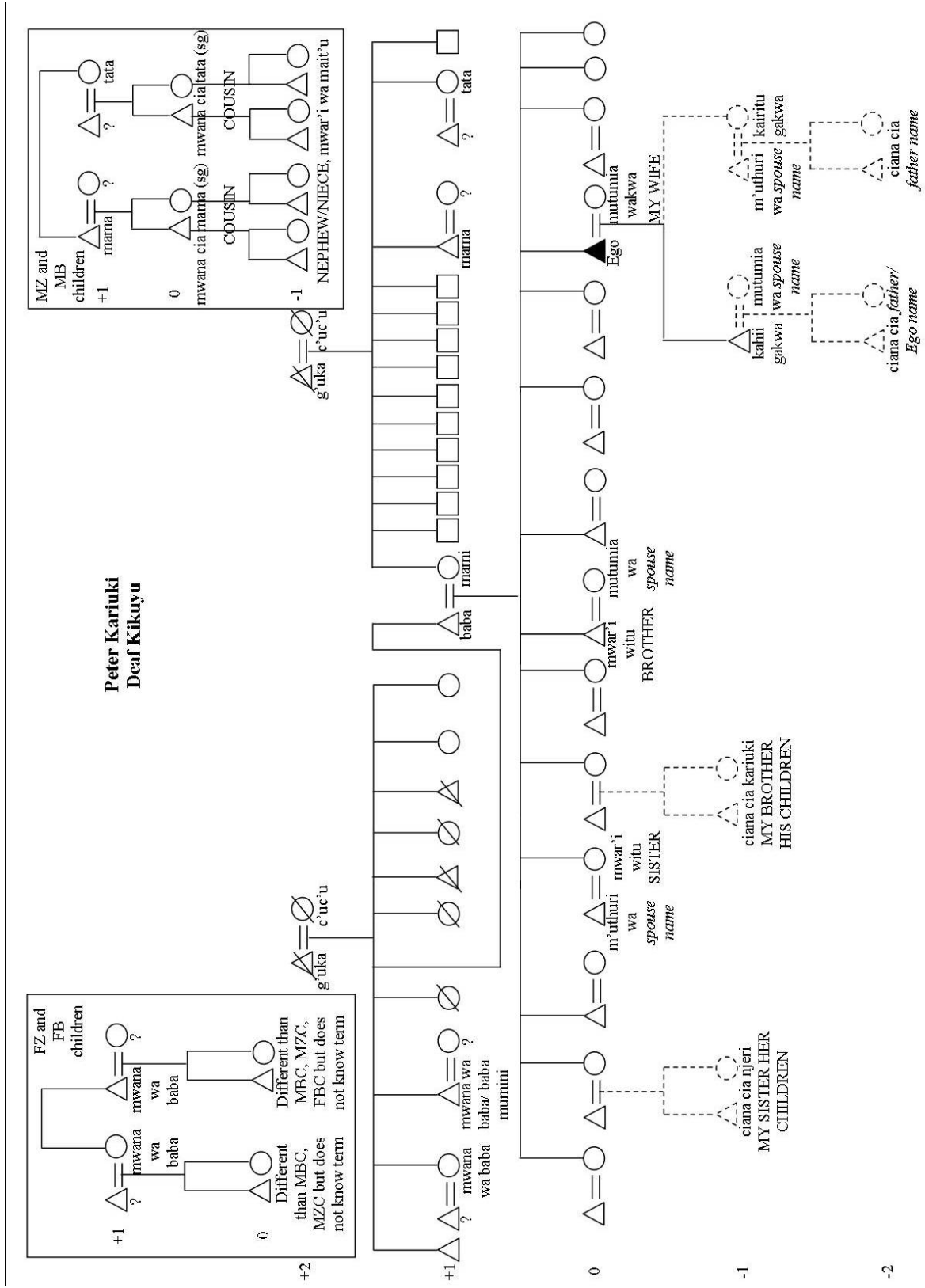








Appendix G<sub>1</sub>: Peter Kariuki (Deaf Kikuyu) Kinship Tree, Part 1



\*Ego did not know the birth order of his father's siblings, only that there were 4 sons, 2 deceased, and 6 daughters, 3 deceased and that his father was the fifth child.  
\*Ego did not know how many siblings his mother had, only that it was more than 14. He also did not know the sexes or the birth order of any one.

Appendix G<sub>2</sub>: Peter Kariuki (Deaf Kikuyu) Kinship Tree, Part 2

**Peter Kariuki**  
**Deaf Kikuyu**

