THE AFRICAN HERITAGE PROGRAM: COMMUNITY MEMBERS SPEAK

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the extent to which African heritage is important in the schools under the Toronto District School Board is explored using the anti-racism and social constructivism frameworks. Phenomenology guided the research process and open ended questions were used to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The major findings indicate that some of the needs of students of African descent were met through: identity affirmation; the integration of the African experience; reinforcement of culture and connectedness. The study contributes to anti-oppressive practices which stipulate that social programs and services should respond to multiple forms of oppression. Several recommendations that could potentially improve the program were made. These recommendations are: community based curriculum development and program delivery; the need for comprehensive government funding of the program and the need for the program to address contemporary gaps in skills development.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late mum, Ennie and my late sister, Makho.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The debate about whether or not school curricula and programs fully meet the needs of local communities continues in the academic literature (Dei, 1996; Basu, 2011). The nature of the debate has been about the need to capture the lived realities, identities and cultures of the people served by these programs. There have been numerous efforts to make the curricula more relevant to local communities within the City of Toronto (kumsa, 2005; Madibbho, 2008; Tettey and Puplampu, 2006). The African Heritage Program (AHP) is one such program that seeks to address such shortfalls. This program was introduced into designated Toronto District School Board (TDSB) schools in order to address some of the challenges faced by students of African descent (SAD) in the school system (Dei, 2008; Madibbho, 2008). For the purposes of this study, SAD are students with one or both parents being of African ancestry. The challenges faced by SAD broadly relate to socio-economic integration. This study aims to obtain the views of parents of African descent of children enrolled in the AHP. The study could provide guidelines and strategies for improving the program. The study will also contribute to the academic and social work debate on the development of relevant curricula, programs and policies. The research method used was that of interviewing a small group of parents of African descent using a set of open-ended questions. Parents of SAD were chosen for interviews because in their role as guardians they had an overview of the program. The approach used was the phenomenological approach, which allows respondents to articulate their

experiences of the program. The study was guided by the anti-racist framework in combination with social constructivism.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

School students of African descent often face difficult challenges within the Toronto school system. Toronto has been found to fall short in terms of meeting the multi-faceted needs of SAD. (Basu, 2011; Dei, 2008; Daniels, 2001). The African Heritage Program (AHP) is one program that seeks to address such shortfalls. According to Basu (2011), Daniels (2001), Dei (2008), Galabuzi (2007), problems faced by Peoples of African Descent (PAD) following transnational migration are mainly a result of systemic inadequacies to appropriately respond to increased diversity in the City of Toronto. The diversity of the student population in TDSB schools has not been matched by corresponding diverse programs. Relevant programs are deemed necessary as they serve the purpose of integrating cultures of PAD (Cojoe, 1999; James, 2001; Morgan & Ezekiel, 1995). Like in other cultures, the experiences of SAD are shaped by their ethnic-linguistic, spiritual and religious identities amongst other factors. However, not all these factors are incorporated into the school curriculum. As a result of the exclusion of these multiple identities, this population has an array of issues that can be addressed by the AHP. According to Baffoe (2006), Dei (2006), James (2001); Madibbho (2008), the institutionalisation of barriers to economic and social mobility has also been identified as one of the major problems for SAD. One of these institutions is the school system, which creates barriers by designing a curriculum that does not acknowledge the worldviews of African peoples. Programs offered by the school system in Toronto are reflective of the dominant (white) society's cultural values, epistemologies, and worldviews, which are

presented as the 'universal norms' or 'truths' (Malekan, 2010; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Using only Western-based epistemologies eclipses or ignores other equally authentic ways of knowing, including Afrocentric or African-centered epistemologies. According to Basu (2011), challenges they face include homelessness, isolation, racialized and gendered poverty, post-traumatic stress, discrimination in housing and social services, employment, healthcare and the reunification of families (Dei, 2008; Basu, 2011).

The learning environment of SAD lacks relevant resources that could make the learning relatable to them: a culturally relevant curriculum and communicative practices, instructional pedagogy that affirms the experiences of SAD in Toronto, and excellent Afrocentric research centres (Dei, 2008; Galabuzi, 2007). The absence of such relevant resources in the system leads to social disengagement of PAD, especially in the education system. This disengagement and isolation results in a myriad of other problems such as high school dropout rates truancy, poverty and violence.

The TDSB introduced AHP to help meet the educational needs, including improving academic achievement among pre-university students of African heritage in Toronto. AHP has been running since 2006 but the literature that pertains to its effectiveness was not been found. This study assesses the effectiveness of AHP in meeting the needs of SA D. The strategy to determine this is to elicit the views of parents with children enrolled in AHP. The assumptions of the researcher are that the perspectives brought by community members who are parents or caregivers of children enrolled in AHP will offer feedback that could be used to assess the effectiveness of the program and offer ways of improving the program. Community feedback has been recognized as being important in ameliorating social and economic hardships faced by

racialized students and thus enhance their well-being (Graham, 2000; Johnston, 2009; Infundo Ephakemeyo, 2011).

1.3. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

Canada is one of the most diverse countries in the world (James, 1997; Kumsa, 2005; Patterson, 2011). Patterson (2011) further argues that globalization resulted in the liberalization of immigration policies which meant that as early as the 1960s, a skilled labour force essential for the Canadian labour market, could be drawn from elsewhere other than English speaking countries in Europe. This also meant that a large number of PAD were admitted to Canada as immigrants.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) introduced in 2002 contributed to an increased number of immigrants from Africa (Danso and Grant, 2000; Kumsa, 2005). The IRPA contributed to an increased population of PAD mainly due to immigrants who came to Canada as sponsored family members. Basu (2011); Dei (2008); Madibbho (2008), further point out that political, environmental and economic instability in countries such as Haiti, The Democratic Republic of Congo contributed to a large population of PAD in Canada. Some of the immigrants from these countries are victims of forced migration from war-torn zones and refugees from refugee intake countries such as the above. Some of the immigrants are recent economic migrants.

According to Patterson (2011), a large number of the immigrant population chooses to settle in major cities in Canada. The diversity of the Canadian population, therefore, extends to the City of Toronto and the schools under the jurisdiction of its affiliated school boards. Dei (2008); Kumsa (2005) state that in 2001, 50% of the population in Toronto was born outside of Canada. The diversity of the population,

particularly in Toronto, meant that there was a need for policies, services and programs that are responsive to the resulting challenges.

In Canada, and particularly in the City of Toronto, SAD face unique challenges and issues due to the absence of their culture and languages in institutions that shape their lives. James (1997) attributes some of the challenges, such as lack of viable employment opportunities, to an environment that alienates their experiences. Challenges faced by PAD are compounded by language barriers since the official languages in Canada are English and French. Therefore, factors such as cultural and language alienation impede their success in spheres such as the labor market and schools. Relatable languages are deemed as necessary tools that can ensure successful transitioning in a new and diverse environment (Basu, 2011).

According to Basu (2011); Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (1993), education policies such as The Common Curriculum, Grades 1–9 1993 produced initiatives such as The Schools as Community Hubs to deal with problems faced by minority groups in Ontario. In Toronto, the 'Schools as Community Hubs initiative was implemented to offer a range of services for students, their families and communities. The services include settlement services, extra-curricular activities, language and mental health related services. Basu (2011); Patterson (2011) indicate that at inception, the 'schools as community hubs' initiative was a collaborative effort between boards of education and service providers on one hand and families, and communities on the other. However, this initiative now falls short in adequately capturing the lived experiences of diverse community members because stakeholders were not adequately consulted by school boards. (Eby et al, 2012). School boards, approach issues faced by particular

community members from a particular lens of understanding which is devoid of input from the marginalized communities

The needs of PAD had to be concretely addressed through specific programs that target and integrate perspectives of students with diverse languages and distinct ethnic backgrounds. These programs are effective in the sense that they enable schools, communities and ethnic groups to come together and organize, design and experience their own forms of integration through cultural and linguistic diversity. In Toronto, the implementation of such viable strategies that support diversity in schools is often left to the discretion of individual school boards (Basu, 2011). The AHP is one such strategy that evolved from the Schools as Community Hubs and was adopted by the TDSB to enhance curriculum diversity for the benefit of PAD (Madibbho, 2008: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993). It was developed in a consultative process involving the school board, schools and parent council committees (Basu, 2011). This program provides an opportunity for students to learn about African history, culture and language (Basu, 2010: Toronto District School Board (n. d)). The AHP is made up of language instruction, the production and use of African educational resources and the celebration of African heritage and African contribution during February (The African Heritage Month). Within this broader program is the International Languages and African Heritage Programs (which will be simply referred to as the African Heritage Program or AHP in this paper). The program is offered in designated Toronto District School Board (TDSB) schools.

POSITIONALITY

According to Absalom and Willet (2005), positioning oneself is a vital process of the research procedure. It serves the purpose of ridding the research process of culturally

irrelevant views that marginalize other ways of knowing. The declaration of who one is, in regards to knowledge claims cultivates a sense of trust between the researcher and the community and ultimately, between institutions and populations served. It also gives the anti-racist researcher the opportunity to explain the underlying factors behind the research process. These factors may be derived from the personal and shared experiences the researcher has with the participants.

My interest in this research project emanates from my multiple identities that have been repeatedly submerged during the course of my life. I endured layered forms of oppression under the colonial conditions and post-independence Zimbabwe. The school curriculum was based on a British education system that was oblivious to my experiences as a colonized woman. I was subjected to a curriculum that required me to relate to alien experiences that were reproduced in, for example, literary works that depicted an alien context. The contexts that were foreign to me as an African student, living on an African socio-political landscape were, for example, the Medieval, Renaissance and the Elizabethan Periods that were the backdrop of the academia. My circumstances and needs as a deprived, colonized young Zimbabwean were totally ignored.

Post-independence Zimbabwe added another layer of oppression as the needs of my ethnic group were not validated by authorities from the dominant culture. Underdevelopment, underemployment and cultural suppression were institutionally and subliminally promoted in ways that adversely impacted people from my ethnic group.

The integration of my heritage and experiences at an academic level is an opportunity for me to share my journey with others and help in finding solutions to various forms marginalization. It is my hope that, whilst my own story might still bear the trauma, I might

in some way undertake research that will contribute to the success of students who have lost hope because of the absence of knowledge that does not speak directly to their identity. It is my experience of being continuously deemed a member of the minority group that informs my Major Research Paper on the importance of integrating multiple cultures into the learning environment. Aspects of my African heritage, ethnicity and language that are constantly marginalized are important elements that guide this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE AFRICAN HERITAGE PROGRAM: WHAT IS IT?

To acknowledge the dual nature of AHP, the public school system defines the AHP as the Elementary International Languages and African Heritage Programs. It is one of the long integration programs, which include language programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development Programs (ELD). Other settlement programs such as translation services, counselling and multi-lingual educational services that address the immediate needs of the children in schools are included amongst these categories of programs (Basu, 2011; Toronto District School Board (n. d)).

According to the Toronto District School Board (n. d), the AHP is considered an integration program that is part of the continuing education programs offered and administered by school boards in the City of Toronto. The availability of the program in designated schools is a result of a collective action that involves the TDSB that informs the communities, the parents who make a request for the program and settlement counsellors and principals who facilitate the program. The program is held after school hours and on Saturdays (Basu, 2011). It is offered as a result of demand by community members. It is made available if there is space and a minimum of twenty-three students who need it. According to Basu (2011); Toronto District School Board (n. d), the provision of the AFP is dependent on such factors as the leadership capability of the school principal and the ability of particular communities to organize in order to claim a particular linguistic service. This process involves communities being able to advocate for themselves, forge alliances amongst themselves, settlement workers and community

agencies. Basu (2011) further points out that communities with languages spoken in top ten refugee intake countries are able to organize and request the International Languages and Heritage Program. Kumsa (2005) states that for PAD who immigrated to Canada due to forced migration and displacement, heritage programs are key in the restoration of lost identities

2.2. THE HISTORY OF THE AFRICAN HERITAGE PROGRAM:

James (2001), states that early African Heritage Programs were established by figures such as Marcus Garvey as early as 1935 and Gwen Lee Ann in collaboration with the Ontario Institute of Education (OISE) and the Toronto Board of Education.

According to Cojoe (1999), James (2001); Morgan and Ezekiel (1995), the African Heritage Program emerged again as a result of the multicultural approach to education which was introduced in English school boards during the 70's in the City of Toronto, and in other provinces in Canada. Although international migrations had been an ongoing process, there were increased waves of immigrants into Canada due to factors such as globalization and displacement. Thus, there was a need for responses that would cater for populations impacted by these new conditions in Canada. The presence of immigrants of African ancestry had to be acknowledged through the incorporation of their worldviews, practices and cultures into supplementary programs that would be ultimately integrated into mainstream programs in schools (Basu 2011). Basu (2011); Cojoe (2005), further explain that the program was thus perceived as an effective tool of inclusion that would acknowledge diverse ethnic groups and Peoples of African descent in particular. This multicultural approach to education proposed that schools should be informed by a careful analysis of what works for diverse ethno-cultural groups as far as schooling is concerned

(James, 2001; Morgan and Ezekiel, 1995; Basu, 2011). The African Heritage Program was, therefore, developed to deal with the diversity that emanated from the neighbourhoods in the cities. Historically, the diversity of the Canadian population was not reciprocated by relevant school curricular, practices and policies (James, 2011).

Basu (2011); James (2001) further state that the AHP was a bi-product of the multiculturalism ethos of the 1960s-1970s, which was characterized by radical resistance to hegemonic practices. These practices engendered multiple social issues which could be mitigated by multiple perspectives informed by programs such as AHP. Cojoe (1999); James (2001); Morgan and Ezekiel (1995); Mullings (2009) further argue that during this period of deep social consciousness, the school system had to devise an 'ethnic' curriculum, for specific heritages, that would create a sense of belonging and inclusiveness. The assumption was that a community conscious curriculum would assist school boards to engage students of all backgrounds to achieve best outcomes. The curriculum would also reflect an inclusive picture of contemporary Canada, which includes African Canadians and other ethno-cultural groups. Through an inclusive curriculum, the school board expected to respond to issues faced by the youth in high need areas of Toronto. Therefore, an alternative curriculum that informed programs offered after school hours, on weekends and evenings was implemented (Johnston, 2009; Toronto District School Board (n. d).

According to Baffoe (2006); Basu (2011), the multicultural approach to education was an acknowledgement that the public school system had failed to create a niche in the school curriculum for certain ethnic heritages such as African Canadians. Bonnila-Silva (2000); James (2001) further argue that the Multicultural Policy of Canada of 1971

which informed the AHP was a tool used by governments to 'preserve' the multicultural heritage of Canadians, incorporate cultural and linguistic aspects of minority groups into existing power structures and to ensure that citizens participated in all institutions regardless of cultural backgrounds. The AHP was deemed a relevant program that would subsequently integrate values of Students of African descent into social structures such as schools (Basu, 2011; James, 2001). Historically, there has also been a series of policies, such as the Heritage Language Program (1977), that were enacted to acknowledge cultural diversity in schools (Basu, 2011). In the 1970s, the Government of Ontario used this policy to institutionalize heritage programs that affirmed multiple identities in schools. This was in response to calls for the Government of Ontario to address the concerns of ethnic minority groups which included the loss of their indigenous languages and identities. Basu (2011); Dei (2008); Malekan, (2010) state that the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute ACT of 1991 and the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act of 1997 were policies that were enacted to restore and preserve languages other than French and English which were already adopted as the official languages. Consequently, these policies promoted other languages in an environment where English and French were recognized as the official languages in Canada. In due course, inclusiveness in regards to languages and cultures was strengthened through a range of policy documents. Policy documents such as Antiracism and Ethno cultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1993), and Changing Perspectives: A Resource Guide for Antiracist and Ethno cultural-Equity Education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1992) were intended to encourage inclusivity and promote equity. They particularly benefit PAD

by ensuring that students enrolled in schools reach their potential and acquire knowledge and information about them, and the world around that is not biased. The policy documents also paved the way for school practices that instil confidence in racialized students' cultural and racial identities. According Patterson (2011), policies that promoted these inclusive practices were a response to Canadian population which was rapidly becoming diverse due to increased immigration rates. Patterson (2011); Basu (2011) further add that school board level policies were passed to support the teaching of cultural heritage programs and languages that reflected the diversity of Toronto's population. In 1975, a Toronto Board of Education Work Group Draft Report on Multiculturalism initiated an important discussion of Heritage Programs. Aspects of the Heritage Program that were discussed were textbook bias, multicultural material development, ethnic relations and the training of teachers from diverse cultural backgrounds (Basu, 2011)

Policies which support cultural diversity and awareness translated into specific plans for action some of which culminated in programs such as AHP which enrich curriculum diversity and contribute to inclusive schooling (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993).

2.3. RESEARCH ON AHP AND ON ISSUES FACED BY PAD

Researchers such as Cojoe (1999); Dei (2008); Madibbho (2008) have long been interested in strategies that can address social issues faced by PAD. These issues have been mostly linked to institutions of learning. Dei (1996); Dei (2008) use historical perspectives to argue for measures that could address the needs and concerns of students of African descent. Studies have identified the following as major challenges facing students of African descent within the Ontario school system: socio-economic deprivation because of their racial and cultural heritage; poverty; misrepresentation of SAD and their identities; frustrations with schooling and over-exposure to white

experience that shapes the education system (Cojoe, 1999; Dei, 2008; Madibbho, 2008). Various strategies have been suggested for addressing the problems, including the development of Afrocentric knowledge (Asante, 1991; Galabuzi, 2011). According to Dei (1996); Galabuzi (2011), Afrocentric knowledge is conceived as the study of the phenomena that is premised on the perspectives of PAD. They further state that the discussion of race together with class, gender and ethnicity in schools can assist in the development of culturally relevant strategies that can address some of the concerns of SAD. Dei (2008); Malekan (2010), affirm that education models, such as Afrocentric epistemologies, that challenge individualism can provide effective ways of improving the lives of Peoples of African ancestry. Individualism, which is a tenet of neo-liberalism has been responsible for the perpetuation of isolation and alienation which is experienced by PAD. This promotion of individual success as a value which prevails in Western individualistic cultures, according to (Dei, 2008), is in sharp contrast to African collectivist cultures characterized by sharing.

The African Heritage Program was introduced by the TDSB to meet the needs of racialized students. Literature that captures the voices of people of African descent on the effectiveness of AHP is very limited, as they have often been excluded from conversations about the program (Basu, 2011; Toronto District School Board (n. d). Research on school programs and how they meet the needs of marginalized communities has mostly been conducted from a sociological perspective (Cojoe, 1999; Dei, 1996).

According to Olesen (2010), the use of sociological perspectives, such as critical race framework, to analyze school programs which target marginalized groups is limited to theories which investigate and explain marginalization. Such an approach to social

issues tend to focus on the structural causes of problems more than on concrete actions for addressing the challenges. Dei (2008); Wagner (2005) state that problems associated with the current school system are due to a culturally biased curriculum that glorifies white cultural values and Western-based knowledge as universal norms. Dominant cultural values are often disseminated through standardized and IQ tests which measure individual excellence. Taking a critical anti-racism approach, Dei (2008) argues that the marginalization of racialized students in Canada, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, was perpetuated by learning deficit models that often labeled students of African ancestry as failures

Similar lenses have been applied to examine practices and policies of the 1990s that informed school programs. However, the analyses of schooling systems (e.g. Dei, 2008; Galabuzi, 2011; Wagner, 2005) do not consider practices informed by these learning deficit models frameworks and how they impact multiple identities of PAD. These analyses of school programs do not specifically look into viable measures to be taken in order to mitigate some of the subsequent challenges that are faced by SAD. Limitations of sociological approaches to social issues which pertain to PAD include lack of analyses of complex and relevant intervention methods that capture ethnicity, race and gender (Olesen, 2010).

The African Heritage program was created particularly for individuals of African descent who live in Canada (Toronto District School Board (n.d.)). It thus becomes a program that affirms the presence of the black community in Canada which is variously referred to by several labels such as Black, and Canadian Blacks in Canada (Boatswain & Lalonde, 2000). This population is diverse, with some born in Canada, the Caribbean,

Africa and other parts of the world. According to the Canadian census of 2006, the black community in Canada is 696 8000 out of a population of 31,241 030 (Boatswain and Lalonde, 2000: Madibbho, 2008). According to Basu (2011); Patterson (2011), heritage programs are of benefit to constituents of the African-Canadians. Between 1991 and 2005 there was a significant increase (31%) in the Black population of Canada due to influx of immigrants and refugees. The AHP benefits Blacks in Canada. They have always been a part of early Canadian history in spite of beliefs that seem to imply that the presence of Black people in Canada is a recent phenomenon associated with immigration from the Caribbean, and Africa. Black people came to Canada at its making as loyalists, refugees, slaves or fugitive slaves as early as 1698 (Boatswain & Lalonde, 2000). Part of the population that benefits from the African Heritage Program immigrated to Canada as political and economic refugees. Historically, Black women were also employed as domestic servants and men as porters and on railroads. Programs that affirm the social, cultural and historical identities served are vital in schools as they serve the purposes of acknowledging the presence of historically marginalized bodies, particularly within the schools system (Dei, 2008).

It is hoped that the African Heritage Program will, therefore, provide a vast curriculum that will acknowledge that black people and other racialized minority groups have continued to contribute to various aspects of Canadian life including areas such as education. The program will also give a full picture of experiences all Canadians within the school system (Toronto District School Board (n.d.).

The program is important as it integrates African history to the general fabric of Canadian History. The history encompasses factors such as colonialism, slavery and

current political turmoil in mainland Africa. It therefore becomes a tool that is used to deliver appropriate resources to particular populations (Graham, 2002; Toronto District School Board (n.d.); Morgan & Ezekiel, 1995).

According to Dryfoos (1999), Black communities can benefit from supplementary programs that will address high-risk behaviours and educational failure, adolescent pregnancies, substance abuse and delinquency. It is hoped appropriate heritage programs, such as the AHP in schools, will also curb high school dropout rates (Dei, 1996, 2008; Galabuzi, 2011). Another impediment faced by black students in the education system that will be addressed by the African Heritage Program pertains to expulsion and suspension from school. The program will be a resource that will be channelled towards the provision of adequate infrastructure and tools that will improve the learning environment, particularly in poorly resourced areas. Without relevant strategies which include services and programs such as the AHP, black students are likely to become transient students who largely achieve lower grades because of multiple barriers to education (Benjamin, 2002; Dei, 2008; Infundo Ephakemeyo, 2011; Morgan and Ezekiel, 1995; Toronto District School Board (n.d.)).

According to Graham (2002); Toronto District School Board (n.d.), AHP could include culture of the PAD as identified by symbols, historical dates, heroes, heroines and motifs. Studying such facets of lives of PAD provides valuable knowledge and information about PAD. It also enables African communities in the diaspora to express their shared history and experiences in spheres such as the academia. The infusion of African languages and cultures into programs assists schools to deal with issues of exclusion as experienced by PAD. One strategy for addressing exclusion of PAD is the adoption of a

comprehensive curriculum that addresses social problems associated with factors such as globalization and international migration (Basu, 2010). Institutional exclusion of PAD is also tackled through a curriculum that taps into their daily practices and lived realities.

The AHP is perceived to enhance full participation of Peoples of African ancestry through an understanding of their identities. These identities are explored through their worldviews, languages and knowledge. Basu (2010); Toronto District School Board, (n.d.), state that there is need to develop more relevant material and texts that speaks to Peoples of African heritage. However, the production of resources that speak to the realities of PAD is impeded by budget cutbacks imposed by neoliberalism.

Studies by Dei (1996); Kumsa (2005); Madibbho (2008) examine the importance of programs that promote identity and accommodation in spaces of learning. These studies the importance of engaging families to assess and evaluate the relevance of school programs is emphasized. The studies indicate that the evaluation of services and programs by community members accurately captures their needs. Ackley & Cullen (2002); Anderson-Butcher, Lawson, Lachini, Flaspohler, Bean and Wade-Mdivian (2010); Bowen and Richman (2002) suggest that mainstream program evaluation uses administrative data from school and public agency sources. Data such as daily assessment scores are used to; target underachieving students, enhance their success and to evaluate the effectiveness of school programs and curricula. Furthermore, a study conducted by Bowen and Richman (2002) found that research on the impact of school programs has focused on the general student population and not specific racialized populations such as PAD. Therefore, there is the need to develop partnerships with families of African descent in order to develop programs which are community centred

(Dei, 2011; Galabuzi, 2011). Such partnerships produce relevant and effective ways of capturing diverse experiences.

Existing literature on students and communities of African descent has focused on their failure to integrate into the school system; the need to provide alternative schools such as the newly establish Afrocentric school (Dei, 2005; Morgan & Ezekiel, 1995; Toronto District School Board (n.d.)). However, this study will bring a different approach to the debate - it will engage the community so that it can play a pivotal role in knowledge production that pertains to the African Heritage program. A conversation on how the AHP addresses the needs, well-being and affirms the identities of SAD will elicit ideas on the relevant and shifting African worldviews and experiences. Aspects of these worldviews that emerge from the study may be incorporated into school practices and programs.

2.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ANTI-RACISM PARADIGM

This study uses an anti-racism framework to assess the effectiveness or impact of the African Heritage Program implemented by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). Anti-racism is a framework that critiques and analyses how institutional power structures and dominant ideologies operate to exclude people because of their race, ethnicity, ancestry, and other social identities (Dei, 2005; Mullings, 2009).

According to Dei (2005); Mullings (2009), critical anti-racism framework is based on the assumption that power is located in social institutions. Racialized communities are marginalised and excluded from participating in these institutions through practices, policies and programs. Dominant knowledge, disseminated through the schooling system, further perpetuates the oppression of racialized groups. Systems such as schools

and their boards eclipse alternative ways of knowing. For example, bureaucratic procedures that Directors of Education have to follow in order to initiate change are impeded by many layers of administration and jurisdictions. These practices may work to exclude new ways of knowing that are informed by AHP (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.). Thus, the AHP is a tool of resistance to hegemonic discourses. This study will examine a range of issues faced by PAD within their social, political and cultural context. The project will analyse how the AHP responds to their intersecting identities of ethnicity and race. The analysis of contemporary, linguistic and social factors that shape the program is also key to understanding what the needs are. The evaluation of programs by families of African descent is, therefore, to some extent synonymous with resistance to dominant knowledge paradigms which inform schools in Toronto (Mullings, 2009; Toronto District School Board (n.d.). The anti-racism framework focuses on aspects of racialized communities that have been ignored by schools that traditionally promote Anglo-Saxon values.

Challenging dominant values within the school system can be difficult in the sense that they permeate every fabric of society. (Mullings, 2009; Young, 2005). An anti-racist research paradigm acknowledges that not all racial groups have the same opportunities that lead to success (Galabuzi, 2011; Dei, 2008). Impediments to the success of SAD include an array of systemic barriers that disproportionately affect them. Through the lens of the anti-racist framework, success of the SAD is feasible if the knowledge systems of Peoples of African ancestry are incorporated in the learning environment. The TDSB thus designed The African Heritage Program within the notion of equity and inclusiveness (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.). The findings from this research project may

contribute to a process that could eventually lead to adjustments to the AHP and the school curricula in general. Such adjustments could be replicated in other settings where programs and services need to respond to diverse needs of communities.

Policies that support anti-racist paradigms include the policy of Equitable and Inclusive Schools (2008), which was passed by the TDSB in Ontario. This policy was enacted to create equity of opportunity and access to TDSB programs, services and resources. These conditions are deemed essential to the achievement of successful outcomes for all ethnic groups served the TDSB (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.).

The assumption is that disadvantage in communities can be ameliorated through programs that address the genesis of economic disparities between students from racialized communities and those from dominant groups (Bannerji, 2000). This is achieved through a curriculum that teaches PAD about their past and current experiences. These experiences are linked to some of the challenges they face as communities of African ancestry. Some of the objectives of AHP, therefore, are to analyse the material needs of students of African descent. These emanate from historical and current socio-political conditions that inform the curriculum of the AHP. The availability of the program is also perceived as a valuable opportunity for students of African descent to learn a new cultural heritage and language. Reinforcing culture through learning African languages is perceived as an essential element of integration (Bannerji, 2000; Basu, 2011; Infundo Ephakemeyo, 2011).

Critical race scholars such as Bannerji (1996); Dei (2011); Smith (1999) identify some school programs and services as instruments that are used to prop up white culture. Settlement programs that target newcomer students, for example, only serve the purpose

of facilitating their adaptation into a new environment in Canada. Such programs do not challenge the schooling environment that is dominated by whiteness. Smith (1999) further argues that such programs and policies control thought patterns, actions and behaviours of racialized students who subsequently become alienated from institutions that govern their lives. The anti-racism framework enables researchers to critique such school practices and dominant discourses which pervade the school system. This is because foundational knowledge which informs these programs does not capture the lived experiences of racialized communities (Wong, 2004). The lived realities of PAD include factors such as inadequate employment opportunities which leave them susceptible to exploitation by market forces. The vulnerability of PAD is perpetuated by discriminatory practices that do not affirm their history and heritage. These practices deny them access to employment and other services. This vulnerability has a negative impact on the well-being of PAD (Dei, 2008; Mullings, 2009; Smith, 1999; Thobani, 2005). The analysis of the AHP through an anti-racist lens will explore relevant African paradigms that can be incorporated into school curriculums and programs in order to increase access to services that are essential to the wellbeing of PAD.

Race is perceived as a social construct upon which certain interests are served and particular privileges are claimed. Therefore, programs such as AHP are needed to contest dominant ways of knowing. (Dei, 2005; Mullings, 2009; Thobani, 2005). By offering alternative lens to issues, such programs cater for the diverse communities that make up Canada.

According to Bannerji (1996): Thobani (2005), an anti-racist lens to learning makes visible the dominant discourses which define systems which privilege and promote

western culture. Challenging these dominant discourses through alternative knowledge systems will ensure that knowledge disseminated within the school system is relevant to the increasingly diverse populations in Canadian cities. The African Heritage Program provides an alternative approach to education. It is through this program that experiences of PAD may be understood. Some of realities are identified as everyday struggles which pertain to, for example, their economic well-being and civic engagement. Some of the challenges that disproportionately affect PAD are due to factors such as government cutbacks on programs, services and other support structures needed by this group (Basu, 2011; Fossati, 2011). This study has the potential of exploring the factors that influence these struggles and their potential implications on the lives of PAD.

These factors are perceived as the source of exclusion and marginalisation of racialized communities. Tackling issues of power and privilege is imperative. Doing so addresses knowledge which privileges dominant culture which has permeated every fabric of society including the schooling system. Challenging dominant paradigms within the school system, through the AHP, may not entail a complete overhaul of oppressive institutions, but may offer new ways of viewing curricular issues and developing relevant knowledge which can further inform programs and services for diverse communities (Basu, 2010).

The assumptions of researchers who are guided by anti-racist framework are that racialized community members should articulate alternative ways which challenge traditional knowledge. The diversity of views can contribute to alternative approaches to challenges faced by particular communities (Allahar, 1998; Madibbho 2008). Therefore, the anti-racist framework promotes an inclusive and collaborative approach to social

issues. Collaboration in this research project is amongst actors such as the TDSB, school principals, teachers and PAD (Basu, 2011; Toronto District School Board (n. d). Collaboration gives racialized communities the opportunity to self-define and identify through their stories. It also provides PAD with a chance to share their experiences which have been shaped by their racial identity (Dei, 2005; Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Mullings, 2009; Pon, 2007). A community approach to learning has the ability of bring forth culturally relevant knowledge that is essential for the integration of racialized PAD (Pon, 2007: Wong, 2004: Dei, 2008).

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The author will also use social constructivism as a paradigm through which the experience of the African Heritage Program will be understood. One premise of social constructivism is that reality is not objective but is a result of social interaction within a particular context (Gergen, 1985). Therefore, how SAD experience the AHP - which is the basis of this study - should be conceived within the context of diverse factors which encompass historical, geographical and socio-cultural complexities that shape the program. The social construction of values, shifting identities of PAD due to factors such as migration and norms that inform the program will inform the study. The rationale for choosing this as the theoretical framework is based on its ability to capture the complexity of experience and views (Creswell, 2013). The social construction of how the program responds to lived realities is also dependent on nuances such as region, geographic location and linguistic affiliation. Social constructivism places emphasis on experience and interpretation. It is concerned with meaning and it seeks to uncover the way members of society understand given situations (Creswell, 2013). The assumptions of social

constructivists are premised on co-creation of knowledge which is key in the amelioration of marginalization. The study will therefore assist in the development of programs that are responsive to the wellbeing of PAD.

This particular study is also focused on knowledge which is disseminated through the schools system in Toronto. It therefore echoes the tenets of social constructivism which state that knowledge is created, maintained and disseminated in social institutions (Gergen, 1985). Therefore, it is through the philosophies of social constructivism that the notion of shared ideas, knowledge and practices can shape a responsive program, such as the AHP that will make well-being of communities a reality (Baylis et al. 2013).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this research is to engage a community of families of African descent with parents who were born in Africa in particular, so that they can articulate whether the African Heritage Program offered in schools under the jurisdiction of the Toronto District Board meets their needs. One aim of the research project is to get an idea of whether the program is fulfilling its objectives. Another objective of the study is to find out, from the participants, what modifications may be recommended if necessary.

3.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What meanings do People of African Descent (PAD) attach to AHP and how do community members reconstruct the relevance of AHP in their well-being and success? To further clarify the research question, participants will be asked the following questions:

- i. What does the program mean to you as a parent of African descent?
- ii. How does the program appeal to you as a community member?

3.3.1. RESEARCH METHODS

The research was conducted using the phenomenological approach to research inquiry. It is an approach through which social occurrences are understood through a descriptive analysis of experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 2013). In the current study, this approach was applied by giving the participants a chance to describe how the AHP had impacted them. The focus was on the participants' perceptions of the program offered by the school. The rationale for selecting this approach is based on its systematic approach to describing the phenomenon being studied. It is a method which, through the use of interviews, captures how parents of African descent experience the African

Heritage Program (Kim, 2010; Pascal, 2010). The approach was relevant in this study as it enhanced the researcher's appreciation of the meanings and relevance that the community members attach to the program. The phenomenological approach guided the researcher to delve into the participants' world in order to investigate if the program affirmed their lived experiences and how it enhanced their well-being.

According to Creswell (2013), the phenomenological approach is useful in cases where the issue can only be understood through the examination of a number of participants who have a shared lived experience. In this case, while participants are different in terms of factors such as language and unique cultural inclinations they, however, have a common heritage as community members of African descent. They have a shared historical background which emanates from the history of colonialism, slavery and similar diasporic experiences as well. Literature on this community's experiences of schools programs that affirm their worldviews is scarce. Therefore, my research will reach out to these community members so that they articulate how the aspects of the program, such as, storytelling, song and dance, adequately addresses their needs as people of African descent (Toronto District School Board (n.d.); Morgan and Ezekiel, 1995).

The use of the phenomenological approach to data collection elicited information that addressed how the main aspects of the African Heritage Program, such as storytelling, song and dance offered by TDSB affirm the community's identity. Data which pertained to how the contributions of Africans to humankind enhanced their success and integration was also collected from the participants (Toronto District School Board (n.d.)).

3.3.2. PARTICIPANTS/SAMPLE

Four parents of African descent (3 men and 1 woman) from the target community were engaged in qualitative interviews. The researcher contacted the outreach coordinator of a community agency serving community members of African descent in order to facilitate recruitment of participants from their community. Specifically, the researcher wrote a letter to the outreach coordinator to solicit for the agency's participation in the study. The researcher approached this community agency and asked staff members to assist her by placing a recruitment flyer on their notice board (See Appendix B Recruitment Flyer for Participants).

The study was conducted in the City of Toronto. Toronto has a large population of PAD who perceive the AHP as relevant in their lives. The researcher identified a major community organization, in the City of Toronto, that serves PAD to assist with the recruitment process. Initially, 15 potential participants responded. However, the participants who were finally recruited for this study are four adults who are parents and or care givers of children who identify as African. Specifically, participants are parents or care givers who were born in Africa. Furthermore, the parents had to indicate that they have children in elementary school who use the African Heritage Program offered by any designated community school under the jurisdiction of the Toronto School Board. The participants are fluent English language speakers as translation services were not provided. For the purposes of this study, the sample was drawn from a population of PAD who are served by the AHP. Due to their affiliation with the peoples who identify as Africans, participants had to confirm that they identified with key concepts of the study such as; racism and integration.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

This demographics questionnaire takes into account the diversity of contributions made by participants in terms of specific factors like their age, gender, place of origin, and language (See Appendix E Demographic Questionnaire). The purpose of questionnaire was to ensure that participants suited the criteria of the research project. The demographic questionnaire was also used to identify certain life's experiences and to locate the participants within certain periods that influence the attitudes of the respondents toward the AHP (Bryman, 2008). To discuss how the AHP meets their needs, the researcher had to ascertain that the lives of participants were shaped by historical events and factors peculiar to PAD. Examples of these include factors such as colonialism. The following is a sample of questions on the demographics questionnaire.

- What is your ethnicity?
- What is your gender?
- What is your mother language?
- Indicate the number of people (and the age groups) in your family that make use of the community programs offered by the Toronto District School Board.

According to the findings of the demographic questionnaire, the four participants are parents of children enrolled in the AHP. They are above the age of 18. Three of the participants are male, and one is female. All four of the participants are of African descent. The average number of children of participants is three. All participants are married. All participants live in Toronto where the schools are under the jurisdiction of the TDSB. They are also fluent in English language as translation services were not provided.

INTERVIEWS

I interviewed four participants. Each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder and later transcribed. Participants were asked a set of questions pertaining to their ethnicity as a members of the community of PAD. The questions were in relation to the AHP and how it meets the needs of the family members. Participants were also asked for their views on how to facilitate and improve the delivery of the program (See Appendix F Interview Guide). The following is a sample of interview questions that were asked to elicit information about key elements of the participants' experiences and views on AHP.

- In what ways does the African Heritage Program contribute to the wellbeing of your family members and the community of PAD?
- In what ways do you think the program could generate knowledge about people of African descent in Canada?
- What aspects of your culture do you think should be integrated into African Heritage Program?
- In what ways have you contributed to the nature and delivery of the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Participants were emailed the transcripts of the interview to check for the accuracy of their responses. All participants confirmed that the documented responses were accurate.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

One philosophy of the social constructivism paradigm pertains to sharing of knowledge amongst social actors. Participants will share their ideas on what the African Heritage Program means to them as individuals and as community members. This will give them the opportunity to be active co-creators of knowledge that has an impact on

their lives. They will describe how their belief systems, traditions, and worldviews should inform the program. Social constructivism framework has a significant impact on how the data collected from the participants is analyzed. The researcher paid particular attention to different ways in which participants articulated how the AHP is relevant to their wellbeing (Barnet, 2008). The researcher also analyzed and explored how the language chosen by the participants conveyed particular themes that shape the study. Similarly, the Anti-Racism Framework guided the researcher to analyze, for example, the language of resistance used by the participants. This language was carefully chosen by the participants to highlight the significance of the AHP in areas where they are excluded on the basis of their cultural heritage (Boushel, 2000).

Thematic techniques were used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a method that is premised on the writer's awareness of recurring themes, motifs and ideas. It involves extracting participants' quotes from the interview transcripts and finding themes from the quotes that answer the research question (Bryman, 2008). The first phase of data analysis involved transcribing the interviews, from the electronic recordings. Transcripts were then organized according to themes and inputted into computer files that were named using pseudonyms provided by the researcher.

The second phase of the data analysis involved reading the transcripts in order to make notes on emerging themes that seemed to answer the research question on how AHP meets the needs of PAD. Responses to questions on the interview guide that were deemed to convey a common theme, were grouped together and coded. According to Creswell (2013), codes are assigned to signify data which illustrates recurring ideas, similarities and differences and missing data. Labels were assigned to statements which

were perceived to convey significant aspects of the study such as the context which shapes needs. Codes were used as labels to delineate emerging motifs associated with the impact of the African Heritage Program on People of African descent. Fifteen different codes were developed and matched to segments of texts that were perceived to fit particular themes. For instance, responses and sentiments that seemed to convey the theme of integration were labelled 'AHP INTEGRATION'.

Themes that emerged pertained to issues of: 'Integrating African Ways'; 'Reclaiming what was lost'; 'Connecting people with a common goal'.

3.6. *ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS*

I sought authorization to recruit participants from Ryerson University. To ensure that participants were fully informed about the research process, individual participants were mailed a Letter of Introduction which further explained the purpose of the study (See Appendix C Letter of Introduction). The letter specified the approximate length of time the interview would take. It also outlined the importance and potential benefits of the study. The letter provided individual participants with an e-mail address. This enabled the participants to email the investigator for further questions if that was necessary. On the day of the interview, participants were provided with the Informed Consent Form. The Informed Consent Form further elaborated on the voluntary nature of participation, and the potential risks and benefits involved. The participants were also informed that if they had questions regarding their rights as research participants in the study, including the right to withdraw, they could contact the Ryerson University Ethics board using the contact information provided (See Appendix D for the Consent form for Participants). One ethical dilemma that was addressed was that of the participants' right to privacy.

Participants could be uncomfortable with disclosure even if the researcher is deemed to be an 'insider' in the community of People of African heritage. The discussion of one's ethnicity which has been historically submerged can engender feelings of shame and stigma. To address this ethical dilemma, the researcher identified community agencies that serve communities of African descent where strong kinship ties are already established. I informed the participants about community resources that will be made available should the study evoke feelings of trauma and stressed.

Confidentiality requirements were observed in the study. A recruitment flier was displayed on the notice board of the agency assisting with the research project. Communication between the investigator and participants was through email. This ensured that potential participants were not identified by staff members who work for the agency that assisted in the recruitment process or by other community members who are service users. The community from which the sample was drawn from is large. Therefore, to further ensure anonymity, I used pseudonyms chosen by the participants themselves. The researcher informed the participants that their information would remain confidential as outlined in the consent form. Any participant information will be securely kept in a cabinet accessible to only the researcher. The information will be kept until the study has been completed and the final report submitted to Ryerson University.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. FINDINGS

As previously noted, participants were asked (a) to describe how the African Heritage Program meets their needs and (b) to recommend ways for improving the program. Five categories were created from the responses: Identity Affirmation, Integration of the African Experience, Reinforcement of Culture, Connectedness, and Suggestions for Improving the Program.

IDENTITY AFFIRMATION

The participants perceived identity affirmation in terms of complexities arising from transnational migration, place of origin, historical experience and mixed ethnic, racial and religious backgrounds. Participants view the program as useful in restoring the loss of identity that occurred through conquests and colonialism.

The program offers children of African descent an opportunity of finding who they are...It plays an important role of telling children about their African heritage and culture. (Nandi)

Participants stated that their identities are complex due to factors such as displacement and slavery. This sentiment is captured in the following sentiment...often *there is an element of 'oh I am from Canada but my parents were born in Africa. Such sentiments can lead to a disconnection amongst family members. (Nandi)*

All participants indicated that AHP helps them to understand and to connect with their origins. They further added that the origins are complex in the sense that they comprise several and mixed ethnic backgrounds.

My identity is complex and never complete... I consider my ethnicity to be (an) African of Bantu origin. Back home I have been packaged and classified... Addressing the origins of Africans...and the people of African descent in the diaspora today...and talking about this aspect of Africans has deepened their understanding of who we and our children are. (Gerald)

According to the participants, AHP enhances their understanding of complex identity issues and experiences.

THE INTEGRATION OF THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

The participants understood the 'African experience' to mean the incorporation of achievements and contributions of PAD into socio-economic spheres and everyday life. These experiences inspire, guide and enable them to participate and contribute to society. This enables participants to draw inspiration from learning about the history of current and historical community members.

"the trailblazing...pioneering experiences of African Canadians such as Braithwaite...the first African Canadian to be elected to a Legislature in Canada are topical issues among young African Canadians...you often hear them talk about this first black:...inventor... Governor General...who inspired them to study... (Elliot)

The participants indicated that notable figures in the community are invited as guest speakers to share strategies of how to succeed.

...with guest speakers...the program is about how to make it in one's chosen field. It is also about (one's) road to success, pitfalls and the life principles (one) has to abide by as a black person in order to succeed. (Gerald)

According to the participants, shared experiences are a positive influence for the larger community of PAD.

Participants pointed out that significant contributions of PAD were highlighted in the program. One example of these is the engineering inventions of the aqueduct system used for irrigation and water supply in Egypt.

...the invention of the aqueducts was initially attributed to Nero of Rome. They however, originated from Africa... around the river Nile in Egypt. The field of Engineering is silent on the contributions of Africans on these...It does not acknowledge that the shaduf system originated from Egypt and that African inventions contributed to the foundation of science and engineering. (Sebastian)

Additionally, the contributions of architectural techniques used in the construction of Great Zimbabwe and the Great Pyramids of Egypt that are not acknowledged in the field of engineering are validated in the AFP.

...how about the scientific techniques ...The construction of the Great Zimbabwe, one of the most magnificent architectural structures in the world, by the local black population was falsely attributed to early white settlers by the colonial government. Because of this program, our children take pride in knowing that magnificent pieces of engineering such as the Great Pyramids of Egypt originated from Africa... modern engineering cannot reproduce these pyramids. Modern scientists often wonder how it was possible to move thousands of pounds of material that built these pyramids without the use of modern hoisting equipment and cranes. (Sebastian)

The participants observed that the program acknowledges the often ignored contributions of African knowledge.

The origins of life, for example, are explored through current scientific theories such as The Evolution, Extra Terrestrial and the Creation Theories. These theories do not explain, how, when and who created the world. African peoples'... interpretation of how the world began complements what is taught in schools...it gives people a glimpse of how Africans view the world.

REINFORCEMENT OF CULTURE

Participants acknowledged the value of language as a vehicle of culture. One participant, for example, said:

Language comes from a culture...when you speak a language you learn a lot about; culture and its folklores and beliefs...and about how particular people think the world came into being... Language is an instrument of culture...Learning an African language is another way of learning about African culture. (Sebastian).

Furthermore, participants highlighted that language is important in terms of how various aspects of life are handled. They identified these life experiences as family bereavement and subsequent healing.

It is an instrument of culture...in which we as Africans express how we relate with our world and surroundings...how we heal and solve our problems...how our lineages raise children. (Nandi)

According to the participants another importance of language, in their day to day lives, is that it is a unifying factor in the community and in families.

...the family benefits in terms of unity and this is seen during dinner table conversations. Our children used to feel left out whenever we spoke in our African language...now that they have learnt a bit of our language, they feel like they are part of the culture...they do not feel like outsiders. (Sebastian)

According to the participants, language as a unifying factor also extends to different generations.

Language gives us an opportunity to transmit something to our children as an inheritance that is passed from our ancestors to us. When they attend the program, we tell them that Canada is our new home now...we were born somewhere else, but here is something that was passed to us from our fore fathers. (Sebastian)

Participants regard African arts as an integral part of culture. It is perceived as an element that fosters understanding between cultures. African arts as an element of culture also has an educational significance for the participants and the broader society.

We were invited to teach a song.....It is a song that evokes nostalgic memories and tranquility that prevailed in our native South Africa prior to Dutch and English settler governments...You see, such songs are rich in history which explains why we immigrated to Canada. It was important for the attendees to learn the words, their significance and meanings behind the song. It is through such culture which is further expressed through the arts that...we as a people have been understood. We may seem insignificant but our contribution to the broader society is meaningful... (Sebastian)

Participants stated that the preservation of family values is an important component of the culture of PAD. One aspect of family values that was highlighted by participants is the harmonious family interaction amongst family members. Participants also emphasised the need for respectful conflict resolution amongst family members.

...the program reinforces and teaches Africans values that Africans share... the concept of Ubuntu 'guides us to proactively deal with family conflict

...one can disagree with a father but the disagreement does not have to escalate into a conflict. People need to be constantly reminded that children cannot speak to their parents in a disparaging way. (Gerald)

Another theme that emerged from the study is the recognition that PAD are not a homogenous group but possess a rich diversity in terms of culture and language. Participants explained that languages and cultures are taught in a way that reflects multiplicity of cultures that are embedded among PAD.

Although the program does not teach all African languages, children benefit from knowing that there are other languages and subcultures embedded within broader groups. Children also learn the grammatical structure of a language and how to distinguish it from another language....they also learn that there are other equally important languages and cultures besides their own. (Sebastian)

To further explain the significance of culture in the school curriculum, practices and environment, participants highlighted the importance of using relatable classroom material. They mentioned that classroom material such as literary works about and by PAD used in the program ensures the success of students of African descent.

...they like and respond well to classroom material and texts that are written by writers with an African background...writings by people like Alice Walker....she wrote novels like Colour Purple. As an African parent who was partly educated in Africa, I excelled in Literature in English because I selected texts such as 'Native Son' and 'River Between' by Ngugi Wathiongo. The symbolism, themes and storylines appealed to me as an African... (Gerald)

CONNECTIONS

Participants emphasized the importance of connections between PAD and relevant organizations that inform, advocate and address issues faced by PAD. The connections fall into three broad areas which are; connections with agencies, connections with peers and connections with the past.

CONNECTIONS WITH AGENCIES

Participants stated that the AHP links them with services that serve PAD. These agencies include the African Legal Clinic and the African Immigrant Association. Participants stated that they turn to these agencies for support and for general interaction.

...the program connects us to places that enable us to integrate and participate in African groupings such as the African Canadian Association...where we get support, interact...learn a lot of things such as how to be better citizens (Elliot).

Some organizations organize cultural events such as the African Festival and the Caribbean that celebrate being a person of African descent.

Connections with Peers

Participants noted that the program allows students of African descent to connect with their peers. These are people with a common desire of learning about African heritage. Peers were also perceived as people who face similar challenges.

It offers us an opportunity to come together on issues of our heritage. It offers our children the peer element of knowing that that they are not alone in seeking to know about their African heritage and in solidifying their knowledge... (Elliot).

...the program complements our effort, as parents, of teaching our children about our heritage...we are happy to see our children connect with other

people of African Heritage...the program is a vehicle that links my children with others. When they connect with people with a common desire, it becomes easier to learn. It brings awareness that they are not the only people from Africa who want to learn. (Sebastian)

CONNECTIONS WITH THE PAST

Participants observed that by teaching African Heritage and origins, the program connects students with their past. They added that it is important for them to know where they came from and to know more about their cultural origins. They also stated that the program fills the void that comes as a result of lack of knowledge about the self

It is important for young people in the community to be knowledgeable about where they came from. This knowledge will help them to face particular social problems found in Toronto, such as substance abuse... gun violence...Young people get a chance to learn about how their heritage matters in difficult times...their self-esteem is also enhanced. (Elliot)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Participants gave feedback on how to improve the program. The feedback could be categorized as follows: curriculum development, program delivery, funding and skills development.

Curriculum development

Participants suggested that curriculum development of the AHP should be based on broad community consultation in order to meet the numerous needs of a diverse and complex population.

The program should be developed by curriculum developers and academics from the community and not by curriculum developers who are located in inaccessible TDSB offices. (Elliot)

Furthermore, participants suggested that the curriculum should be constantly revised for relevance.

The curriculum should be updated frequently. The constant revision of the curriculum will keep it relevant as new developments in African communities arise. (Elliot)

If we spend too much time focusing on what happened in the past, we will miss out now (Nandi).

Participants recommended that languages selected for programming by TDSB should be representative of PAD in terms of numbers, geographic locations and cultures.

Africa is a large continent with fifty two countries...In due course as the program matures...how we get TDSB to acknowledge this diversity without creating a sense of exclusion. Reigning African languages that span across borders in Africa, for example should be identified. Arabic should be taught because it is spoken in almost all countries in North Africa. Swahili is spoken in several countries from the east to the west. Certain dialects of Nguni languages are spoken in several countries in the southern part of Africa. (Gerald)

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Some participants expressed the desire to involve people from within the community in the delivery of the program. They further argued that elders from the community are potentially effective in program delivery since they are knowledgeable about the culture of PAD.

...seeking out elders from each cultural group would assist...people who pass on culture to us in the community are our elders. The TDSB should seek out elders and other community leaders to assist with further

development of this program. Community leaders do not have to be elders...they can also be people who came to Canada as adults. These know a lot about African culture. (Sebastian)

Funding

The need to support the AHP through government funding was articulated by all participants. By funding the program the government will be supporting not only families of African descent but Canadians as a whole. According to one participant,

...lobbying both the Provincial and Federal Governments to fund it because it is a program not only about people of African origin but about Canada as a whole. We are a better nation if we learn about each other. The program equips us, Canadians, to be in a better position to deal and work with each other and with people from other countries as well. (Sebastian)

Another participant echoed the above sentiments when he added that funding the program will be an investment into a potentially successful research institute that promotes works of PAD as well.

...It has changed the course of what is taught in any classroom...it also has the potential of being a budding research institute, which, if adequately funded, can inspire the youth of African descent to be innovators. (Elliot)

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Participants suggested that, in addition to addressing cultural issues, the program should also impart skills that equip PAD to deal with contemporary challenges. Participants identified these skills in the areas of financial management and advocacy.

African communities are amongst the most less privileged in Toronto. Therefore, it will be helpful to teach finance and business programs to

children when they are still young...they will learn how to manage their money and resources as well. Nutrition programs will ensure that the African–Canadian population is healthy. (Elliot)

A number of African-Canadians are recent immigrants... either they cannot or are not given the opportunity to advocate for themselves, so it would be great if children who attend the program could gain skills for...advocating for themselves. These will help them to put their issues on the discussion table...in most cases they are always spoken for... (Elliot)

4. 2: DISCUSSION

Findings from this study suggest that AHP broadly meets the needs of PAD through addressing issues of identity, integrating the African experience, reinforcement of culture and connectedness. The participants made recommendations for improvement, including the need for funding, community based curriculum development and delivery as well as the need to develop skills of the PAD.

The participants in this study highlighted different ways in which the program affirms their identities which are a complex interplay of history, race and migration. The importance of catering for different ethnic groups is noted by Galabuzi (2011) who states that students of African descent are not a homogenous group. Therefore, their peculiarities should be taken into account when developing programs. The needs of Canadian-born students of African descent, for example, are different from those who were born in continental Africa. The validation of this complex interaction of identities means that this body of diverse students will feel valued resulting in increased self-esteem and greater engagement in the educational experience. The exploration of a people's history and ethnicity will assist in their integration into mainstream education systems.

This supports the view that teaching students through the parameters of racial identity enhances their engagement with larger educational systems in the long term (Flores & Elliot, 2007).

The findings of this study suggest that the needs of PAD are generally being met through the integration of the African experience which includes factors such as achievements and contributions of Africans. Historically, Africans contributed in very significant ways to socio-economic, technical and scientific developments and other areas of Canadian society are celebrated through the African Heritage Program. Educating the Canadian public on the role and contributions of Africans to, for example, the foundations of science and architecture is one strategy that can be used to inspire PAD to emulate pioneering works of African innovators and leaders. According to Patterson (2011) diverse pedagogical strategies that speak to the African experience of achievement and innovation should be adopted within the Canadian educational system. Such strategies have the potential of motivating PAD since their successes and accomplishments are centered in the learning process.

Culture was identified as a key factor to the success of AHP; it contributes in very significant ways towards the wellbeing of PAD. Findings from this study suggest that AHP promotes activities that teach and maintain African culture for the benefit of PAD. African cultural values should be integrated into mainstream society, not just the educational system. Dei (1997); Kumsa (2005); Pollard & Ajirotutu (2007) emphasise the significant role of African culture in shaping how people many Africans view the world. Patterson (2011) identifies some of these cultural expressions as nonverbal cues, learning styles and particular cognitive approaches. These can be integrated into the learning

environment to inform different aspects of schooling such as teaching methodologies, curriculum development and practices. This would help create a learning environment that is able to manage ethno-cultural diversity more effectively. Benjamin (2000); Boatswain and Lalonde (2000); Maddibho (2008) outline some of the benefits of infusing the learning environment with alternative worldviews from programs such as AHP. These authors argue that Afrocentric cultures provide accurate information about PAD in the educational system and can minimize stereotypical representation of Blacks. Knowledge about PAD and their cultures also enhances their participation at various institutional levels. Teaching from a cultural perspective also empowers students to interrogate existing knowledge forms and to also interpret the world through their own worldviews.

One aspect of the AHP is the language component, which participants identified as a primary instrument for the transmission of culture. African languages are important in transmitting cultural values, beliefs, and knowledge. This view is supported by Patterson (2011) who says that one strategy that can enhance academic performance is the use of the students' own languages and codes. Basu (2010) also asserts that one of the benefits of using one's own language for instruction is that it facilitates a seamless transitioning into mainstream school systems. Some participants stated that language bridges intra-generational and intergenerational gaps. In this case, language is perceived as a symbol of inheritance that new immigrants can pass on to the next generation. In addition to helping to unite individuals, families and communities, language also perpetuates cultures. Basu (2010) concurs by stating that immigrants, particularly refugees benefit from intergenerational language maintenance which can help them to reconnect with their origins following displacement and subsequent trauma.

Another major issue that is of importance to participants is the notion of being connected to the past. Being connected to the past links them to their roots and origins. It also links the issues they face to socio-historical events. This externalises problems faced by PAD such as gun violence poverty. Shifting the blame from individual members to systemic failures paves the way for a different approach to social issues. This approach will compel agencies and organizations to integrate into services what PAD deem as tenets of the history that defines them.

PAD can also refer to their history to learn how adversities were overcome. They gain inspiration from such historical situations. Galabuzi (2011) states that PAD should be reintroduced to their history which was erased by white dominant groups. The revival of this history through programs such as AHP will help PAD to engage in issues that affect them. Knowledge about PAD history, in which their achievements are documented, will enhance their participation in society.

Participants in this study allude to the importance of connecting PAD to social agencies. The findings further show that community organizations, which work in conjunction with the AHP, meet the needs of PAD through providing information which pertains to legal, employment and immigration support services. Community-based agencies play an important role in providing programs and services that create a range of opportunities including employment (Maddibho, 2008).

Participants offered a number of recommendations for improving the AHP. These can be classified as curriculum development, program delivery, funding and skills development. Participants recommended that curriculum development should be based on broad consultation so that the full spectrum of community views and interests could

be captured. Not only would involving teachers and educators of African heritage in curriculum development help to address the needs of PAD, it would also help to minimize the alienation of Black students in mainstream schools because of their familiarity with African culture (Pollard & Ajirotutu, 2000).

Participants in this research indicated the need for funding of the AHP by all levels of government. Funding of the program serves the purpose of filling in the gaps that were identified. The gaps that were identified by participants include hiring and training skilled teachers and curriculum developers, establishing research centres which focus on the knowledge of PAD, paying speakers and the production of relatable resources on PAD issues. Similar gaps in funding have been identified by other researchers including Dei (2005); Galabuzi (2011) who point out that alternate programs that particularly benefit minority groups have experienced budgetary cuts. All levels of government need to restore funding for these services. This funding will cover school library collections on Black material, train anti-racist scholars and teachers, programs on race, gender and ethnicity, creation of centers that focus on alternative knowledge. Galabuzi (2011) further argues that funding of such gaps in the education system is likely to curb underachievement.

Some participants stated that since collaborating agencies are important, there is a need to increase funding available to them. These collaborating community based agencies are however, underfunded. Madibbho (2008) argues that these community agencies are ill-equipped and underfunded and yet they deliver many services that meet the needs of PAD.

Participants suggested that since PAD are underprivileged in the City of Toronto, developing skills such as advocacy and financial management will enhance their wellbeing and participation in society. Business skills will enable them to succeed in face of contemporary challenges. Fleras and Elliot (2000) also argue that students of African descent should be equipped with skills and tools that will ensure their success in the labour market before they leave school. The AHP should therefore adopt innovative teaching methods that assist in the development of these skills. Wagner & Yee (2011) state that assisting racialized peoples to reach their potential should be achieved through a critical discussion of race as a factor that shapes challenges faced by this group. However, the markets during this neo-liberal era dictate what is deemed as relevant in programs. As a result the needs of the labour market take precedence over the critical issues faced by SAD.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1: IMPLICATION FOR RESEARCH, POLICY & PRACTICE

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE:

This study has significant implications for social work practice, research work and education in terms of issues affecting PAD. Practitioners should consider that, like any other group, the identities of PAD are very complex. Practitioners should not use a 'one size fits all' approach but should adjust their intervention strategies to suit different circumstances of service users of African descent. The need for strategies that capture this complexity is articulated by Dei (2008) who argues that for PAD to reach their potential, intervention models should respect their lived experiences and complex issues. Furthermore, Baffoe (2010) points out that programming should not lump together Caribbean and African immigrants on the basis of skin colour but should acknowledge that they are different in terms of demographics and socio-economic characteristics.

The intervention models should also acknowledge that some PAD such as newcomers might need longer-term support due to factors such as the trauma they experienced in their homelands. This sentiment is echoed by Baffoe (2006); Daniel & Brody (2008) who state that practice models should be constantly adapted to suit the lingering issues faced by refugees.

Social Work practice deals with the results of disengagement of PAD within systems such as schools. Practitioners offer programs that do not affirm their contributions and experiences. To further curb this disengagement that extends into services, programming in social work practice should include the input and perspectives of PAD. If their voices are infused into service delivery, clients are likely to feel valued.

According to Hynie (2005), client's views can be integrated through organizational and program media such as websites, bulletin boards and newsletters.

The study found that language is viewed as an important element of the culture of PAD. It is through this culture that the worldviews of this group can be understood. Therefore social work practitioners should attempt to communicate with PAD in their own languages. Practitioners should also develop resources in the languages of PAD. The use of clients' own languages at the sites of social work practice is most likely to produce positive outcomes. According to Imberti (2007), the advantages of using clients' languages include an enhanced understanding of service users' situations. The situations could involve family dynamics that can be the reason why a particular client needs services. The other benefit is the ability to capture the symbols and worldviews embedded in the language of the client.

The study found that there is need for program staff to be drawn largely from the community of PAD. This need for representation in program provision extends to social work practice. In sites of practice, the presence of practitioners such as Black social workers knowledgeable in African cultural heritage can give clients of African descent an opportunity to work with a team of professionals with a background similar to their own. Social workers with an African heritage can provide services that are sensitive to the gender and race of service users (Bond, 2010). However, tensions arise when changes are made at institutional levels to accommodate diversity of experience. The reluctance of organizations to integrate African perspectives into mainstream agencies shows that racism in social work practice is subtle. Racism resides in, for example, in the veiled the

language of 'expertise' and 'ability' that excludes racialized groups (Allahar, 1998; Bond, 2010; Wong, 2004).

One of the issues raised in the study pertains to the importance of social and community networks. Social interaction by particular groups of African descent is understood through the concept of 'Ubuntu' which, according to Graham (2002), is a belief that all human beings are interconnected with each other, with the environment, and with the Creator. Individual identity does not exist separate from the environment, but as a part of the collective identity of the community and the world. In many African cultures, the community is the most important social entity. This is captured in the African proverb 'It takes a village to raise a child'. Findings of this study suggest that AHP is particularly helpful to young people of African descent. The program connects SAD with a network of agencies that serve PAD. Some of these agencies were identified as the Canadian African Association, which offers various opportunities for social interaction. Kinship is extended beyond the nuclear family to include both extended family and non-family members of the community. Responsibility for child-rearing, preparation for adulthood, and rites of passage are the responsibilities of the entire village. Social work practice with individuals, couples and caregivers with problems should, therefore, involve the extended family (Daniels & Brody, 2008).

To intervene on behalf of young PAD, social work practitioners can develop mentorship programs that motivate participants through the success stories of mentors (Williams, 2002). Mentorship programs in social work practice have the potential of modelling the behaviour of young PAD. According to the participants, such mentorship

programs can include role models and guest speakers from the African Communities who can inspire young people.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Research participants stated that whilst they appreciate a program that teaches their culture and knowledge, they are encouraged to lobby the Federal Government in particular to fully fund the programs and to ensure that they benefit Africans and Canada as a whole. This sentiment seems to reflect the need for policies that ensure accessibility to financial resources that will fund, for example, long-term integration programs for PAD. According to the participants, there is need for investment in programs such as AHP which enrich and depict Canadian history, culture and knowledge as heterogeneous. Thobani (2007) concurs by arguing that public and social policy should reflect interests of a diverse Canadian population.

Participants also reported that one of the benefits of AHP is that it teaches students through a range of instructional activities. These pedagogical activities equip them with skills and knowledge that assist them to speak for themselves and to succeed. This assessment of AHP illustrates that PAD are conscious of systemic barriers to their well-being. Therefore, there is need for more anti-racism policies that acknowledge the systemic racism that is responsible for their situation. Another way of ameliorating the exclusion of the African experience is the passing of comprehensive anti-discrimination policies in schools and in other institutions. These policies will support cultural awareness and sensitivity. Thus, programs such as AHP will serve as a source of history and knowledge that will assist in the development of policies that consider contextual factors and relations of power such as race and gender.

In the study, participants stated that AHP affirms their culture which shapes how they view and interpret the world. Problems such as high school dropout and low academic performance are a reflection of programs and policies that have failed PAD. The policies fail because they do not embrace the worldviews and realities of PAD. (Patterson 2011) states that governments prescribe policies that inform programs delivered by social work practitioners. These policies fail when they produce service delivery systems that do not capture the needs of PAD. To mitigate irrelevance in policies, Fleras & Elliot (2007) recommend that at the evaluation phase of policy development, governments should form partnerships with communities such as PAD. The benefits of such partnerships include the implementation of policies that factor in the unique needs of PAD.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PRACTICE AND SCHOLARSHIP

One of the major theories that guide social workers in their work is the Anti-Oppressive Perspective (AOP) which equips social workers with the ability and tools to identify, question and challenge power dynamics in order to eradicate any forms of oppression that may exist (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005; Danso, 2009). This particular study contributes to Anti Oppressive scholarship by interrogating the power which dominant white groups wield in schools systems (Wagner & Yee, 2011; Wong, 2004). It is the same power that enables people who identify as white to determine what is deemed as knowledge. Literature reviewed for this study shows that 'alternative' knowledge forms, by and about PAD, disseminated through programs such as the AHP are accorded subsidiary statuses in schools. As a result, the AHP is deemed a supplementary program available after school hours and on weekends (Basu, 2010;

Toronto District School Board (n.d.). Wagner & Yee (2011) further point out that resistance to oppression, which is a fundamental tenet of AOP, entails nurturing knowledge forms and contributions by and about racialized communities which is excluded from research projects and academic journals which privilege dominant white culture. The study therefore, focuses on how some of the challenges faced by SAD, can be alleviated through strategies informed by the AHP. According to Sakamoto & Pitner (2005), principles of AOP such as the empowerment of both the target groups such as PAD and social work practitioners entail a learning process in which both parties learn from each other. The study illustrates that learning processes takes place within an environment which promotes white privilege. The AHP contributes to the literature of resistance to dominance by providing an opportunity for PAD to challenge the status quo through their worldviews and cultures.

The need for partnerships between social work practitioners and PAD is echoed by participants who emphasise the importance of being involved in processes, such as program development, that impact their lives. Similarly, in social work practice, AOP guides practitioners to challenge oppression by forging partnerships with service users whose input can potentially improve services. AOP requires social work practitioners in in such partnerships to constantly reflect on how their 'specialised professional knowledge' enables them to bring more power in their interactions with target groups such as SAD (de Montigny, 2013; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005).

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The participants articulated the need for PAD to be understood as a group. Therefore, this requires researchers to create a culturally relevant research agenda. From an anti-racist and a social constructivism informed study, I was able to deduce that aspects of culture inherent in AHP can inform engagement and capacity building activities which can lead to the well-being of the community. Some participants further added that, capacity building in this community involves the ability to, for example, advocate for themselves and to lobby the Provincial and the Federal Governments to fund the AHP. Another participant added that it also involves speaking for themselves as a community as opposed to being spoken for. Whilst the capacity building initiatives mentioned are essential in enhancing the well-being and success of PAD, they do not however address economic inequalities that perpetually confine PAD to the margins of society (Barneji, 1996; Wagner, 2005). Initiatives, whether collaborative in nature remain incremental endeavors that mask lived realities. Such limitations in strategies inherent in AHP and other anti-racism strategies provide material for future research. Future research should, therefore, focus on how collaboration between this community and allies can elicit concrete measures to be taken in order ensure that political and economic disparities in Canada are addressed.

Findings indicate that participants want to be involved in the development of programs, curricular and policies that affect them. This means there is a need to effectively engage them. The effective methods of engagement and consultation need to be researched on. Although there are existing ways of getting input from the target population such as PAD, problems and issues faced by this community persist. This shows that there is need for more research on methodologies of assessing the needs and

views of PAD more effectively. Existing methodologies of engaging PAD are designed for different populations and may not, however, be adequately adapted for the population of PAD. This population has its own ways of interacting, which include customs and speech patterns that may be incorporated into the research process.

Future research can also focus on how PAD perceive success. This is against a background of definitions of success that are dictated by the dominant culture. These definitions may not necessarily coincide with those of the PAD. According to Hynie (2005); Patterson (2011), the definitions of success are often imposed by governments in collaboration with agencies. Agencies rely on different levels of government for funding. They are therefore bound to comply with assessment and research tools that support the agenda of their funders. According to Hynie (2005), the definitions of success are imposed by the governments which further impose research methods and evaluation tools that determine how target populations perceive success.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The results of this research project suggest that for racialized students of African descent, their families and communities, the African Heritage Program provides opportunities to be understood through culture. Culture extends to 'how PAD solve their problems', integrate 'who (they) are into the Canadian social fabric and how they engage in a curriculum that celebrates achievements of current and historical African figures. The research project was guided by the anti-racism and social constructivism paradigms whose ideological assumptions are that issues faced by PAD are rooted in the historical exclusion of their experiences. Therefore, the AHP serves the purpose of re-constructing identities and contributions that are misrepresented. From the findings, it can be inferred

that the quest 'to be understood' has implications for social practice, research and policy. Research grounded in people's perspectives on how their experiences, which include identities, cultural expressions and achievements should be conceived, has far-reaching implications for social work practice. Some of the information derived from this research can be used to adapt Intervention strategies so that they can incorporate what is known about PAD.

Based on the literature review for this project, it appears that there is a gap in terms of research which pertains to the relevance of programs informed by African heritage. It is hoped that the findings from this project will assist in the development of programs that embed diverse cultures, ethnicities and languages. Furthermore, the findings will assist in the development of advocacy and outreach strategies, and culturally competent services that foster the full participation of all Canadians. It could help to build social capital, enhance service providers' knowledge of cultural capital, encourage citizen engagement, and facilitate community agency and empowerment.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

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Appendix C Letter of Introduction

Appendix D: Consent Form for Participants

Appendix E: Demographics Questionnaire for Participants

Appendix F: Interview Guide

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

The researcher conducting this study is Nomathemba Nkiwane, email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca, in partial fulfillment of my Master's Degree under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Barnoff, email: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca, from the Ryerson School of Social Work at Ryerson University

“African Heritage Program - The Community Members Speak”

Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study

Seeking: Parents of African descent with children who are enrolled in the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board to participate in a research project. The study will engage parents of African descent, specifically, parents who were born in Africa, so that they can explain how the African Heritage Program meets their needs and wellbeing.

Participation and participant's information will be confidential:

Participants must be fluent English Language Speakers as translation services will not be available.

The study will be conducted by Nomathemba Nkiwane, a student, from the School of Social Work - the Ryerson University.

Duration of the study: 1Hr 40 minutes

Contact Information:

For more information please contact:
Nomathemba Nkiwane

E-mail: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca

Principal Investigator: Nomathemba Nkiwane

If interested in the project, please, tear-off flags and email the researcher.

<u>African Heritage Program Study</u>	<u>African Heritage Program Study</u>	<u>African Heritage Program Study</u>	<u>African Heritage Program Study</u>	<u>African Heritage Program Study</u>
Contact Name: Nomathemba Nkiwane	Contact Name: Nomathemba Nkiwane	Contact Name: Nomathemba Nkiwane	Contact Name: Nomathemba Nkiwane	Contact Name: Nomathemba Nkiwane
Email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca	Email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca	Email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca	Email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca	Email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca

The researcher conducting this study is Nomathemba Nkiwane, email: nkiwane@ryerson.ca, in partial fulfillment of my Master's Degree under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Barnoff, email: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca, from the Ryerson School of Social Work at Ryerson University

Dear:

You have identified yourself as a parent of African descent with children who are enrolled in the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board. This invitation letter is sent to you to solicit your participation in a Master of Social Work research study entitled "The African Heritage Program – Community Members Speak".. If you choose to participate in the study it is necessary for you to carefully read the following information so that you can ask as many questions as necessary to understand the nature of the study.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR PARTICIPATION:

The purpose of this research is to engage families of African descent, in particular, so that they can explain how the African Heritage Program, meets their needs and wellbeing. The relevance of the African Heritage to the wellbeing of your children, yourself and community members will be discussed through factors such as your beliefs, values, and experiences as a community .

(a)Location of the Interview:

The location of the interview will be chosen by each participant from a number of options such as: private rooms that are booked for purposes of interviews at: Ryerson University, public libraries and community centers.

(b)Consent Form:

On the day of the interview you be provided with the Informed Consent Form. The researcher will review the research process and explain what you will be asked to do.

You will be asked to review the informed consent with the researcher so that any questions which you have in regards to the research process, can be addressed before you begin the study. You will then sign the consent form.

-This process will take 20 minutes.

(c) Demographic Questionnaire

Participation in the study will also involve the completion of a Demographic Questionnaire The Demographic Questionnaire is a set of questions that give information such as who you are, how old you are and your ethnic background.

The following are sample questions that you will be asked to respond to:

- (1) What is your ethnicity
- (2) What is your gender?
- (3)What is your mother your mother language

(4) indicate the number of people (and the age groups) that make use of the community programs offered by the Toronto District School Board

-Completing this exercise will take 20 minutes.

(d) Interview Process

As a participant in the study you will be asked to engage in an interview with the researcher. You will be given a set of questions which pertain to your identity as a member of the community. You will be asked to explain how this identity is affirmed by the African Heritage Program. You will also be asked to contribute ideas that will assist in how the African Heritage Program is delivered.

The following are sample interview questions:

(a) Would you like to explain how the whole family as a whole has benefited from the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

(b) Have you ever been given the opportunity to have a say about the nature and delivery of the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

-The interview will take approximately one hour and it will be audio-recorded with your consent.

To Schedule an Interview and to request for any additional information, please contact:

Nomathemba Nkiwane

Email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca

Your participation will be appreciated. I sincerely hope that you will assist in the research process which will assist this community.

If you have any questions in regards to the nature and procedures which pertain to the study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Nomathemba Nkiwane

Appendix D

The researcher conducting this study is Nomathemba Nkiwane, email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca, in partial fulfillment of my Master's Degree under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Barnoff, email: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca, from the Ryerson School of Social Work at Ryerson University.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Nomathemba Nkiwane from the Social Work Department at Ryerson University. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of a Master's Degree in Social Work under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Barnoff. Before you consent to be in the study it is important that you understand what is being asked of you and have the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the study.

Student: Nomathemba Nkiwane (Email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca).

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Lisa Barnoff (Email: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca).

Department/ Institution: School of Social Work: Ryerson University

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to engage families of African descent, in particular, so that they can discuss how the African Heritage Program, offered by hubs in community schools under the jurisdiction of the Toronto District Board, meets their needs and wellbeing. The relevance of the African Heritage to the wellbeing of community members will be discussed through factors such as; the participants' shared values, origins and historical experience. The research requires five participants.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR PARTICIPATION:

Location of the Interview:

As part of the study you will participate in an interview and complete some questionnaires. The location of the interview will be chosen by you, as a participant, from a number of options such as: private rooms that are booked for purposes of interviews at: Ryerson University, public libraries and community centres.

You will be asked to review the informed consent with the researcher so that any questions which you have in regards to the research process can be addresses before you begin the study. If you agree to participate, you will then sign the consent form.

-This process will take approximately **20 minutes**.

Demographic Questionnaire

Following the consent process you will be asked to complete a Demographic Questionnaire which will take approximately 20 minutes to finish. The Demographic Questionnaire is a set of questions that give information such as who you are, how old you are and your ethnic background. Additionally, the survey will ensure that accurate data which is derived from, for example, your ethnicity and place of origin is captured. The following are sample questions:

- (1) What is your ethnicity
 - (2) What is your gender?
 - (3) What is your mother's language
 - (4) Indicate the number of people (and the age groups) that make use of the community programs offered by the Toronto District School Board
- Completing this exercise will take **20 minutes**.

Interview Process

As a participant in the study you will be asked to engage in an interview with the researcher. You will be given a set of questions which pertain to your identity as a member of the community. You will be asked to explain how this identity is affirmed by the African Heritage Program. You will also be asked to contribute ideas that will assist in how the African Heritage Program is delivered.

The following are sample interview questions:

- (a) Would you like to explain how the whole family as a whole has benefited from the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?
- (b) Have you had a say about the nature and delivery of the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

-The interview will take approximately **one hour** and it will be audio-recorded with your consent. The location of the interview will be chosen by you as a participant from a number of options such as: private rooms that are booked for purposes of interviews at: Ryerson University, public libraries and community centers.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

You will not directly benefit from participating in this study. However, your views and ideas in regards to programs offered by community schools will contribute to literature and research that will inform how programs in schools can better reflect the needs of families. In particular, the study will add on to the existing literature that addresses how the education system in Toronto can respond to the needs of the families of African descent. The research process will discuss community values, historical experiences and norms that can inform the African heritage program offered by the Toronto District School Board. This could be of potential benefit to your community.

The results of this research may in future be published in professional journals and may be used for presentations. You will receive a copy of the results of the study that could be of potential benefit to your community.

ANTICIPATED RISKS AND DISCOMFORT:

This is a minimal risk study. The risks pertain to the sensitive information which could be potentially shared during the research process. Involvement in the study is based on whether you are interested in the research topic or not. You are not obligated to answer questions you are not

comfortable to answer. Therefore, any questions that you feel you would rather not answer should be left blank.

The questions are not intended to provoke bad memories. The researcher does not anticipate any discomfort that may be triggered by questions associated with the study. However, if you begin to feel uncomfortable as a result of the questions, you can withdraw from the research process, either temporarily or permanently.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Your identity will be held in confidence throughout the duration of the research process. Individual participants will not be identified. The researcher will use pseudonyms chosen by you as a participant and these will appear on all written materials.

Research records will be kept in a locked file and only the researcher will have access to the records. Only the researcher will transcribe the recordings. Any information shared during the research process will be protected and secured by mechanisms such as password protected files. Personal data gathered during the research process will be destroyed once the research is complete. Any interview related audio tapes used and transcripts will be kept separate from any forms which may bear your contact information such as emails.

COMPENSATION

You will not be compensated for participating in the research. You will receive a copy of the results of the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. If you choose to withdraw from this study you may also choose to withdraw your data from the study. You may also choose not to answer any question(s) and still remain in the study. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with the researcher, Ryerson University or Africans in Partnership against AIDS (APAA) the agency which is supporting this project.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS:

The researcher conducting this study is Nomathemba Nkiwane. The student's supervisor: Dr. Lisa Barnoff at: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca). You may ask questions you may have now. If there are any questions you may want to ask later, you may contact the researcher at by email at: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact:

The Student: Nomathemba Nkiwane at: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca .

The researcher's supervisor is Dr. Lisa Barnoff (Email: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca).

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, please contact:

Toni Fletcher, Research Ethics Coordinator
Research Ethics Board
Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3
416-979-5042 or toni.fletcher@ryerson.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study “The African Heritage Program – Community Members Speak” as described herein. Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, and you agree to participate in this study. You have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Statement of Consent to Participate in an Audio-Recorded Interview

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I consent to participate in an audio-recorded interview.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Demographics Questionnaire

The researcher conducting this study is Nomathemba Nkiwane, email: nnkiwane@ryerson.ca, in partial fulfillment of my Master's Degree under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Barnoff, email: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca, from the Ryerson School of Social Work at Ryerson University.

Project Title: Community Schools as Community Hubs: Families of African descent Speak

Preamble: This Questionnaire aims to obtain more specific information to understand your family household and your community. The information collected will not in any way be linked with your name or used in any way apart from academic purposes of this research. The information collected will be linked to a code or pseudonym and will only be seen by me and possibly my academic supervisor. Please feel free to avoid answering any questions that may cause you any discomfort.

(1) Indicate your ethnicity

(2) Indicate your country of birth

(3) Indicate your gender

- Male
- Female

(4) Indicate your mother language

(5) indicate the number of people (and the age groups) that make use of the community programs offered by the Toronto District School Board

(6) indicate the number of people (and the age groups) that make use of the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board

Prepared by: Nomathemba Nkiwane

Appendix F

Interview Guide

The researcher conducting this study is Nomathemba Nkiwane, email: nkiwane@ryerson.ca, in partial fulfillment of my Master's Degree under the supervision of Dr. Lisa Barnoff, email: lbarnoff@ryerson.ca, from the Ryerson School of Social Work at Ryerson University.

Research Project Title: Community schools as community hubs: families of African descent speak

Preamble: I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate in this project. The information you give in this project will help us understand how well the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District Board contributes to the success of your children, family and your community. We are only limited to a period of 1 hour. However if you feel there is need to extend the duration of the interview please we may do so.

You are free to stop the interview at any moment or not answer any questions you may not be comfortable with. The information you give me in this interview will not be shared with anyone other than my academic supervisor. Your name will not be used anywhere in writing the report. Instead, the information will be coded so that it will be anonymous. Furthermore, a pseudonym will be used to quote any statements you make. Please also feel free to add more information that you think may be relevant to capture your particular

I would like to start from wherever as you wish, but a good starting point is for you to begin by introducing yourself and telling me where you were born in Africa; where your children were born and then tell me about the importance of the African Heritage Program which your children participate in. I will now turn on the tape recorder so that you can begin introducing yourself and then we can proceed to address the questions on the Interview Guide.

Are you ready?

Please start.

(1) General Information about the family household:

(a) Please tell me the number of family members in your household (including any extended family members living with you):

(b) Ages of the respective family members:

(c) Gender of family members

(2) Family background/family dynamics:

(a) Please tell me about the country where you born.

(b) Please tell me about the country where you raised?

(c) Please me about your ethnic background & how you identify yourself

(3) Knowledge about supplementary programs offered TDSB:

(a) Would you like to tell me about supplementary programs offered the TDSB in general?

(b) Please tell me about any members in your family who make use of the supplementary programs offered the TDSB?

4) Awareness about the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board:

(a) Tell me about the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

(b) How have you or any member of your household made use of the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board

(c) If you are aware of the program and haven't participated in them, tell me why you have not?

(5) Benefits of the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board:

(a) Would you like to explain how any children in your family have benefited from the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

(b) Would you like to explain how any youths in your family have benefited from the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

(c) Would you like to explain how any children in your family have benefited from the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

(d) Would you like to explain how the whole family as a whole has benefited from the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

(6) Community Inputs into the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board.

(a) In what ways have you contributed to the nature and delivery of the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board

(b) What kind of programs would you like to see offered at the community school?

(7) Addressing Needs of the local community through the program:

What specific needs you think the African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board should be addressing in regards to your family?

(8) Additional Information Offered in connection with the program:

What additional information do you have in connection African Heritage Program offered by the Toronto District School Board?

(9) Additional Questions for questions for the interviewer

What other questions do you have for me?