

EVOKING SOCIAL RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE THROUGH RECLAIMING AND
REVIVING SANKOFA: BLACK AFRICAN FEMALE LEARNERS EXPERIENCE
SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Encountering institutionalized forms of racism during high school in Saskatchewan, immigrant Black African female students experiences in dealing with assimilatory and hegemonic in kind learning environment have not been well understood or even explored. Having moved from Ghana as a young learner, this researcher discloses the processes of being silenced in classrooms in cent on Euro-Canadian learning and the indifference to unique cultural contributions that “othered” learners could offer.

Addressing the lack of acknowledgment, this researcher sought to find five kindred female learners to explore how each relied on her resilience to develop social resistance to hegemonic practices. While informed by regular treatise of individual interviews, this researcher employed Seidman’s (2006) interview method, DeKa wɔwɔ focus group discussion and Riessman’s (1993) core narrative research analysis. Furthermore, while grounding the research in antiracism theory and Black feminist thought, this researcher offers collective analysis that arrived at cultural foundation that spoke to strength and aspiration. Sankofa is an Akan culturally valued notion that allows individuals to take on cultural identity to take on responsibility to understand one’s past. The latter allowed the knowledge keepers to identify strength, and insights to resist the assimilatory measures while learning in largely Euro-Canadian context. Ultimately, this thesis used a strength based approach in exploring the students’ experiences, and introduces Sankofa as a theoretical concept that evokes resilience and social resistance. Such findings may well be one of the first ones in Canadian educational context. This researcher believes that discovery and unfolding strategies in developing resilience and social resistance are essential in diversifying the learning environment in Saskatchewan and elsewhere beyond the much favoured Euro-Canadian context.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Pearson William Kwaku Ahiahonu and Elizabeth Akpene Ahiahonu

Thank you for your love and guidance

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Canadian society is framed by multiculturalism in accord with section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Mackay & Dickenson, 1989). Furthermore, the Canadian government abides by United Nations Article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which proclaims that:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

("International obligations and commitments")

Despite making strides for equality, many in Canadian society continue to face inequity. The focus of this research was on immigrant Black African female high school students and their experiences as they develop social resistance and resilience in an environment where they are racialized minority.

Rationale

Immigrant Black African female students who come to Canada likely possess many hopes and aspirations according to Okwako (2011). However, their hopes and aspirations are met with various barriers which may include historical tensions of discrimination that is ongoing. The qualitative research explores the social resistance strategies employed by five immigrant Black African female students who have graduated from Saskatchewan high schools and were enrolled in an undergraduate program at the University of Saskatchewan. In conducting this qualitative research, I framed my research in critical theoretical framework. I have used an integrative approach combining antiracist educational theory, articulated by Dei (1995) and Black feminist thought, which emerged in the 1990s in response to second-wave feminism in the United States. In particular I applied Collins (2000) in hopes to shed light on how the participating students develop social resistance to actualize their resilience. Essentially, I explored how the students have constructed and reconstructed "...their world – against ...discrimination, inequality, [and] social injustice..." (Sage, 2007, p.1). To address students' social resistance strategies, I employed Sage's (2007) definition of social resistance which is a:

social phenomenon in which disadvantaged, exploited, and dominated groups contest the dominating practices that nation-states, social institutions, social organizations, and traditional cultural practices have constructed. Resistance and acts of agency – meaning the capability of individuals to construct and reconstruct their world – [work] against abuses of power, discrimination, inequality, social injustice. (p.1)

And I intended to explore the above with the research participants to unfold the social resistance and resilience developed during high school years.

Research focus

I proposed that each of the interviews come out as a case study conducted in a story form, allowing each of the participants to explore high school experiences while assessing what kinds of social resistance strategies each developed and employed. In addition to conducting the interviews, I shared with the participants my high school experiences as an immigrant, Black African, female student. Clandinen and Connelly (2000) state, these are lived and told stories and that; storytelling is an avenue for students to tell their stories of challenges and triumphs.

The study was guided by the following research overarching questions: How do immigrant Black African female students use story form to explain their experiences as a racialized minority? This question is supplemented by: How did they invest their hopes and aspirations to succeed? In what ways were their high school years hostile to their presence? How have the learners negotiated and challenged the tensions? These questions emerged out of my literature review which spoke to racialized tensions in the high school experiences of immigrant Black African learners. In the next section I identify my positionality as a researcher and speak to my own experiences as a racialized minority in Saskatchewan schools.

Researcher praxis

As a Black African woman born in Ghana, West Africa, who immigrated to Canada¹ at the age of nine, I have been educated in the Ghanaian education system and continued my education in Saskatchewan from elementary to postsecondary levels. I have experienced and understood how it feels to be Black African, immigrant, female student in a Saskatchewan high school, and my experiences and insights have been foundational for this research endeavour. As an immigrant coming to Canada adjusting to Canadian life at the impressionable age of nine years, I felt internally conflicted between the desire to be welcomed, to feel the same as everyone and to preserve my own culture, as a Ghanaian from the Ewe tribe. However, no matter how I tried to fit in with the other children, that I was not different from anyone, in the eyes of my peers, I remained a foreigner. Besides my dark brown skin, the texture of my hair, my distinct Ghanaian accent were often perceived as an inability to speak the English language correctly, and, in some instances, led to the questioning of my intelligence. Such instances, always defaulted me into an ‘outsider,’ a racialized other.

The above mentioned attributes separated me from others, proving that, I was an outsider. The perception was that I was not truly a Canadian; I was an African-Canadian, a Ghanaian-Canadian. There was always the question, “no really, where are you from?” All of these put into question my identity as a Canadian. Growing up in Canada, I carried in my heart the desire to be seen as a Canadian but was not allowed to do so. As a result I became increasingly frustrated and angry. However, when I discovered Nkrumah (1970), hooks (1981) and Fanon (1967) and their postcolonial and anti-racist and feminist writings, my spirits were lifted up. The frustration and anger developed into desire for understanding my own cultural identity which was comprised by Ghanaian, Cape Coast and Saskatchewan education. Being exposed to the ideas of the authors, I began to realize that by ‘fitting in’ is equivalent to becoming assimilated, and in the process of education I was losing my own cultural identity. I needed to revisit my Ghanaian identity by embracing fully my past— according to what concepts behind Sankofa required. Sankofa encouraged me to reflect upon my past and from

¹ Ogbu (1978) classified racialized minority groups into two main categories. First, autonomous, voluntary immigrants, and in this category he asserted that some people migrate to settler colonies such as The United States of America, Canada, and Australia as voluntary immigrants for economic and social gain. The second category according to him is the involuntary (non-immigrant). For example, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade which forcibly brought peoples of African descent to the Americas.

doing so I was in a position to make a choice to the good aspects to move forward successfully in life. This thesis work established that Sankofa is a theoretical framework – similar to the medicine wheel and Miyo-Pimatisiwin recently defended by Fiddler (2014) for her Master’s Degree in Education.

Throughout elementary and high school, I have experienced challenges but I have been able to overcome the obstacles by employing what I call social resistance strategies as a form of resilience. My understanding of the situation presents my positionality, social context, and these are continued as a researcher. I knew that in conducting such a study and while identifying my position as a researcher, my personal understanding of the situation may not necessarily be a negative influence of the research outcome. To balance my assumptions, I decided to document my thoughts in form of a private journal, writing down my thoughts and assumptions prior to the study, during, and after the study. I analyzed these in the context the information provided to me by participants in the research.

By exploring struggles and barriers of students in high school, I recognize the interconnections of race and gender and according to Shorter-Gooden (2004): *gendered racism*... [refers] to the racial oppression of Black women. Many, or perhaps most, of the personal experiences of racism that Black women encounter are forms of gendered racism. Thus, it is difficult to disentangle racism and sexism in the lives... [and] to understand how Black women cope with oppression, it is important to explore their experiences of gender as well as racial bias. (p.410)

Furthermore, Shorter-Gooden (2004) described strategies employed by African American women in cases where racism and sexism have created a degree of stress in their lives. The strategies are defined as: First, the reliance on faith which includes prayer and spirituality. Second, drawing strength from African American ancestors; and valuing—sustaining a positive self-image. The third focuses on, ongoing external coping strategy—leaning on the shoulders, or relying on social support. Fourth, refers to three specific coping strategies (role flexing—altering their outward behavior or presentation; avoiding—diminishing contact with certain people and situations; and standing up for themselves and fighting back—directly challenging the source of the problem (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). The strategies informed my understanding of the various resistance strategies employed by African

women. I hoped to gain further insight into the resistance strategies by exploring the experiences of immigrant Black African female students and these are now accessible in Chapter Seven.

The interconnection between race and gender is an important aspect which has been discussed in Chapter Two, under the heading, the Social construction of gender. I have also elaborated on this topic in Chapter Three under the heading of “The emergence of Black feminist thought.” In addition, I have proposed further inquiry into gendered analysis of resilience and social resistance as a recommendation in Chapter Eight.

My research focused on the genderless (Jessen Williamson, 2011) use of Sankofa and how its informants/performants used Sankofa to reclaim and revive the cultural identities to develop resilience and social resistance in the face of hegemonic practices informed by racism. My research I focused on racism in its differing forms, including the institutional, systemic and individualized acts of racism within Saskatchewan high schools, and how these affected the lives of immigrant Black African female learners.

By systematically analysing each of the personal stories conveyed to me during my research, I brought forth how individuals arrive at developing strategies for social resistance to racism and what contributions such conversations provided into the discourse on resilience, reclamation and revitalization of cultural identity. The following chapter lays the ground work for my exploration of these in form of literature review.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explores the ways in which resilience has been understood and explored. The second section discusses how peoples of African descent have been “othered” in North American contexts. Keeping my overarching research questions in mind, I sought articles which would frame my overall understanding of my research topic. The following is my overarching research questions:

How do immigrant Black African female students use story form to explain their experiences as a racialized minority? This question is supplemented by: How did they invest their hopes and aspirations to succeed? In what ways were their high school years hostile to their presence? How have the learners negotiated and challenged the tensions?

Exploring the definitions of resilience

Despite a growing body of research across various academic disciplines, researchers have little consensus about a singular definition of resilience. In this research I focused on resilience in cross-cultural settings—exploring the socio-cultural understandings of resilience in youth, specifically, immigrant Black African female students in Saskatchewan high schools. I defined resilience from a sociological perspective. This viewpoint emphasizes the factor of human agency in resilience, which Sage (2007) defined as “...the capability of individuals to construct and reconstruct their world—as a response to abuses of power, discrimination and inequality,” (p.1). This definition does not adhere to traditional psychological understandings of resilience, which focuses on the individual. This perspective instead views the individual within his or her wider family, community and cultural context. Furthermore, this perspective considered a much broader range of adversity. I was happy to come across Jessor, Turbin and Costa (1998) who described adversity as “...conditions or variables associated with a lower likelihood of positive outcomes and higher likelihood of negative or socially undesirable outcomes” (p. 195). The authors further claim that protective factors “enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes and lessen the likelihood of negative consequences” (p.195). The authors asserted that resilience is not simply an individual fixed trait but involves an amalgamation of socio-cultural factors.

The tenants of resilience research

According to Milton (2009) resilience generally took four forms “1) Identification of a risk factor as a cause for concern; 2) analysis of the causes and consequences of the risk; 3) recognition that not all individuals respond in the same way to the same threat and that not all are equally negatively impacted; 4) research on protective factors that have been incorporated into intervention programs” (p.14). A strong feature in psychological and medical resilience literature has been the identification of protective factors defined as both internal assets of the individual and as external strengths in which the individual grew and developed.

Regarding the individual domain, Milton (2009) influenced by Garmezy (1985) noted that, children or youth are able to overcome great adversity and children seem to possess personal qualities of temperament and competence to overcome problems or obstacles. The personal qualities are classified as personal adaptive coping strategies. Families are thought to foster protective factors. According to the author, family members can be of great support to children or youth experiencing varying forms of adversity. The family unit is seen as possessing resources which can uplift a child or youth. For example, continuous family engagement involving parents or guardians can inspire achievement in children and youth (Milton, 2009). The third domain for developing resilience is the community which is defined as “...external support from persons and institutions outside of the individual and the family and located in the larger community” (Milton, 2009, p. 16). It is interesting to see that Condly (2009) supported Milton’s statement. Milton (2009) concluded that there is a direct correlation between the individuals’ qualities and these qualities enable connections to the external world.

Milton (2009) building on the works of Edward & Warelow (2005) referred to community connectedness as a major source of resilience. Milton (2009) noted that, “when youth and families feel connected to the community they have greater access to inherent competence and resources to use in the service of managing or eradicating risk...” (p. 24). As a result, youth who are connected to the broader community and have instruction and clarity about the norms and values for the group demonstrate higher levels of resilience. Milton (2009) also noted that when protective factors operate across three domains, there is a higher chance that youth developed resilience. Although resilience is viewed as an individual response, it is not an individual fixed character trait. Instead, resilience is seen as contextual and

conditional—negotiating among individual, environmental [and social] domains Milton (2009). Fraser, Richman and Galinski (1999) argue that, resilience “...must be viewed ecologically...Resilience emerges from heterogeneity of individual and environmental influences that conspire to produce exceptional performances in the face of significant threat” (p. 138).

In recent years, prominent researchers such as Ungar (2005, 2008), Boyden and Mann (2005), Ungar, Clark, Kwong, Cameron, and Makhnach (2005), Allan and Ungar (2014) have added their voices to the discussion by broadening the understanding of resilience to include environmental influences and cross-cultural influences of resilience and claiming that resilience researchers have largely focused on outcomes that are influenced by western standards. Ungar (2008) outlined such a bias as being “Western-based with an emphasis on individual and relational factors” (p. 218). Furthermore, Ungar (2008) argued that western-based research on resilience lacks sensitivity to community and cultural factors and as a result “...there has been little cross-cultural validations of findings...” (p. 219). He urged for more rigorous inquiry (qualitatively or quantitatively) into culturally determined outcomes to address “resilience in non-western cultures and contexts” (p. 219). The following section highlights the blind spots that Ungar (2005, 2008) and Boyden & Mann, (2005) identified.

Resilience research as a socio-cultural approach

Researchers studying resilience in various cultural groups have come to understand that resilience can be defined by highlighting the cultural contexts. Ungar (2007) is co-director of the Resilience Research Centre (RRC) reported on the centres research on understanding resilience from cultural contexts. He stated that RRC examined “...factors related to resilience among young people from different cultures in fourteen communities...” (Ungar, 2007, p.5). RRC researched resilience in eleven countries, across five continents, and found great differences among the children that they interviewed and identified differences, among their resilience strategies. Ungar (2007) asserted that:

There were some factors that, while common, were emphasized much more in one setting than another. In fact, when it came to more collectivist aspects of society, like a sense of cohesion (feeling a part of one’s community and culture), religious affiliation

and nationalism, all aspects of resilience, children in non-western countries said these were more important parts of their lives than their Canadian and American counterparts. (p.5)

In identifying and exploring the resilience of immigrant Black African female students, who may come from different cultures and backgrounds, I have taken into consideration that their understanding of resilience may be influenced by their cultural background. I was hoping that their cultural understandings of resilience may inform my findings and these are addressed in Chapter Seven.

Resilience research: An African American perspective

Through the expansion of the meaning and understanding of resilience, it is possible to argue for new approaches on research in resilience. Some researchers explored resilience among racialized minority groups, centering on how racialized minorities overcome varying forms of discrimination. For example, Miller & MacIntosh (1999) made a link between racial identity and race pride to be foundations for developing coping mechanisms. A great degree of research concentrates on the experiences of African American youth. Scholars such as Miller & MacIntosh (1999), Chapman & Mullis (2000), and Scott (2003), and Eyerman (2001) explored the socio-cultural aspect to resilience.

Milton (2009) noted that “[m]any of the coping strategies for African American youth emanate from the possession of race pride and need to assert racial identity” (p.20). Furthermore, there is a school of thought in resilience research that called for Afrocentric Theory of Black Personality, which enlightens the racial socialization of African American youth. According to this school of thought, racial socialization is developmental processes whereby children, youth, acquire behaviours, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group and come to see themselves and others as coming from unique group. The latter statement is supported by McAdoo (2002), Peters (2002), Thornton (1997), and Sanders-Thompson (1994).

Assertion of racial identity and positive racial socialization are important protective factors for African American youth tackling “... the stress of racialized trauma and oppression” (Milton 2009, p.20). Smith (2008) advised that “...racial socialization should not be

overlooked as a contributor to the resilience of African Americans who encounter racism and discrimination” (p.6). Having learnt from the mentioned scholars and their work, I used some of the literature regarding the experiences of African American youth as a foundation for my research, taking into consideration that histories, social and cultural contexts and experiences are vastly different from person to person and variations on understanding on resilience vary from culture to culture. The reading that I have done on resilience has helped me to realize the gap and it is my suggestion that there is indeed lack of research on how African Canadian settlers understand resilience, specifically Black African female students’ strategies for resilience and social resistance. I am now then suggesting that we look at the Canadian researchers and their contribution to the discourses on socio-cultural aspects of resilience. I was hoping that my research strengthened my point that my research participant’s insight to their interpretations on resilience and social resistance was a unique one. My findings did indeed speak to that and the insights are brought forth in Chapter Seven.

Resilience research: The experiences of students of Black African descent

In my search for cultural contexts to resilience, resisting and challenging racism, the following are important findings in my literature search: “...positive racial identity...having a strong racial and political consciousness...” (Ungar, 2005, p.447). These ideas were illuminated in my research findings through Sankofa. For example, research conducted by Moriah (2011) explored and assessed an Afrocentric parenting program in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Moriah’s (2011) research found the importance of placing emphasis on cultural contexts for Black parents raising their children in Halifax. The researcher asserted the importance of the reinforcement of cultural pride, which was considered as a form of racial socialization that included pride in one’s African cultural heritage. Moriah (2011) argued that “the need for African people to regain their cultural history” (p. 95) was essential to the wellbeing of the children. One of Moriah’s (2011) participants stated that: “I think the parenting program helped them, the little children as well as the parents develop a sense of self-worth, self-value, self-esteem. All of those things that they cannot...may not be feeling good about themselves but they’ll say, I know how to tackle that big R word” (Moriah, 2011, p. 82).

Moriah's (2011) point struck a chord in my own work. In my estimate the above statement referred to embracing African roots, history, and culture, and the statement is in congruent to the Akan cultural framework, Sankofa. The following section, then, highlights the origins of Sankofa, its symbolism and place. In my own mind Sankofa, offer a major foundation from which resilience and social resistance are formed, and provides the insights on cultural reclamation and revitalization. My research undertaking embraces Sankofa as a theoretical concept that needs to be further explored for its potentials.

Sankofa: a theoretical concept that evokes resilience and social resistance

The concept of Sankofa originated in Ghana, West Africa. It is believed that an Akan King named Adinkra developed the concept (Pearman, 2009), (Harris, 2004), and (Kojo & Rowe, 1998-2001). There are two depictions, a mythical and symbolic bird and heart shaped symbol. For my research, I used Pearman's (2009) depiction of Sankofa. Pearman (2009) visually describes Sankofa as "... [a] mythical bird that flies forward while looking backwards with an egg...in its mouth" (p.75). Appendix G shows an illustration of the Sankofa bird, and as one may well imagine many artistic interpretations are readily available for personal preference. The illustration and the thoughts behind Sankofa are equivalent to medicine wheel and Miyo-Pimatisiwin that my close peer Fiddler (2014) defended as being a theoretical concept that promoted resilience among Aboriginal undergraduate students at the University of Saskatchewan.

In her qualitative research, *Examining the Influence of Aboriginal Literature on Aboriginal Student's Resilience at the University of Saskatchewan*, Fiddler (2014) defined resilience from a Nehiyaw (Cree) perspective where she also drew from a sociocultural understanding of resilience, Miyo-Pimatisiwin. Fiddler (2014) argued that students reliance on Aboriginal ways of knowing embodied in values and beliefs and "...perspectives striving for a good life and being attentive to holistic growth and balance of the four areas of self: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual" shaped her research participants development of resilience.

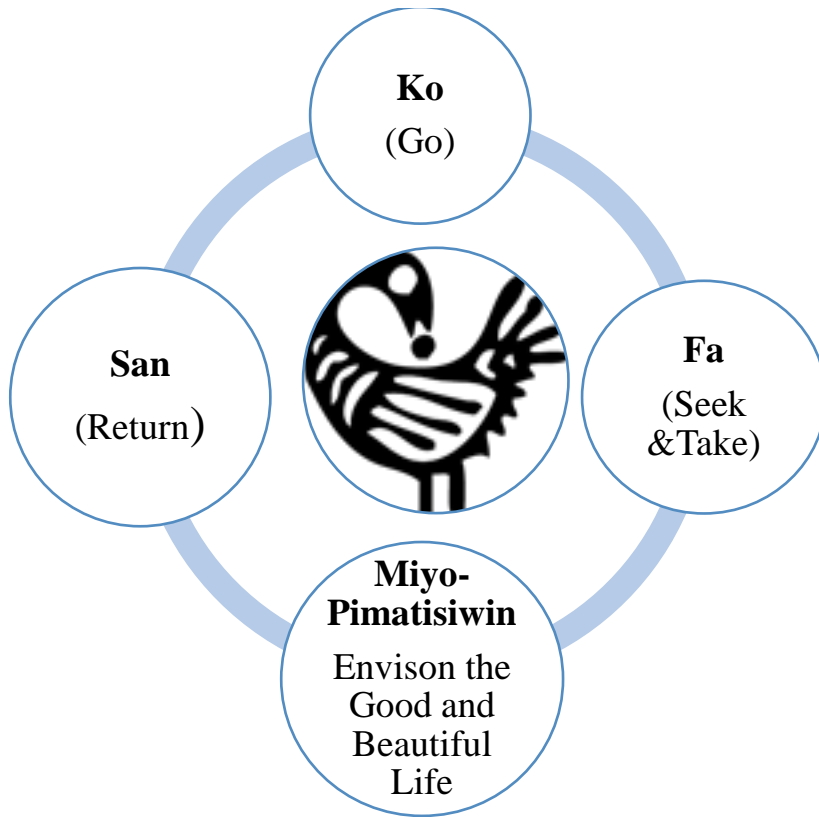
I have come to appreciate that Sankofa and Miyo-Pimatisiwin are similar in that the people involved in the interpreting the models actively seek good life. While medicine wheel and Miyo-Pimatisiwin are introduced to the scholarly world in Canada, my work introducing

Sankofa as a theoretical concept that evokes resilience and social resistance, and reclaiming and reviving of vision on good and beautiful life may well be one of the first ones in Canadian educational context.

Sankofa symbolizes an individual moving forward in life, knowing and appreciative of the past. The egg symbolizes history, culture, while at the same time presents the future. The word Sankofa, in the Akan language, Twi, literally means, to go back and fetch it: San (return), Ko (go), Fa (seek and take) (Pearman, 2009), (Harris, 2004), and (Kojo & Rowe, 1998-2001). Sankofa is a West African cultural framework that I now propose as a theoretical concept that shed light on how individuals view themselves, view their community and the world around them. As much as Fiddler (2014) saw Miyo-Pimatisiwin as a world-view, in my view Sankofa offers that: world view. Sankofa “...symbolizes the Akan belief that the past serves as a guide for planning the future; it is the wisdom in learning from the past as one builds the future” (Pearman, 2009, p.75). As much as any informant/performants enticed into Miyo-Pimatisiwin as being able to obtain good life regardless gender, Sankofa in my estimate promotes empowerment regardless of gender as well. I have come to recognize that genderless qualities are important in many cultures around the world, including among the kalaallit – Inuit in Greenland (Jessen Williamson, 2011).

The following diagram depicts the ways in which I have come to understand the interconnectedness of the theoretical concepts Sankofa and Miyo-Pimatisiwin.

Diagram 1: Sankofa and Miyo-Pimatisiwin



Reframing resilience: The interconnections of resilience and social resistance

Literature on the resilience of minority youth, specifically Black youth, alert us to disturbing assumptions to social dysfunction. The assumption is that “the context they live in is negative...[c]onsequently, these assumptions lead to the lack of positive expectations about Black youths’ potential” (Jernigan, 2009, p.31). Since my discovery of Jernigan’s (2009) Ph.D. dissertation which is informed by Robinson and Ward (1991), I freely explored Black African female high school students resilience as “the strengths that Black youths use to develop in oppressive environments [that consists of]...the concept of active resistance” (Jernigan, 2009, p. 31).

In this research, I looked to employ a strength-based approach similar to research conducted by Robinson and Ward (1991), who explored the social resistance strategies employed by Black female adolescents in the United States. The authors note that, due to the

effects of gender and racial discrimination, Black female adolescents, “can, and need to be prepared to enter into a society that requires a critical consciousness, as well as skills and strategies to combat subjugation” (Jernigan, 2009, p. 31).

Robinson and Ward (1991) defined two ways of conceptualizing Black girls’ resistance to oppression: resistance for survival and resistance for liberation. First the authors state that “self-denigration [is] due to the internalization of negative self-image, excessive autonomy and individualism at the expense of connectedness to the collective” (Robinson and Ward, 1991, p. 89). The two authors offer resistance for liberation and define that as “...resistance in which black girls are encouraged to acknowledge the problems of, and to demand change in, an environment that oppresses them” (Robinson & Ward, 1991, p. 89).

The above is supported by Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) who stated that “...human agency can be manifested in the form of resistance to the established order or structural conditions” (p. 166). For the purposes of this research, I explored the experiences of Black African female high school students who have arrived to Canada and looked for their ways in which they have contested dominant, hegemonic practices in their education, as forms of resistance and resilience. In agreement with Anderson and Danis (2006) and Marshall (2000), the concept of resistance should be included in the conceptualization of resilience.

Ultimately, resilience in the form of resistance to oppression is specifically evident in studies involving racialized minority groups. For example, a study conducted by Bachay and Cingel (1999) explored and described various ways in which racialized women resisted racial oppression and patriarchal structures to chart out successful career paths. It was noted that their resilience strategies entailed strong family ties, faith in religion, a reliance on their cultural values and a refusal to be victimized or marginalized. These shaped their resilience. In the next section I explored social resistance and resilience from a micro and macro levels.

Mapping the understanding of resilience and social resistance

According to Raby (2006) and Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) resistance can be seen from a micro or macro level. Resistance at the micro level may involve individual overt or covert resistance to adversity, while resistance at the macro level involves collective action. Social Resistance involves negotiation, on the part of individuals, where the dominant cultures are

both adopted and contested: “At times resistance may take the form of ambiguity where a person may walk between the spaces of dominant and non-dominant social forces. Regardless of the form of resistance, it implies agency and resilience among individuals” (Shaikh and Kauppi, 2010, p. 167). To explore some aspects of experiences of immigrant Black African female students in Saskatchewan high schools, I believe that it was essential to map out the social ecology of the actors involved in my study. On the outset I assumed the negative environment is a foundation to explore and understand how immigrant Black African female students resist and develop resilience strategies. As one would see I also looked at the reclamation, revitalization as well as liberation aspects that Sankofa offers.

Racism exists and is embedded in all facets of Canadian society; and Saskatchewan high schools are affected. In this study, I uncovered the negative social ecology of the Black African female immigrant students’ experiences to highlight the process involved in developing social resistance and resilience. This study evaluated some aspects of anti-racist education with the view to make recommendations for its effectiveness to redress immigrant female Black African students’ school experiences. In the following section I discussed the social ecology of the experiences of peoples of African descent in Canada. This section provided a historical context for setting the stage for understanding and exploring the social resistance and resilience for immigrant Black African female students in Saskatchewan high schools, and next section, then deals with the social ecology of the ‘actors’ involved in my study.

Historical context of othering Africans in North America

Historically, there has been negativity directed towards immigrant peoples of African descent in Canada. One notable theory regarding hostility towards new immigrants is termed ‘nativism,’ and it is “...opposition to an internal minority on the grounds that it posed a threat to Canadian national life” (Palmer, 1982, p. 7). Nativism theory seeks to explain why Anglophone Canadians historically reacted negatively to African immigrant peoples who settled in Canada. In my work I want the readers to be alerted to the fact that African American experiences are significantly different from Africans migrating to Canada directly. While this is the case, it is also desirable for the readers to understand that even though the great differences exist, the socio-cultural effect of the imposed racism are similar to both populations. The

nativism theory exposes prejudice on non-Europeans and the agenda of nationalism. These, Shepard (1985) claimed as sources that explain the negativity and animosity toward the Black immigrants – where ever they came from.

Ultimately, the purpose of emphasis on a historical understanding of immigration in Canada is to draw attention to how historical injustices manifest themselves in contemporary Canadian society. In outlining the experiences of immigrant peoples of African descent in the Western Canadian Plains, I will draw on the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (TAS), which also occurred in Canada (Cooper, 2006), and the experiences of Black Oklahomans who migrated to the Canadian Plains before World War I.

Canadian early immigration: The case of Black Oklahomans

The history of the TAS provides a landscape for understanding the tense relationship between peoples of African descent immigrating into a country, Canada, populated by white Europeans. In this section, I rely on the work of Shepard (1985), which was republished in *Prairie Forum* 2013, to explain the initial Canadian reaction to Black immigration into Canada.

Immigrants to the Western Canadian Plains (WCP) who were Anglophone were not free from the taint of racism. While Canada is often praised in contemporary times as providing a safe haven for escaped slaves, prior to the American Civil War, there is little recognition and understanding that those who escaped slavery from United States did not necessarily live an ideal life (Shepard, 1985). Major governmental departments expressed their views in regards to the increase of Black migration to Canada, and in 1899, the immigration branch of the Federal Department of the Interior replied “...negatively to the suggestion that blacks be allowed to settle on the Canadian Plains. The branch informed its agent in Kansas City that ‘...it is not desired that any negro immigrants should arrive in Western Canada...’” (Shepard, 1985, p.135).

Canadian immigration authorities also played major roles in discouraging Black immigration to the WCP. Some of the attempts included, denying access to information and stopping immigration information. Some examples of exclusionary practices involved: “vigorous medical examinations at the border as a deterrent” (Shepard, 1985, p.138). Shepard (1985) notes that:

By spring 1910, the Edmonton Board of Trade felt that it was time for action on the question of black immigration. At its monthly meeting on 12 April, the board unanimously passed a resolution calling the federal government's attention to the "marked increase" in black immigration to the Canadian Plains. The Board said that it felt that the foundations for a "negro problem" were being laid. (p. 137-138)

The notion of development of a "Negro Problem" is one which has been socially constructed since the era of the TAS. Peoples of African descent were viewed as socially pathological and inherently flawed.

In Canada, "Blacks were subjected to economic and social discrimination in eastern Canada, imposed by a racially conscious society" (Shepard, 1985, p.135). Nova Scotia and Ontario legislated segregated schools also around 1828, Black immigrants who fled from United States to Ontario, and were denied educational rights. They were not allowed admission to common schools (Harper, 1997; Houston and Prentice, 1988). Upon arrival, parents of students were often confronted and told to seek alternative schooling for their children. School superintendent, Robert Murray, suggested Black parents to develop a clause in the 1841 School Act to create their own schools. Such action was later documented in the Negro Separate School Act of 1849 (Harper, 1997; Jaenen, 1972).

Across the Eastern part of Canada growing sentiment of negativity towards peoples of African descent was evident. These sentiments range from notions that by allowing children of African descent to share the same classrooms as Caucasian children, there would be a moral corruption of Caucasian children. These sentiments were not only held by citizens of the district but also by people in positions of authority. For example, a school commissioner, an editor of the Chatham Journal and a local politician of Raleigh Township fanned the flames of anti-black sentiment and to oppose school aid to African Canadians. He was supported by the Western District Council.

The arguments proposed were based on unfounded, discriminatory claims, reminiscent of arguments proposed in defence of enslavement of Africans. Due to the negative reaction to black settlement and integration in the schools, children of African descent in the communities of Windsor and Chatham were racially segregated: "...local Black families did not wish to have Black only schools, but were forced to do so by the lack of accommodation they received when

they attempted to have their children attend a local White school” (Black History Canada, p.1). African-Canadians ensure to close such schools in 1965 (Black History Canada).

Having understood the social ecology of my research participants, we can now move onto how the lack of knowledge on my research area continued the unjust treatment of Black learners. In my case, I worked specifically to look at how Black African female could be empowered.

Identifying a research gap: Exploring the social resistance and resilience of immigrant Black African female high school students in Saskatchewan

Since the first African settlement took place in Canada, there has been a continuous increase of Black Canadians. The 2001 Statistics Canada indicates that “People of African origin make up one of the largest non-European ethnic groupings in Canada” (Statistics Canada, 2007). The majority emigrated directly from African and Caribbean countries. As a result there is major increase of diversity in the institutions of education. However, there is little or no research that indicates the well-being of students of African descent within the Saskatchewan school system. In my effort to look for resources that speak to the social ecology of my subject area, I realized lack of research on successful educational experiences of immigrant African students in Canada, let alone in Saskatchewan context. As I searched further, I found that the gap is even greater in measuring the successful educational experiences of immigrant Black African female students. The bulk of literature focuses on poor academic results and issues regarding increases in high school dropout rates—which emphasize academic challenges encountered by immigrant students of African descent Codjoe (2006), Ogbu (1992) and Lomotey (1990). Beside Geres’ (2013) Ph.D. dissertation that delved into the resilience of new Canadian entering the Saskatchewan high schools, very little information is accessible on how specifically the Black African females fare in Saskatchewan schools. Geres’ (2013) research participants were not necessarily Black learners from African countries as she worked on how as refugee from war-torn countries coped with school expectations.

As mentioned earlier, I wanted to specifically uncover the strategies employed by African female students in high school. When research has been conducted on a minority population, it has often focused on the male students. Such is the case for reporting on high

school students of African descent. These studies are often conducted in Ontario and only recently in Manitoba, and focus heavily on issues of high dropout rates and rarely seek to investigate and or understand the strategies that students develop to resist and overcome obstacles such as differing forms of racism. In that regard, Okwako (2011) wrote: "...few of these studies have not explored how marginalized students, such as African immigrants and refugee students, construct their identities, and how these processes shape their schooling experiences" (p.5). While finding ways to identifying the racism that my participants experienced, this study sought to invest their schooling experiences to fill in the gap. My attempt would be to reap from their experiences of resisting hegemonic practices by employing the ways in which the individuals developed resilience, social resistance strategies, and how they came to reclaim and revive their cultural identity while experiencing denial in Saskatchewan high schools.

The majority of the data concerning racism encountered by immigrant Black African female students is found in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, Canada. Research has also been conducted, generally, on the schooling experiences of racialized minorities in other parts of the world, significant amount to be found from United States. Literature on the experiences of immigrant Black African female school students' specifically in Saskatchewan is virtually non-existent.

Having said that, I came across research in Canada, conducted by the Canadian Research Institute for Advancement of Women which described the experiences of Black Anglophone and Francophone young women in English and French schools. These experiences spoke to the elementary and high school levels. The study found that young women experienced racial confrontation and harassment by fellow students. The study concluded that, "...sexist and racist expectations of teachers and guidance counselors can have a profound effect on the lives of racialized girls" (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2010, p.1). These realities point clearly to the problem I addressed by exploring the social resistance and resilience strategies employed by immigrant Black African female high school students in Saskatchewan.

To understand the social ecology and explore the resilience and social resistance of immigrant Black African female high school students, I suggest that there must be an analysis

of the root cause of the underlying problems. In the following section I provide a brief history on the origins of racism in Canada where differential treatment was made on African female students.

The social construction of race: Origins and implications

Discourses on race superiority and inferiority have for long permeated human relations prior to Charles Darwin. His work exploring the origins of species was advanced by social Darwinists that greatly influenced the discourses differences along the lines of race. Social Darwinism promoted the idea of competition among individuals, groups, sovereign nation's ideologies and doctrines amongst many others. The theory also promoted the advancement of Western Eurocentric views of superiority and the theory essentially became the platform for the doctrine of white supremacy. White supremacy is the foundation of racist ideologies and the notion of the white man's burden. Macdonald (2006) explains the evolution of such values:

Superiority precedes and grounds supremacy, not the other way around. That is racist do not regard power as the source of their power. Whites are more powerful because they are superior, because by nature or culture has made them better and more worthy; moreover, whites are superior even when they are not powerful. (p.6)

The assumed inferiority of Blacks, or any other racialized minority groups of people, justifies the subordination. It is perceived that the alleged inferiority of Blacks justifies their subordination and therefore allowed Whites to presume apparent supremacy. The notion of supremacy and superiority are used interchangeably which is incorrect for they have distinct features and each must be thoroughly understood in conceptualizing and clarifying the behaviour of White colonialists. To better understand these terms, the opposite word for supremacy namely subordination must be understood. Supremacy denotes ultimate power, while the subordinates in turn lack power (Macdonald, 2006). Both these terms can be defined in relation to intrinsic worth.

According to Macdonald (2006) Natural law theory can be used to explain anything for it rationalizes a position that has already been taken; for example, an imperialist mentality, oppression of women and the North Americans attempted justification of Blacks Slavery.

Ultimately, the underlying intent of natural law is to promote the notion that those who are superior are inherently better than those considered inferior and do not necessarily depend on supremacy for superiority.

The question then is what in particular makes the white person superior and the racialized person inferior? What justifies their superiority over others considered subordinates? The era of racist theories which included scientific scholars, who claim that genetically, White people were a superior over any race and certainly beyond the Black.

The notion of The White Man's Burden is a result of White supremacist philosophies. Since the White man was seen as having a higher status, psychologically, as civilized and cultured, it is his duty to help the inferior. The term is used in this context to 'lift up' the 'backward peoples' to correct their alleged barbaric nature. This very notion of lifting suggests that lower and higher stages of civilization are primarily the result of cultural, religious, and political habits. These are the parameters within which racial discrimination operates in Canada: the false and rationalized assumptions of a group of people simply based on the color of their skin. I am happy to report that these "...constructed ideas about race are scientifically unsound and grounded in the belief in white superiority, these ideas are often normalized as common sense and not easily recognized as constructed" (Baker, 2006, p. 2).

In more recent times the ideas of inherent superiority and inferiority have influenced research in the areas of education and dialogue which include the determinants for intelligence. For example, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* written by American psychologist, Herrnstein and Murray (1994), and American political scientist, Murray (1994) are prime examples of such research grounded in socially constructed notions of inferiority and superiority (Rutledge, 1995). Herrnstein and Murray (1994) research compared the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of African Americans to that of White Americans arguing and justifying long-standing ideologies of racial inferiority. At the heart of their analysis on race and intelligence was that human intelligence is inheritable. Here, the author's endorse Social Darwinist notions of human individual characteristics as fixed traits and unsusceptible to change. They "...assert in their work that culture, intellect, and knowledge are racially determined, fixed and hence not subject to devices of social reconstruction" (Rutledge, 1995, p. 249).

Furthermore, the authors proposed policy recommendations which targeted vulnerable groups in American society. The following are a few of the recommendations: First, the elimination of social welfare programs designed to assist single mothers, specifically, women of lower socio-economic status, based on assumptions that they possessed lower IQ which could be inherited by their children. Second, they proposed a reduction of immigration into the United States of America because of perceived fears of the reduction of the national IQ by new immigrants. Third and most relevant and notable to my research, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) argued for the elimination of affirmative action initiatives designed to assist African American students enroll into post-secondary institutions. This proposal was based on the preconception that African American students would lower the IQ of post-secondary institutions. According to one of the most notable critics of Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) work, Rutledge (1995), states that "[a]ccording to the logic of The Bell Curve, Blacks or other societal have-nots, because they have failed the Darwinist/Spencerian survival-of-the-fittest test, ought not to be given social consideration, remediation, compassion, or compensation to level the playing field" (Rutledge, 1995, p. 250).

Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) correlation of race and IQ has significantly impacted pedagogies in education, curriculum development leading to exploration of a variety of learning styles and linking certain learning styles to race. Essentially, recognition and understanding Herrnstein and Murray's (1994) work and the application of such viewpoints shows the pervasiveness of the preconceptions of intelligence which has influenced the experiences of racialized students in Eurocentric school environments. For the purpose of this paper, this brief understanding of how schooling is experienced and clearly indicate the misconceptions that students are bombarded gives us a better picture and helps us to understand the social ecology where Black African female students navigate and negotiate to a better future.

In accordance with the conventional understandings of racism, I emphasized a less conscious but hegemonic form of racism, which is often referred to as "white privilege" in antiracism discourses (Egbo, 2008). The following section outlined the forms in which social resistance towards change to the hegemonic practices of racism took shape.

In Canada it is common that people deny the existence of racism and opt out to the notion of colorblindness. I argue that Saskatchewan schools downplay and label acts of racism to “bullying.” In my experience schools do not tackle the issues for what they are. Due to this laissez-faire attitude, the plights of immigrant African female students are often ignored and posited as irrelevant. The onus is placed on the child, youth, to fit in and or to cope or overcome their oppression on their own.

Different cites of oppression

The works of critical scholars such as Shorter-Gooden (2004), have written extensively on how women from Africa resisted various oppressions they encountered in their lives. This author focused on the experiences of African American women, and it is noteworthy and relevant to inform my research. The following section will briefly describe one of her publications entitled, *Multiple Resistance Strategies: How African American Women Cope With Racism and Sexism*. In my estimate Shorter-Gooden’s work speak to my effort to shed light on the interconnection of gender and race.

As it was important to discuss the social construction of racism, and provide some understanding of the ways in which gendered issues are deeply rooted in heteronormative patriarchy have taken shape. Though my research participants did not specifically speak to the ways in which their experiences may have been gendered, I recognize the ways in which gender takes shape. Therefore, in the following section, I provide a brief discussion on how gender is been understood, using Butler (1988) work.

Butler (1988) shows that gendered behaviours, that we have come to understand as masculinity and femininity are learned behaviour through the processes of socialization and these are rooted in normative heterosexuality. People are taught at a young age to behave a certain way according to these gendered markers of masculinity and femininity. Butler (1988) further argued that through the learning of these behaviours individuals perform masculinity and femininity; “Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed.” (1990, p. 527). Therefore, Butler (1988) exposes how gender is socially constructed. So if gender is socially constructed and its performants are influenced by its socialization aspects, then, notions of gender as inherent, can be challenged. “Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which

gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis” (p. 522). By emphasizing the performative nature of gender, Butler (1988) challenges the normative heterosexual assumptions embedded in the social construction of gender which is used as a tool to socially control people and places social constraints on individuals.

Another aspect of the social construction of gender is how gender is not binary and that varying cites of oppression are interconnected. In my research I am used Black feminist thought as a guiding philosophy which looked specifically how race creates differential treatments for Black African Female Students. I have specifically discussed these ideas in further detail in Chapter Three, under the heading, The emergence of Black Feminist Thought. As mentioned earlier, though my research participants did not speak specifically to the ways in which the interconnections may affect their school experiences I have offered further insight into the interconnections of gender, race, class and sexual orientation as a recommendation for further studies.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: IN SEARCH OF THEORY

This chapter introduces and discuss the guiding philosophies and theories that frame my research. The theories I used are antiracism and Black feminist thought. Keeping my research questions in mind, I explored antiracism theory informed the ways in which my research participants experienced differing forms of racism in their school. The second theory, Black feminist thought informed my understanding of the ways in which the interconnections of gender and race create differential treatments for my research participants.

Paradigmatic framework

This research is situated within the broader paradigmatic framework of Critical Theory which is strongly informed by postmodernist and poststructuralist theory dominating the areas of social science research since the mid-twentieth century “... and is still a major theoretical force today” (Henry & Tator, 2010, p.29). This paradigm focuses on exposing, addressing societal ills, and practices, by understanding the underlying hegemonic power structures. The theory takes into account various forms of social inequalities in society such as racism, sexism, social economic status, homophobia, environmental racism. Due to the nature of this research, exploring issues of racism, which is grounded in power relations, it is evident that this research is situated within critical theory paradigmatic framework. Under the umbrella of critical theoretical paradigm, I have drawn an integrative approach of antiracist education theory, articulated by Dei (1995) and Black feminist thought, theorized by Collins (2000). I have used these theories in informing my literature, data collection and data analysis, and these are the basis for my realization that the Akan concept on Sankofa in my estimate is equivalent to these and I offer Sankofa as a theoretical concept that allowed cultural insights on development of resilience and social resistance strategies. As one would see later Chapter Five, the qualities include the reclamation, revitalization and indeed pose a foundation for feeling liberation – outliving experiences of racism.

In my work, I first questioned the power relations within societal contexts and these were be analyzed from a critical lens. Egbo (2008) promoted perspectives to be arrived at by applying divergent lens. I believe that my analysis on the impacts of racism in the schooling experiences of immigrant Black African female students provides such a divergent lens. Secondly, I

employed the dialogic methods desiring a clear showcasing of the school experiences of my participants. Indeed, there was a strong emphasis on meaningful dialogue with research participants. The foundation of the research is centered on the stories of five immigrant Black African female students, elaborating and exemplifying resilience and social resistance strategies high schools in Saskatchewan.

I used story form in this research which speaks to my desire for educators to resist the hegemonic practices. I want to make sure that this research describes the experiences of immigrant Black African female students in Saskatchewan high schools in my attempt to understand the particular situation through the story telling of their experiences. I hope that my strategy promote meaningful change to future Black students' educational experiences.

Antiracist theory and education

Antiracism, as defined by Dei (1995), “acknowledges the reality of racism and other forms of social oppression...in the organizational life of the school” (Dei, 1995, p.180). The theory questions the role of educational systems, schools, and critically analyzes how these institutions produce and reproduce racial, gender, and other inequalities, such as class based inequalities and sexual orientation in society Dei (1995). The theory is “an educational political action-oriented strategy for institutional and systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (Dei, 1995, p.195). The theoretical framework of antiracism is used to explore and critically analyze the racism, interconnected with sexism that immigrant Black African female students encounter in Saskatchewan high schools.

The theory acknowledges that racism is often intertwined with other forms of discrimination and these create differential treatment for certain individuals or groups in society. The complexity of racism when intercepted by many other sites of reasons for oppressions is relevant my study. I believe that the experiences that my participants spoke to the complexities of interceptions, makes it challenging for me to come up with readily available solutions, and I am not introducing some simplistic manual on how to solve the complex problems on my own. Dei (1995), however, shed some good light on how using antiracist theory addressing problems such as high dropout rates of African Canadian students in Toronto, can give good understanding on the dynamics that I am addressing.

Dei's (1995) research examined the call for African-centred schools in Ontario, and identifies the challenges posed by such schools for Canadian students, parents, educators, and administrators Dei (1996). The author stated that the establishment of such a school is proposed as an alternative form of schooling for youths' whose needs are not served by the mainstream school system. The author argues for the establishment of such schools on an experimental basis, in direct consultation and meaningful partnership with students, educators, administrators, and the wider local community Dei (1995) and Dei (1996). My effort of understanding some aspects of racism is to understand this in light of 'race' and 'gender, and the following section deals then with gender from the point of view of the African America females.

The emergence of Black feminist thought

Second-wave feminisms began early in the 1960s into the late 1970s. The movement grew out of the era of rapid social change in American society, specifically, the Civil Rights Movement. Second-wave feminism advocated for social, political, and economic equality for women. Its aim was to provide framework for exploring issues that affect all women and to provide opportunities for women to enter the public sphere. However, according to (hooks, 1981) Second-wave feminism, characterized through Betty Friedan's revolutionary classic, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), sought equality for one kind of woman, the Caucasian middle and upper class woman. As a result, the movement virtually disregarded the plights of other women in the United States, women of lower socio-economic status, racialized women. The movement of advocacy for all women's rights was flawed and lacked foresight. I recognize that women of varying racial (race being a social construct) backgrounds of lower income were also excluded in the second-wave feminist movement, due to the movement catering to middle-and upper class, and heterosexual Caucasian women.

However, this discussion focused on the experiences of African American women. Caucasian feminists at the forefront of feminist discourse did not realize the power of white supremacy as a racial politics, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and Jim Crow segregation, in American society and its impacts on African American women. The lack of foresight led to the alienation of African American women. One major example was: "1970, White feminists'

reluctance to aggressively organize against the political persecution of Angela Davis continued the legacy of White women rejecting and alienating Black women” (Taylor, 1998, p. 234). Angela Davis was a member of the Black Panther party. Due to the exclusion, some African American women rejected second-wave feminism and sought new ways of theorizing and understanding the experiences. I have discussed these new ways theorizing their experiences in the following section.

African American resurgence in the face of rejection

As mentioned earlier, the African American women felt excluded from the women’s liberation movement. They felt that though the idea of liberation for women was appealing—they quickly realized that the struggle did not have their interests at heart (hooks, 1981). As a result a subsection of African American women resented the movement and viewed it as white supremacy re-asserting itself. Other African American women “...reacted to white female racism by starting black feminist” (hooks, 1981, p. 9). One major theory is produced by Alice Walker, who introduced ‘Womanism’ which referred to African American women who face oppression on dimensions involving sexism, racism, and classism. Another notable African American feminist, Patricia Hill Collins, is known to identify four major guidelines in the construction of Black feminist thought which I have used in my research to explore the experiences of Black African female students in Saskatchewan.

Black feminist thought

The interconnections of hegemonic practices, policies of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Jim Crow segregation, capitalist and heterosexual patriarchy led to the differential treatments of African American women who responded to second-wave feminism with new ideas on how to empower women. Patricia Hill Collins is known to identify four major guidelines in the construction of Black feminist thought. First, she argues that there must be empowerment of African American women and a focus on self-assertion. The idea of self-assertion involves self-definition that enabled African American women to construct positive images of them to repel the negative socially constructed images of their womanhood. Second, African American women were urged to confront structures of racism, classism and sexism that

oppress them. Understanding the interconnections of these is an important step in collective effort to undo the injustice Black African American women experienced.

Third, African American women are to make contributions to intellectual thought – theorizing, and become politically engaged to resist hegemony. Finally, African American women are to incorporate their cultural experiences to resist oppression. Ultimately, African American feminist advocates “...carved out intellectual space to uncover, (re)define, contextualize, and validate Black women’s realities” (Neville & Hamer, 2001, p. 437). The underlying basis of these groups is the notion of Revolutionary Black Feminism (RBF) which posited three key ideas. First, the dynamic of black revolutionary vision as stated by Joy James, a Black feminist scholar, who “...denotes dynamic movement, rather than fixed stasis, within a political praxis relevant to changing material conditions and social consciousness” (Neville & Hamer, 2001, p.439).

Second, the theory identifies the root of African American women’s oppression as stemming from structural and socially constructed ideologies that White American made. To use the words of hooks (1981) the oppression came from white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, and she reminded us to the interconnected realities that oppress African American women. The structure “conversely, discriminates against racial and ethnic minorities, especially women, in institutional participation and access” (Neville & Hamer, 2001, p. 441). The second aspect of the notion, ideology, refers to “...a system (with its own logic and rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas, or concepts) endowed with a historical existence and a role within a given society” (Neville & Hamer, 2001, p. 449).

The above mentioned ideologies are perceived to be truths and involve such aspects as gender and race. Gender roles over-emphasized women’s place in society and the woman’s body as a commodity; while racial ideologies over-emphasized the alleged, inherent, inferiority of African American women. Ultimately, the creation of RBF is a strategy to resist the rejection of second wave feminism and to carve out new ways of understanding the lives of African American women. I recognize that the experiences of African American women are vastly different from that of the experiences of immigrant African women and youth in Canada. Since the latter never personally experienced the African American oppression prior to their arrival to Canada.

However, due to the ways in which interconnections between sexism and racism has been framed in the North American, settler colonial context, my work further explored how this socially constructed differentiation plays a role today – as my participants storied their high school experiences in Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter describes the qualitative methods I used in collecting my data. My research was conducted in a case study format where I used Seidman's (2006) three series interview method and Riessman's (1993) data analysis which was based on my overarching research questions. I used these qualitative research methods to document research participants' experiences and analyze their stories in a meaningful way.

Methods

The aim of the study was to explore the school experiences of immigrant Black African female students. Each of the five participants was informed by the historical tension in form of racism. The experiences are based in Saskatchewan public high schools—and I was interested to figure out how students developed social resistance strategies as a form of resilience in easing the tensions. I used case study conducted in the form of stories as a research method. Case study refers to the thorough examination of “the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible” (Case Studies, 2012, p.1). The method employed a thorough process that involves thick description that speak to in-depth description of the situation being studied. The method also required the involved participant to describe “the nature of the community in which it is located” (Case Studies, 2012, p.1). My research method includes aspects of phenomenology as described by Johncox, Wiebe and Hoogland (2009). The authors thought well of the approach for evoking stories with deep meanings.

I looked to unearth the construction of realities of the stories. And in my mind I wanted to find the retelling of each student's high school experience. How did each participant address the challenges and how did each participant developed social resistance strategies to combat challenges posed by racism. The primary aim of storied form “involves researchers eliciting individuals' past or unfolding stories and then “retelling” the stories in order to clarify their structure and meaning” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2010, p. 372).

Story-ing from Indigenous perspective according to Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, and Jessen Williamson (2011) stated the importance of stories as a form of resilience and resistance:

Narrative resilience therefore has a communal or collective dimension, maintained by the circulation of stories invested with cultural power and authority, which the individual and groups can use to articulate and assert their identity, affirm core values and attitudes needed to face challenges, and generate creative solutions to new predicaments. (p. 86)

Based on the above recommendations, I did make a choice to listen to the stories of the participant, and I also chose to spend a considerable amount of time with participants' to obtain in-depth responses. The interview format complimented the research questions and effectively aided in answering the research questions. Participants were provided space and time to tell their stories of challenges and how they have triumphed over these challenges in high school. See Appendix A for the research questions details. The next session addresses the research design and methods that I used.

Research design and methods: Participant selection

The research was based on the stories of five immigrant Black African female students who have graduated from a Saskatchewan high school and who are currently pursuing an undergraduate degree at the University of Saskatchewan. In addition to these stories, I shared my own story, as an immigrant African female student at the *Deka wówó*, Focus Group. Each participant's story detailing high school experiences in Saskatchewan, Canada, was highly valued in my work. I chose five students as the number allowed me to collect sufficient and in-depth data. More would have been too much, and less would not have allowed for diverse perspectives. The number of participants was manageable for a sole investigator. I needed to devote time and resources to gather in-depth data.

The decision to focus on Saskatchewan public high school graduates, who were enrolled in a university undergraduate program, at the University of Saskatchewan, is because I live here and have access to the participants. In my estimate although the students may have experienced many barriers in high school, they have succeeded and are in pursuit of a post-secondary education. My thinking was that they have overcome racism and survived high school in Saskatchewan and looked for a better future. The latter was qualified by entrance to their undergraduate education.

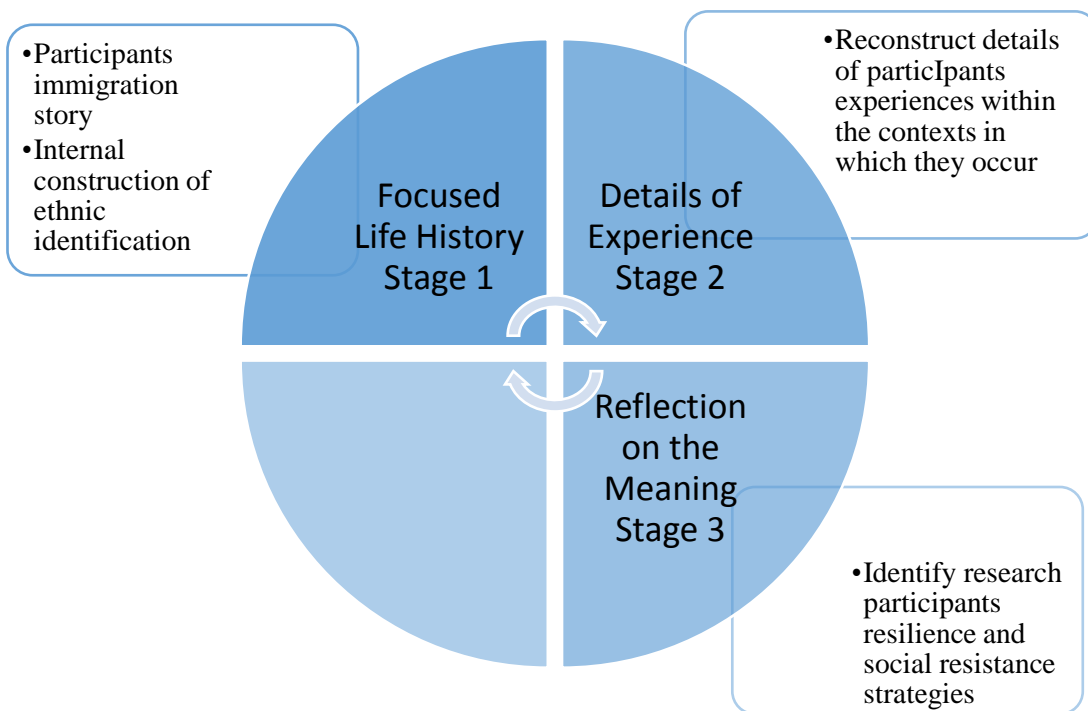
To seek participants for the research study, I approached the University of Saskatchewan's African Students Association from which I was a member. Being a member of the student group helped in establishing rapport. I sought permission from the association president to present a brief overview of the research and provided invitation letters at the African Students Association meetings. In the invitation letter, I provided in detail the objectives of the research, level of participant involvement in the research and their rights as participants in the research. The invitation to participants can be found in Appendix C and the letter to the AFSA president can be found in Appendix D. In terms of participant selection, I chose participants based on the criteria that they have attended a Saskatchewan high school, currently enrolled in an undergraduate program, at the time of the study, at the University of Saskatchewan, and were 18 years of age or older and level of interest in the research. Selection was based on a first come basis. I believed that it was essential for me to collect the data and engage actively with my participants. Since the study was conducted in a story form, I believed that my presence was essential to successfully articulate my participants' voice for this study. This was the nature of my involvement in this study.

Data gathering

As a research method I employed open-ended individual interviews and one focus group discussion called *Deka wōwō*, which is discussed in Chapter Six, for my data collection. The focus group discussion and the individual interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and conducted within a scheduled time period. I also maintained a journal, where I recorded my thoughts prior to the data collection, during the data collection phase and after the data collection. The research questions allowed flexibility and aided in "building upon and exploring participants' responses to questions" (Seidman, 2006, p.15). The open-ended research interview was adopted from Seidman's three series interview method. The first stage is called the Focused Life History Stage. In this stage the researcher in question encourages participants to share their life stories in light of the topic under study" (Seidman, 2006, p.48). The second step is called Details of Experience. Here, the participants were encouraged to reconstruct the details of their experiences within contexts in which they occurred Seidman (2006).

The third stage in Seidman's three series is called the Reflection on the Meaning stage. This stage was informed by the idea that participants should engage in the reflection of what the meaning of their experiences entail. In this section, the nature of participants' involvement was that of collaborators in research. This entailed working side by side with participants in discovering the latent meanings behind their experiences of racism. The following diagram displays Seidman's (2006) three series interview method and how I used it to gather data for my research.

Diagram 2: Seidman (2006) Interview Method



Data analysis

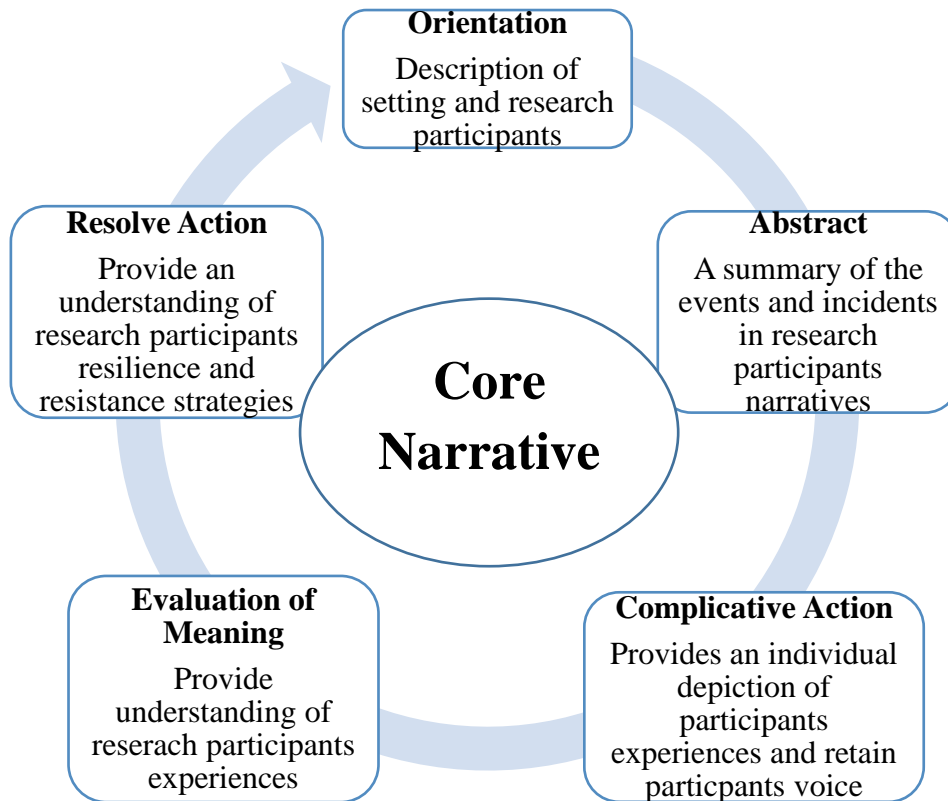
In analyzing the data collected from the interviews and analyzing my own personal story, I used the core narrative or skeleton plot through three thematic categories by Riessman (1993). This provided "...organizational structure which is designed to be responsive to analysis. The first category is Orientation, where the researcher describes the setting and characters of the narrative" (Riessman, 1993, p. 59). In this research the setting was Saskatchewan public high school. The characters were research participants. Riessman (1993) calls the second category, Abstract. Within what Riessman (1993) recommended in the abstract, I provided the events and incidents of research participants' stories. In the summary, I sought the assistance of participants as collaborators, to review the summary ensuring that I represented their stories as accurately as possible. Complicating Action is the third category. In this category, I provided an evaluative commentary on events, conflicts and themes reflected in research participants stories Riessman (1993). In this section, I provided interpretations of the stories. The data analysis process aimed at providing an individual depiction of participants' experiences which required the retention of participants' language, use of words to retell their story. The orientation of this research study was to stay true to this tradition and to ensure that the data analysis process was reflective of participants' voice.

The underlying aim of the data analysis was to illuminate the participants' social resistance strategies in actualizing their resilience, in the face of adversity, specifically racism. Data collected was collated and organized along coding method. For data coding purposes, I used the notion of the story clause. It refers to the idea that every story has a common set of elements and each clause serves a particular function. Riessman (1993) builds on Labov's (1972, 1982) narrative organizational framework. Riessman (1993) notes important elements of narrative organization and notes that the function is "...to provide an abstract for what follows (A), orient the listener (O), carry the complicating action (CA), evaluate its meaning (E), and [or] resolve the action (R)" (Riessman, 1993, p.59). Therefore, each individual clause was coded to indicate the four functions Riessman (1993). For the purpose of this research I coded according to the storyline, reflecting the complicating action within participants' story, meaning given to the action and the resolution of the action. Ultimately, I identified key events

in participants' stories. I organized the participants' stories and findings in a meaningful structure and connected the stories to Sankofa theoretical framework.

The following diagram displays Riessman's (1993) core narrative data analysis method.

Diagram 3: Riessman's (1993) Core Narrative



Credibility

In ensuring reliability, I conducted regular checks with participants where I presented each participant with copies of the interview manuscripts. Furthermore, since the focus was on participants stories, there was caution against substituting participants' words. This promoted trustworthiness. I presented and interpreted the story and message participants wanted to convey in the final product. By engaging the participants, I believed that, this not only ensured trustworthiness of the study but also the integrity of the research—showing that participant' voices are indeed being displayed.

Ethics

I sought permission from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Saskatchewan. I presented a proposal outlining my research question and an explanation of the purpose and all supporting documents (See Appendix A, B, C and D). In addition consent forms were given to participants to sign. This form outlined the purpose of the study and the description of participants' ethical rights. From the outset, participants were notified of the limitations of confidentiality due to the focus group component of the research project. All efforts were taken to keep participants identity confidential through the incorporation of pseudonyms and removal of any identifying characteristics. Also, I clearly documented in the consent form that participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

Furthermore, I provide detailed information regarding procedures that were undertaken during the course of the study. There was a clear indication and description of documentation of the interview procedures and clear documentation of the findings. This was accomplished by keeping a personal journal chronicling the entire research. Additionally, the written data collected from research participants' were protected—locked in a cabinet in my research supervisors' office. Audio recordings, transcriptions and additional notes were stored on web server; Dropbox was protected with a password. I believe that all procedures in the study were made transparent. I hoped to conduct this study being respectful of the rights of participants and hoped that the research will serve as a tool to improve the schooling experiences of immigrant African female students in Saskatchewan public high schools.

The next chapter consists of the raw data collected from the individual interviews where I employed Seidman's Three Series Interview Method. First, the Focused Life History of the research participants was discussed. Second, participant's reconstruction of their experiences—this section is entitled, Details of Experience. Third, one called Reflection on the Meaning.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF THE RAW DATA FROM THE INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

In this chapter, keeping my research questions in mind, I documented the unedited responses of research participants. Providing details of their experiences, the challenges participants encountered and documented the ways in which participants challenged and developed resilience strategies to invest in a successful future.

Before I present research participants transcribed narratives I will like to clarify some points. When I refer to Indigenous peoples in Canada, I used Belangers' (2014) definition as "the descendants of groups of people living in the territory at the time when other groups of different cultures or ethnic origin arrived [...and] those who have been placed under a state structure that incorporates national, social and cultural characteristics from their own" (Belanger, 2014, p.15). I wish to provide a clear definition because my research participants' reflections, when referring to Indigenous peoples in Canada, participants used the term Aboriginal, which is a "...a constitutionally entrenched term describing Canada's Indian, Inuit, and Metis peoples," (Belanger, 2014, p.15). Participants used "Aboriginal" and "First Nations," interchangeably to describe Indigenous peoples in Canada. I realize that these names are often not placed in the proper historical and political contexts. And, as Belanger stated, using the terms interchangeably "...has the potential to obscure the legislative and administrative complexities unique to... in Canada" (Belanger, 2014, p.15). I thought that his statement is relevant to the case of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Stage 1 of the Seidman Three Series Interview Method: Focused Life History

I conducted one individual interview with all five research participants. The first stage of the interview involved questions about participants cultural backgrounds. I asked participants questions regarding their family and migration background. I focused on participants' internal construction of ethnic identity and their immigration to Saskatchewan. Participants shared their educational and career aspirations and social interactions. Their articulation of these stories served as the foundation for contextualizing research participants schooling experiences in Saskatchewan high schools. In addition, as a note of clarification, due to the confidentiality promised to participants, I refrained from providing any identifiable characteristics of research participants.

The following were the guiding questions used in the individual interviews:

Question 1: What is your immigration story to Saskatchewan?

Question 2: What were your goals and aspirations when you first came to Saskatchewan?

Stage 2 of the Seidman Three Series Interview Method: Details of Experience

In the second stage of the interview I encouraged participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which they occurred. This refers to research participants' experiences of racism in Saskatchewan high schools. Here, participants were given the opportunity to provide examples of their experiences and details of their social interactions with peers, teachers and school personnel. The following is a guiding question that I asked participants:

Question: What challenges did you experience while in high school and how did you respond to them?

Stage 3 of the Seidman Three Series Reflection on the Meaning

Question 1: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

In answering the guiding question research participants shared similar sentiments. They noted that though they did not experience what they would consider overt, individual acts of racism, they recognized institutional forms of racism which was evident in their high school curriculum. Research participants stated that they generally did not have difficulties in subject matters such as Mathematics, Science and English; however, they recognized institutionalized forms of racism in the Social Studies or History. They expressed feelings of being silenced in the classroom and their histories as peoples of Black African descent not acknowledged and respected in the classroom. In addition you will also find in research participants narratives that their sense of resilience and social resistance is directly and inextricably linked to their identity as racialized peoples in Canada. Interestingly also, research participants discussed an area of inquiry which has not been explored in their narratives. To provide you with a snippet, research participants discussed desires of wanting to reclaim their African histories and identity. Furthermore, research participants discussed ideas of what it means to be an immigrant on Indigenous land and how the history of colonization and ongoing colonialism in Canada has

helped shape their own social resistance and resilience. Essentially, I explored participants' responses to the feeling of alienation and explored the idea of how history/social studies are taught in the classroom in greater detail in Chapter Seven. For this chapter, however, I have strictly provided research participants raw, unedited responses.

Stage 1 Focused Life History: Luckys' Story

Guiding Question: What is your immigration story?

Lucky was born in a country located in the eastern region of the African continent. She immigrated to Saskatchewan with her family in the early 2000s. She chose the pseudonym Lucky because it is an old nickname. She immigrated to Canada with many hopes and aspirations. She expresses how she was very excited to move to a new country and experience a new way of life. In terms of educational and career aspirations, at the time of the interview, Lucky hopes to become a medical doctor. This dream she has had since childhood and she is currently working to receive admissions into a medical school program.

Stage 2 Details of Experience: Luckys' Story

Guiding Question: What challenges did you experience while in high school and how did you respond to them?

For Lucky, high school was a transformational time where she discovered her academic potential. When she was younger, she was often led to believe that she was not intelligent. Because of the labelling, she struggled with low self-esteem. She did not have confidence in her own intellectual abilities: *"I wasn't the smart one. I was very weak academically. And everybody knew that and told me that."* However, when Lucky started high school, she sought assistance from her teachers and school counsellor. Her school counsellor continues to have a major influence and serves as a mentor in her life. With the help of her teachers and counsellor, Lucky saw her grades improve dramatically. *"I looked at teachers as those who were there to help and help facilitate my learning, so I became more receptive to learning and that was when I saw my grades skyrocket."* When she began to see her grades improve, Lucky renewed her dream of becoming a medical doctor. With the help of her teachers and counsellor, she found

confidence in herself and her intellectual abilities. Furthermore, she began to see her teachers and counsellor as individuals who were there to facilitate her learning:

You know, teachers can have a huge impact in [a] child's life. I remember the [three] teachers who really helped me out. My math teacher, physics teacher and guidance counsellor. They all wanted to help me succeed and when I realized that, I would go to them for help. I started to love learning. I would have half hour lunches so that I would have enough time to go see my physics teacher for help. I realized that hard work and setting goals for myself is so beneficial because I knew that, that was what I really needed to do to get into University.

In the following section, I will discuss the challenges that Lucky experienced and how she was able to deal with those challenges.

Lucky stated that though she found high school to be generally a positive experience, she did have some issues regarding her social interactions with her peers. She stated that she got along well with her teachers; however, she had a difficult time integrating into the school. As an impressionable teenager, Lucky wanted to 'fit in' and make friends and feel like a 'normal' kid. But she found this difficult to do, because she felt that the other children saw and treated her differently and did not want to interact with her.

With the teachers I never felt like I was being treated any different. It was more with the other students...like, when I try and turn to talk to someone they would not acknowledge me. They would turn to look away...Maybe they didn't know how to react or they couldn't understand me.

In dealing with the rejection by her peers, Lucky spent most of her time interacting with other new immigrant children who were a part of a school program called English as an Additional Language, formally known as the English as a Second Language program. Lucky stated that English was her first language, because she had immigrated from an African country which was a former British colony; therefore, since the official language of the country was English, she wanted to be in that classroom where she felt more comfortable and welcomed. This feeling of comfort stems from a sense of shared experience with her peers. There was a sense of familiarity— a sense of solidarity and understanding among new immigrants navigating a new cultural and social terrain, called high school.

Stage 3 Reflection on the meaning: Luckys' Story

In exploring Luckys' social resistance and resilience strategies one major area of inquiring was to explore her overall experience in the education system. The following was a guiding question.

Question: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

In the following narratives Lucky shared her social resistance and resilience strategy of self-education. She discussed how she took time to expose herself to various literature which helped to build her resilience, by reading the stories and challenges of African American peoples in the United States of America. Furthermore, the readings helped her to contextualize and understand contemporary social ills she saw around her. Moreover, Lucky discusses the non-existence of African histories representation in the classroom. She further discusses her expectations arriving in Canada and wanting to learn about the country she immigrated to. Lucky discusses how her knowledge of Canadian history, colonial history, was very limited coming out of high school and she only became aware when she entered university and chose to take a Native studies class.

Lucky's Narratives:

As a person belonging to a minority group, and as someone who, even though I haven't directly experienced African American history in the States, I could see the connections. And I was more aware of African American history because it is tied to the country I come from. So for me I had done more reading and exposed myself to the history. Up till now, I continue to educate myself and I feel a strong connection to the experiences of African Americans. I was always wondering why there was gross discrimination against African Americans in the States and explored the history of oppression. So my exposure to these reading really struck a chord in me. I found myself when reading up about the history. Like I feel pride in who I am. I feel like they went through all that so that I can have a brighter future...yeah. I found strength in that.

There was no African history. It was like it didn't exist. The only time Black people were talked about was maybe Black history month. Yeah it was kinda strange. And in school for the first time in my life I became so aware of my skin colour. I mean in [country of birth] majority of the people were Black, so like being in that school where there was maybe just a view Black people was strange. So I guess it wasn't all that strange that they didn't really put emphasis on Black history.

Coming to Canada, I wanted to learn about the country...you know. I wanted to know where I was, understand the culture and understand the history. I feel like I didn't know much about Canada when I came out of high school—the importance of social issues. I didn't question a lot of things and how they manifest themselves. I took history in high school and there we really didn't study all different perspectives. So I never really was exposed to the kinds of ideas I now know. The way that history was taught was very fact based, memorizing dates... you know...stuff like that.

Okay so, I took history 20 and we learned about [the] world wars and how Canada took part in the liberation and we learned a lot about American history and European history, exploring the French Revolution. I remember learning history 30. This class was based on how Canada was a colony. They talked a lot about French and British settlement. How there was the fur trade and fighting for land. And then briefly they mentioned specific individuals such as Louis Riel, in passing. And when they talked about Aboriginal peoples in Canada, they talked about it in terms of allies—mainly about the Huron and Iroquois. That was the only thing. It was just one movie that we watched. I went through history 30 at that time without really knowing what I know now.

Psychology is my major right, so I took a class on abnormal psychology and we were talking about high rates of suicide and in the textbooks, it often made reference to Aboriginal peoples. But never really went into detail about the connections of colonial history to what is happening now.

And I just always wondered why the overrepresentation. In high school I didn't make any connections what so ever. It didn't explain how and why First Nations people[s] are so overrepresented in Canada in terms of high rates of incarceration. It didn't explain why there were these social issues that I kept seeing around me.

In University, I took this one psychology class called qualitative studies and the professor of the class was a medical anthropologist. He gave us an assignment and we were supposed to explore how different cultures understand illness. So I decided to explore how illness is understood from different First Nations perspectives... and when I started reading about different First Nations tribes, I remember being blown away by the uniqueness of the understanding of illness and I got to learn the exposure to different illness which were a direct effect of colonial history. That began to open up my eyes. I went beyond my research readings and discovered and read about the forgotten sisters and how the police have dealt with the issue of young Aboriginal women going missing and not doing anything substantial about it because of stereotypes and how a people are not valued as members of society. So my exposure to these reading[s] really struck a chord in me because as a person belonging to a minority group, I can make a connection and understand the history of oppression. I am able to make a connection with First Nations peoples. And I noticed the similarities of how the history of colonization set the stage for discrimination of other races [referring to racialized minorities in Canada]. And there I started looking into the treaties and the assimilation policy and the Sixties Scope and how the current education system has managed to sweep under the rug...right?! Someone has to literally go out of their way to learn about these things... they won't teach them... they won't. I became so passionate. So this is where I live. Just the fact that this is a peoples land and we have managed to take it over. I remember sitting up one night late and reading. I was looking at illness and how it manifests itself in culture. And so I was able to connect the historical generational trauma to what I was seeing around me. I discovered the resilience of First Nations peoples.

Later that summer, I decided to take a Native Studies. By taking that class the readings and what we learned really reaffirmed what I had begun to uncover. I began to see the politics behind it all. How the government had played a huge role. So university was where I really began to learn. And I find that very bizarre. In high school, we don't ask questions, we don't challenge. This may be that the history was not so long ago and it is still fresh. I mean the last residential school was closed in 1994 so how come we don't learn about it. There seems to be this willing ignorance. People just willingly do not want to know. It is not that they don't know. And I've done and I've tried to talk about this and share what I have

learned to people. But surprisingly I saw that people were very adamant and didn't want to hear about it. Like people would get very defensive. Why that is... I don't know. Maybe they just... I remember a friend of mine, when I talk to him it is like he feels like he's being attacked. He feels like this guilt that has been imposed on him. It seems to be a very sensitive topic. And I find it really interesting that these same people have no problem talking about other issues in the world. But something close to home they remain silence.

Stage 1 Focused Life History: Tanangachie's Story

Tanangachie was born in a country in the southeastern region of the African continent. She immigrated to Saskatchewan with her family in the early 2000s. She chose the pseudonym Tanangachie because she said it is a name that she cannot be easily identified by: "Because it is not my name."

Guiding questions: What is your immigration story?

"Well, that is a question I ask myself lots of times, especially when it is minus 50 outside...just joking, but not really...My parents moved to Saskatchewan for school, at the University of Saskatchewan. That's why I am here." Tanangachie immigrated to Canada with many hopes and aspirations. She expresses how she looked forward to moving to a new country where she could fulfill her goals.

My goal was to get into university and I was hoping to make some nice friends, finish school on time and go to prom and participate more in school. I was doing a lot of extra-curricular activities at my previous school such as debate team, playing sports, doing a lot of stuff around the school and so when I first came to Canada I was expecting to continue and live a similar life.

In terms of educational and career aspirations, Tanangachie hopes to return to the country of her birth to serve as a civil servant (politician) to help improve development efforts. This is a dream she has long held and she is currently taking classes in relevant political policy and development studies that will increase her knowledge.

Stage 2 Details of Experience: Tanangachie's Story

Guiding Question: What challenges did you experience while in high school and how did you respond to them?

For Tanangachie, high school was not a positive experience. She had many hopes and aspirations but the excitement she felt quickly dissipated when she encountered what she calls a rough environment. This is slang term for a very uncomfortable and unwelcoming environment. *“yeah...high school was rough. I really didn't like it. It was like people just didn't want to associate with you. Everybody was so caught up in their own thing. I honestly didn't want to be there.”*

In dealing with these challenges, Tanangachie sought assistance from her school counsellor and administration. But they were not helpful. *“They were just trying to push my problems away or tried to silence me. They often told me, you should just focus on graduating or you should maybe consider moving to another school.”* She felt as though she was not accepted in the school and as though her problems were solely hers to face and resolve. *“In the end, I felt like I wasn't important enough for the administration to put in some effort in helping me.”*

In the individual interviews Tanangachie shares an experience which I believe demonstrates the lack of preparedness and training of school administrative staff in dealing with issues of discrimination. In particular, they placed the onus of responsibility on the student.

I have a feeling that my high school hasn't changed at all because my sister went through the same situation. My sister went through an even worse situation than I went through which is completely ridiculous because you would think that with my experience there, with changing administration, things would be better. But my sister was pretty much bullied. She was called the 'N' word by her classmates and when my mom went to the school, the principle was like, what would you like us to do? It is almost like what do you mean? Why should we give you solutions? Shouldn't there be something in place—ready to deal with such issues? So...I don't know...did the kids get worse? I don't think so...I just think it is a hard experience for visible minorities in that school.

Due to the lack of assistance from the school's administrative staff, Tanangachie sought help from one of her teachers who taught English. With the help of this English teacher, Tanangachie found a safe space to eat her lunch and spend her extra time. *"...her classroom was a comfortable place. I could go in there and eat my lunch and plus she had a couch in there. It was really nice to just have a chill place to go."* Also, the teacher helped her develop a creative outlet for her thoughts. *"I really liked her class, and I liked the creative aspects of things...how she encouraged us to do creative writing and that is how I was really able to develop my poetry writing skills. I wrote a lot of poetry because that was one way of communicating with myself because I found that I was leaving all these emotions inside and poetry was a great outlet for me."* Tanangachie found the English teachers' class useful and relevant to her own experiences. This is because the teacher taught them about power relationships and colonial histories: *"We would always have discussions on how power would play in different stories we read in class and how power is played out in real life."* In her poetry, Tanangachie writes consistently about power struggles. She said:

I wrote a lot about high school life, people trying to fit in and people trying to control other people. The speaker in the poem is always being controlled by someone or something and the protagonist is always trying to emancipate themselves...so that was the trend of my poetry. I didn't really understand what I was writing then but now looking back, that was probably when I started to resist the discrimination in my own way. That is how I became resilient.

With this growing confidence, Tanangachie became more involved in activities in her community. She joined a community soccer team and engaged in various community activities. *"I got involved in the community. I played soccer, not for the school but outside of the school. I tried not to let the situation at school consume me, consume my thoughts. So I kept myself busy."* For Tanangachie, having a supportive teacher who provided a safe space for her in the school, introduced her to literature which influenced her poetry and involvement in her community all helped build her resilience and social resistance.

Stage 3 Reflection on the Meaning: Tanangachies' Story

In exploring Tanangachies' social resistance and resilience strategies one major area of inquiring was to explore her overall experience in the education system. The following is a

guiding question: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

In the following narratives Tanangachie shared her social resistance and resilience strategy through poetry and exposure to learning about African histories and Canadian colonial history. She also, like Lucky, discussed her lack of knowledge about Canadian history when coming out of high school. Tanangachie discussed her critical consciousness raising occurred when she educated herself and exposed herself to various literature. In addition, Tanangachie expresses some of these thoughts and ideas in her poetry. See Appendix E for her poem she chose to share. In the poem she illustrates how her skin colour, her culture, her history is not inferior and does not dehumanize her. The notion of shared experiences as social resistance and resilience is indicative of the history of endurance of a people who have overcome great adversities of Trans-Atlantic Slavery, Jim Crow Segregation and continuous manifestations of discrimination—essentially, a history of courage, dignity and of hope.

Tanangachie's Narratives:

I had to do some of that research on my own because it seemed weird, odd that, that's all that we learned. And because I was just curious, curious about where the name Saskatchewan came from, who lived here and when I first came to Canada, I heard stories about First Nations people that lived here but I didn't know anything about them. I like knowing where I am and understanding what's around me. Not just going to school.

My final project, I was comparing the political system of Canada and American political systems, parliamentary and presidential. I was looking at the pros and cons of that. And I guess the way that I wrote the paper, the position that I took was that Canada wasn't all that great and debunking the myth of peaceful country. I went beyond talking about the parliamentary system to talking about the political culture itself. And the idea that Canada is a peacekeeper. I also said that USA obviously has its own problems. When I look back at the times in class that I spoke up against the general sentiment in the classroom, I didn't know what I was doing. When I look back at it, I would consider it as a sign of resistance or I was trying to show that there are other sides of the story and that, Canada, you can't just keep

pointing the figure at the USA and other countries. You have to also see your own skeletons in your closet.

I mean, I wasn't just accepting everything that was being said to me, I questioned a lot of things. At that point I just thought that, that was how things are in this country. But I was still trying to understand. I didn't think too deep into it. And I was wondering why we didn't learn more about First Nations people and the only times I remember First Nations people mentioned in the history books was when they were fighting with the colonizers, the British or the French. And it was almost like romanticizing it. You would see pictures and paintings of First Nations people and settlers and they "looked" like they were all in harmony or working together. But to me, I always felt weird about that but at that time I couldn't think past that. But now, reflecting back, maybe they really were trying to silence the history. Because the only time they were present was, they were helping the settlers. And you never really know or understand their customs, how did they live and how they view their relationship with the settlers. The next is the narrative given by Koko.

Stage 1 Focused Life History: Koko's Story

Guiding questions: What is your immigration story?

Koko and her family are from a country located in the western region of the African continent. She immigrated to Saskatchewan with her family in the early 2000s. She chose the pseudonym Koko because it is an endearing name her grandmother gave her.

Stage 2 Details of Experience: Koko's Story

Guiding Question: What challenges did you experience while in high school and how did you respond to them?

Koko mentioned in the individual interview that she did not particularly experience direct and personal challenges that she considers to be racism. She states that people made some remarks that she found to be inappropriate or stereotypical, but she did not take their remarks to heart or allow them to impact her because she did not consider them to be important.

I wouldn't say that I had what you would call challenges in high school. It's almost like everything really came easily for me in high school...I mean there were some stereotyping...maybe I just had a strong enough personality that I just ignored when people were being racist or perpetuating stereotypes. I had a high level of confidence that I never took remarks to heart.

When I inquired into the second part of the question, how she responded to the challenges, Koko found that drawing strength from family members, friends and various social networks helped her to brush aside the negative remarks—essentially, fostering her resilience. Koko had a strong sense of her identity in high school— she had a very strong sense of self and identity. She viewed herself as highly intellectual: *“In grade nine I got the award for the highest average.”*

Koko goes on to state that the reason she believes she was able to develop such a strong personality and positive self-image was because of the positive social reinforcements she had around her. Her sense of identity was also affirmed by her teachers and school personnel. Koko states, *“I never felt like I was less than because of my race.”*

Koko acknowledges that this strong sense of self and confidence in herself, from an academic standpoint, was essential in helping her develop resilience; however, she identifies the downside of that viewpoint. *“I realized that I had that confidence early on and maybe the downside of that is that I placed so much of my identity into who I was academically and what I could do instead of who I am as a person and I later had to figure that out when I went to University.”* She notes that in university she began to critically think about who she was as a racialized minority woman in Saskatchewan and the implications of that identity. *“It was more of my questions about my identity and in figuring out how and what I felt and thought about race as a Black woman in Saskatchewan.”* In the following narratives Koko shared her social resistance and resilience strategies.

I wonder if my experience was more unique or more rare. I'm not gonna claim that I came into high school as a critical thinker but maybe it was certain teachers I had and certain types of classes that we took that helped me. We were kind of encouraged to be more independent in our thinking based on the type of assignments we had and the way that we were taught and the approach that the teacher took. I think it gave us a little taste of critical

thinking. So I wasn't as critical as I am now but I think it was noteworthy. High school wasn't rough for me in the way that it was for some of my friends. I think that maybe it is because of the supports that I had. The teachers that I had always made me feel like I was capable and smart and encouraged me to speak up. Also, I had a counselor in elementary school who reinforced that for me. And also, I was part of various social justice groups on campus so that was an avenue for me to develop critical thinking. I guess I have moved through high school as a liberated person so then anything negative that happened didn't strike me as an obstruction. I felt that I was capable and I felt self-directed.

Koko's response shows and illuminates the importance of social supports in helping students cultivate a critical mindset. The affirmation of student's opinions by teachers and encouragement from teachers helps students to be comfortable in engaging in classroom discussions. Also, Koko was a member of various social justice groups in her school, where she was able to be a part of an encouraging community.

Stage 3 Reflection on the Meaning: Kokos' Story

In exploring Kokos' social resistance and resilience strategies one major area of inquiring was to explore her overall experience in the education system. The following is a

Guiding Question: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

Koko's Narratives

For me, I thought well, this is Canada, so I guess the focus is on Canadian history. In grade 9 it was ancient Greece and Rome and a bit of Middle Ages. Grade 10 it was renaissance Europe. And grade 11 we talked about the treaties, confederation in Canada and then grade 12 was kind of 20th century world wars. I mean it was obvious to me then, like ooh we are not looking at African history but then for me, ok well, Canada was a confederation constituting of British and French so yeah...and then when we learned in grade 11 about the treaties with Aboriginal people in Canada. I mean our teacher didn't shy away from the fact that there were exploitation, war and murder but then in my mind at the time in high school it was like ok well, we are learning all this western European stuff and I say western European because we could

have looked at Russian history and history of other eastern European countries and that could have been a whole curriculum in of itself. I'm like okay...we can't study everything so I guess what they are focusing on is periods of history that correlate to the European presence in Canada. And so, that's kind of how I reasoned it out. So for me, it was never oh this is all there is to know. It was more like this is what has been selected for us to learn. And they were going on European ideals and these European ideals were derived from the ancient Greeks and Romans. I didn't perceive it as a slight against my family or other racial minority groups. We can't study everything because which one would we pick? It was self-evident to me that lots of stuff was being left out.

So then when I think of how would we change the curriculum it was like what would we put in? And even as a Black female I'm not even thinking of Black history I'm thinking of more First Nations history. Umm... which I learned a little bit of in school but if we are thinking of changing the curriculum, I think that bringing forth more First Nations history should be the first priority. Which still doesn't leave enough room for other history but I'm wondering if it would ever get to the point of there being enough room because there will always be another group left out. So yeah, it was always obvious. So because it was obvious to me I always thought I could go to the library and read up about what I wanted to learn. I knew that I could learn about it some other way.

I didn't think much about the treaties during my time in high school. We learned a little but I didn't know what I now know. I remember in grade 4 we did a unit about culture and we learned about First Nations peoples ways of life, how did they live, what did they eat, you know stuff that you do in elementary school. And I thought that was normal. But looking back at it now, being a University student, it seems that what's normal is that people have no clue of the history until they actually take a Native Studies class.

And for me, I certainly didn't know what I know now and apparently that seems to be the norm and that needs to change because I guess, I feel like I am an immigrant, I am coming into a country, where I want to maintain my identity but at the same time I am entering into a country that has an identity, whatever that identity is. Maybe Canada doesn't have one, people argue back and forth about that.

The point is, I'm almost buying into something... and I feel like being a part of this nation I am obligated to understand or have a working knowledge of Canadian history and I think that the problem can be when people just come and they buy into this separation mentality that Indigenous peoples are not important. I feel like that's gross misuse of citizenship for new comers but I mean it is also a fault of the state. It's the institutions... it is a function of the institutionalized racism. And also, these education institution may be passively contributing to the promotion of institutional racism.

So where I'm I going with this... so I guess that's why I would focus on First Nations history. We are in Canada and we need to understand what has been going on which has led us to this point. Also, I think it is important to continue to reflect on what my citizenship means. In my current understanding I realize that I am a settler, a modern day settler by virtue of me being here. I recognize the historical and continuous marginalization of First Nations peoples and I need to be careful to transform. By being a settler, I don't have to be a marginalizing, exploitative influence.

But I feel like it is my duty to understand why historically that's been the case and what factors are currently contributing to the maintenance of this historical injustice. I feel like, it is almost like a double role. Not only I'm I trying to understand first, the identity that my parents have given me and trying to maintain it and second, understand where I am right now and what that means. Importance of understanding what I have bought into—Canadian citizenship. Even though it was my parents' idea to move here and it was their decision to become a part of this society, so it has become my decision as well and that is why it is important to me to understand the history.

The only reason we are able to immigrate here is because of the treaties and I think everyone who comes here needs to understand that. And also those who have been here for generations, who through propaganda have been made to believe that they are entitled to be here but I think that's so important because it is major part of Canadian history. And this has to unearth and understood before we can get into meaningful dialogue about new comers such as myself.

That colonialism only started with the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. I find problem with that, hyper focus or fixation in your own experiences of discrimination that it is not put in

context. And not put in context to justify it but to understand it in terms of history, in terms of who else is involved and in terms of what it means for human history, what it means about human beings and . It is important that, there is a recognition that colonialism wasn't just a unique case, it wasn't just something that happened in the country of my birth.

Solidarity and the ability to look at other experiences and share that experience has been helpful to me in understanding my own experiences. And helps me make connections with others. And what I think it does is put my efforts of social justice in the right place. It is not this minority against another minority. You know how you get into this oppression Olympics. I'm more oppressed than you are. It is not about that, it is more about figuring out where this comes from, what it is meant to achieve, how it is affecting me and how it is affecting others.

I need to recognize that me, myself alone cannot defeat it. I have to look to others and in turn we will work together to achieve it. And it is kinda taken the pressure of me as an individual and it has certainly made me more hopeful about my own experiences. I have examples around me of people who have challenge their oppressive situations and by hearing about their experiences makes me more hopeful. It is good to put it all into context and perspective, so you know that you are not the only one.

Stage 1 Focused Life History: Anaya

Guiding Question: What is your immigration story?

Anaya and her family come from a country located in the western region of the African continent. She immigrated to Saskatchewan with her family in the early 2000s. She chose the pseudonym Anaya because it is her grandmother's name. This name is very important to her. She states that if she were to have a daughter in the future, Anaya would be the name she would give to her daughter.

Stage 2 Details of Experience: Anaya

Guiding Question: What challenges did you experience while in high school and how did you respond to them?

Anaya mentioned in the individual interviews that she had very high expectations when she arrived in Canada. She was looking forward to starting a new chapter in her life. She states

that though she did not directly experience what she would call racism, there were latent, covert forms of racism that she recognized. For example, Anaya discussed the contradictions between what she was learning in school:

I know about African histories and the great civilizations. I know that because my father and uncle told me about it and I read and did a lot of research on my own. So, I know all that. So when we don't discuss African histories and what Africans have contributed to civilization it's almost like it never existed. And thinking that African peoples have not contributed much it made me feel bad...and I know it is not true.

Anaya brought up an important point by stating that she recognized the overwhelming silence toward and lack of acknowledgement of African histories in the classroom and felt unengaged. Though these histories were not represented in the classroom, Anaya found other means of learning about them, which helped her to develop social resistance and resilience. The very act of not accepting the status quo, not accepting what was being taught in the classroom, was an act of social resistance. Essentially, Anaya's resilience and social resistance were built by her social networks, family, and more specifically, being exposed to African histories.

Stage 3 Reflection on the meaning: Anayas' Story

In exploring Anayas' social resistance and resilience strategies one major area of inquiring was to explore her overall experience in the education system. The following is a

Guiding Question: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

Anaya's Narratives:

Growing up, racism never phased me because I was always prepared. My parents prepared me for it. My father is a Pan Africanist, my uncle also taught me a lot of about African histories. I learned about Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela [and] all of the great Pan Africanists. They shared many stories about their own experiences and they taught me a lot about what oppression is. Especially, the history of African Americans and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade—which is also my history. Those taken to the Americas during the slave trade were from the land that I am from. They are my ancestors. So like, I look at African

American experiences in the America's as my own experience. I learned a lot from that. I learned a lot about what to expect and how to handle situations.

Hah Fafa, they will not teach African history in Saskatchewan. [Name of high school], it was a small town in Saskatchewan, my family and a few people from other African countries were there. They did not. It was too bad but you know me, it is not shocking. The history class I felt was biased. I feel like there is so many things that Canadians don't know about not just the African continent but also about other continents and other countries. They didn't teach about other cultures. There was a lot of focus on European history and then there was focus on Canadian history in History 30. But even in Canadian history there was a lot of bias because they barely touched on Aboriginal people's history in Canada.

High school is the foundation, the time to learn. Kids had no idea about the history of colonialism. I think it would help students to understand themselves and their country. I only learned what I know because I took Native Studies class in high school. I wrote a research paper in the class and that's how I discovered stuff about the residential schools which I made connection with because of my own experience. Just like the school experience in [country of birth]. Though the experience is obviously different, there are some general similarities. I think the way education is set up is that the curriculum is set up and fixed by people at the top and it is so specific on what should be taught and what isn't taught. I don't think there will ever be a time that we will begin to learn about African history. Well, not anytime soon at least.

First of all there is an African proverb that says, before you try to clean someone else's eye you must clean your own first. Before you try to teach other history you must teach your own history first. Because without bringing in the true history of Canada, talking about imperialism, colonialism and educating the citizens about it then you cannot make any real impact—trying to teach African history. For Canada to be a whole nation you need to have the Aboriginal history. I know that Aboriginal peoples have many many tribes [nations] and many many languages and dialects. Just like my country [country name]. We have different tribes, languages and dialects. I think that Canada needs to acknowledge that first before we can start talking about how we can teach about other visible race minorities. And me, as an

immigrant living in Canada, I want to know about the history of this nation so that I understand the whole story of Canada.

*There is a famous Nigerian writer, her name is Chimamanda Adichie and she did a TEDtalk called *The Danger of a Single Story*. She says when telling a story we must talk about the whole story, the whole truth. Telling the story from the beginning. So relating to the Canadian story, Canadian history, we shouldn't start from just when the settlers came to Canada. We have to start from the beginning, the origins. I think that, that would be great! You know, that is one of Canada's biggest problem right now...that is teaching. There is so much judgement and stigmatization, racism against Aboriginal people and I believe it is because of the lack of knowing. You only hear the stories of despair... you don't hear the stories of how different Aboriginal group had their own economy and political systems. That's the danger of a single story. I'm not going to go back to high school again...no way. But I want my children and the future generation to be able to learn this history and get to hear the whole story.*

Stage 1 Focused Life History: Blessing

Guiding Question: What is your immigration story?

Blessing and her family come from a country located in the northeastern region of the African continent. She immigrated to Saskatchewan with her family in the early 2000s. Blessing immigrated to Canada with many hopes and aspirations. She expresses how she looked forward to moving to a new country. In terms of educational and career aspirations, Blessing wants to own her own business and looks forward to attaining the education she needs to fulfill her dreams.

Stage 2 Details of Experience: Blessing

Guiding Question: What challenges did you experience while in high school and how did you respond to them?

Blessing stated that she was very shy in high school and oftentimes people mistook her shyness for someone who was as she stated a pushover. "...I was really shy in school so people just thought I didn't know anything." Blessing also stated that she was also placed in English as an Additional Language (EAL) class as well when she started high school. She noted that the

space was safe and welcoming environment. In the EAL class she was able to make friends from all over the world and she felt a sense of community and a sense of familiarity. Blessing stated in her individual interviews that she felt this sense of familiarity because she shared a similar experience with the other students in the class. “...there were so many kids from different parts of the world and it was like we connected because we all understand each other...we all came from different places, with different language but we still connect...” Essentially, Blessings’ resilience and social resistance is characterized by her social networks and especially, the solidarity established in her EAL classroom.

Stage 3 Reflection on the meaning: Blessings’ Story

In exploring Blessings’ social resistance and resilience strategies one major area of inquiring was to explore her overall experience in the education system. The following is a

Guiding Question: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

Blessing’s Narratives:

The way I see it. In this world some people will not accept you regardless of your race—for who you are. But then you don’t have to accept what they say about you. You should not fall into that. If they think you are not capable of doing something, you should resist the temptation of believing what they say. So when it comes to racism and someone says because you are black you can’t do this and that, you cannot get a high position in office, you need to resist that, resist what they are saying. You know...I look to African Americans for that inspiration. After everything they have been through they continue to resist. I am Black also, and I learned that by resisting racism I can also achieve my goals. In this life, I am going to get the necessary requirements to do what I need to do to achieve my goals. So resilience for me is just like resistance, where you try to resist an obstacle that is trying to hold you back.

I didn’t experience direct racism...like how someone will come and say racist things to my face. I didn’t have any of that. People were polite. But when I look deeper...like when you look at what we learn in school, it is all very European influenced. Especially when there are students from different places, countries you would think that they would acknowledge that.

Like I took history throughout high school and it was all about Europe or the United States. [Referring to the United States of America].

*In high school I took history 30 and I also took Native Studies which was optional at the time. We learned about the different cultures and practices, languages and dialects of First Nations peoples but I didn't learn about Residential schools, treaties and other manifestations of colonialism until university. Even though we mainly focused on learning about culture, my history teacher still gave me an idea that there was a lot to learn about Canada and First Nations relationship. So when I came to university, I took an English class, I don't remember the theme but we read a novel about an Aboriginal family. It was called *The Ecstasy of Rita Jones*. That was when I really learned more about colonization and its devastating impacts. Finding out how First Nations people have been strong and they are continuing to fight for their rights makes me strong...you know. Makes me believe that positive change will come. In order for the education system to improve let's begin by teach and share more about Canada and really open up about it and then from there we can include and have a meaningful dialogue about how we can move towards inclusion of visible minorities also acknowledge the history of Canada.*

In the next chapter I introduced the additional stages that I thought were needed to find deeper meaning than has been provided from the above. I introduce the Anlo-Ewe, Dekawowa focus group, as process which brings people together to collectively chart out new ways of understanding their experiences.

CHAPTER SIX: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I sought deeper meaning of my research participants' responses. Through the Deka wɔwɔ focus group discussions, participants shared ways in which they have come to understand their experiences. With my overarching research questions in mind, participants and I engaged in discussions which led to proposed recommendations for investing resilience and social resistance in Saskatchewan schools.

Seeking deeper meaning.

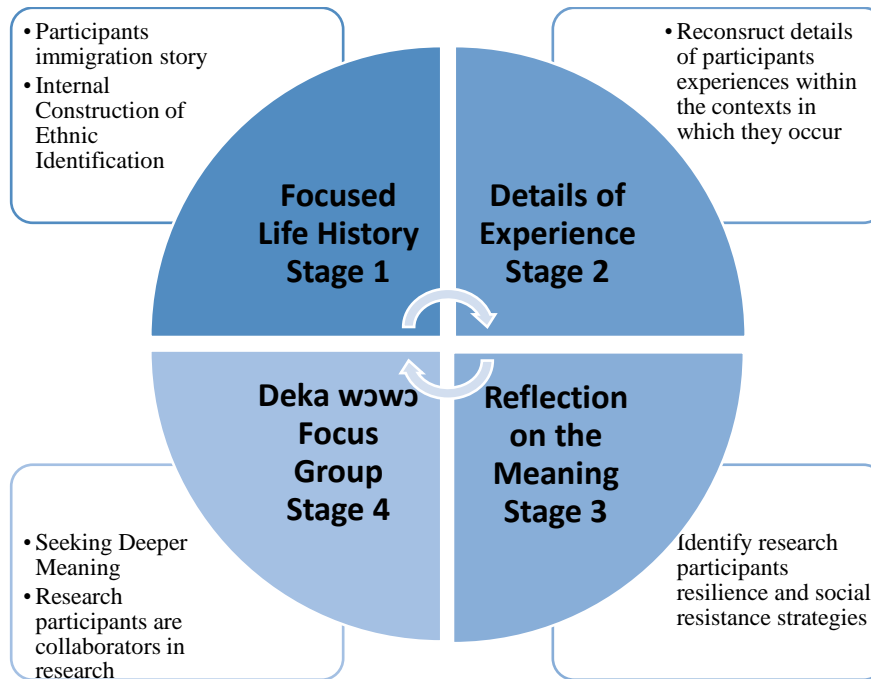
Inspired by Seidman's (2006) three stages of making sense of interviews, I created an additional stage that I call Deka wɔwɔ. In my estimate, it was necessary to create this additional stage to seek deeper meaning of the interviews. I have come to realize that my work took into consideration the socio-cultural insights that Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, and Williamson (2011) suggested to look for in studying resilience across cultures. The following scholars also recommended Ungar (2005, 2008), Moriah (2011), Okwako (2011) and Collins (2000).

Seidman's (2006) recommendation reminded me of Deka wɔwɔ, which in the Anlo-Ewe language Ewe, means togetherness, community and unity, in the English language. As a community we are able to come together in times of adversity. We came together to share our experiences (stories) to help one another understand our past and current experiences to share our hopes and aspirations for the future. I connected the idea of Deka wɔwɔ to viewing oneself, community and world.

In this stage, I also shared my own experiences as a Black African female student. I discussed the ways in which I also felt alienated as a learner in the classroom and discussed the ways in which I challenged the hegemonic practices. I believe that my sharing of my personal story with research participants was essential. The purpose of the Deka wɔwɔ focus group was to create community. I believe that by sharing my story with research participants during the focus group, helped enriched the Deka wɔwɔ experience and I believe enriched the outcome of the research study. Through the Deka wɔwɔ process I was able to recognize the importance of Sankofa essential in identifying the resilience and social resistance of my research participants. Also, through that process I found myself as well as discussed in Chapter Seven.

The following diagram shows how I have merged Deka wawaw with Seidman's (2006) interview method.

Diagram 4: Seidman's Three Series Interview Method and Deka wawaw (Focus Group).



The nature of participants' involvement in Deka wawaw was that of collaborators in research. Together we engaged in a focused group discussion whereby each participant posed questions to one another. We worked together and discussed ways in which social resistance strategies can be employed in Saskatchewan schools to promote change.

The following were guiding questions that I prepared for the focus group discussion:

Question 1: What did these experiences mean to you at the time?

Question 2: What do these experiences mean to you today?

Question 3: What do these experiences mean to you as you look towards the future?

Question 4: What do you think these experiences mean to the schooling experiences in Saskatchewan high schools?

In answering these questions, research participants focused primarily on the fourth question, what do you think these experiences mean to the schooling experiences in Saskatchewan high schools? Participants also posed their own questions which richly informed their insights. As noted in my methods section, I worked side by side with research participants

in the Deka wōwō focus group discussion as co-investigators. Principally, in the Deka wōwō focus group, I explored research participants views on what schooling in Saskatchewan can look like.

The following are questions proposed by research participants:

Question 1: Can the classroom be a politically neutral space?

Question 2: Has multicultural education failed?

The outcome of the focus group discussion resulted in various recommendations from research participants for the schooling experiences in Saskatchewan. The following theme emerged as a result of the focus group discussion, Meaningful dialogue in the classroom which involved discussions surrounding teaching and learning as a shared responsibility among teachers and students, a questioning of a politically neutral classroom and teaching for social justice which promoted a critique of multicultural education and advocacy for an antiracist educational approach.

Meaningful dialogue: Teaching social justice

In the focus group discussion, participants discussed the idea that students are not empty vessels to be filled with information, but are rather, independent thinkers. Therefore, the students' ability to generate knowledge should not be underestimated. With this idea in mind, the purpose of teaching should go beyond the transfer of information to students'. Thus, research participants' believed that meaningful dialogue needs to be promoted in the classroom where students freely engage in various topic discussions with their teachers and peers. Research participants believed that by engaging students in meaningful dialogue students are then able to develop independent thought through the engagement. Research participants' discussion on meaningful and engaging dialogue is reminiscent of Freire (1970) idea of teaching and learning as a shared responsibility among teachers and students. Freire (1970) noted that students are not merely empty vessels to be filled with information by all knowing teachers. He emphasized in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that teachers and need to re-envision their relationship in the classroom as "...co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 1970, p. 81). The establishment this relationship creates potential for re-engagement of students in the classroom. Furthermore, teaching for social justice promotes the engagement of children and youth in understanding current societal issues and potential for the improvement of society. The notion of meaningful dialogue and teaching for social justice stresses the notion of combating racism and its various interconnections of oppression, as a shared responsibility among: teachers, school personnel, students, parents and guardians, and community.

Maintaining neutrality: Can the classroom be a politically neutral space?

Research participants noted that the work of promoting social justice, especially, in the classroom is tricky business. My research participants stated that oftentimes when topics that are considered controversial are brought up in a classroom, teachers shy away and choose to dismiss, silence meaningful dialogue and resist discussing, what is oftentimes, categorized as political issues in the classroom for fear of being labelled biased. There is often the idea that some of so called controversial and political issues are too sensitive for students and may upset students in a classroom. Therefore, a teacher must maintain neutrality at all times in the

classroom. Furthermore, a teacher must never show or share their real, personal views with students.

However, in response to this idea of students feeling uncomfortable and unable to handle controversial topics in the classroom, hooks (1994), points out in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* that, the very moment a teacher chooses to not discuss and engage her or his students in discussing issues, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, class based discrimination, ableism, or any other socially constructed forms of discrimination, which are deemed “political” or “controversial” issues, has also made a “political” choice. Essentially, that teacher has made his or her position known to the class. In the DeKa wōwō focus group discussion, we discussed the notion of neutrality. Upon reflection on participant’s responses, participants shared similar sentiments that, the idea of a politically neutral classroom is disingenuous. Granting, all students’ voices should be heard in the classroom, teachers have a responsibility to challenge offensive statements shared in the classroom. The refusal or resistance of a teacher to challenge problematic viewpoints leaves students, specifically, participants, involved in my research studies, frustrated, feeling uncomfortable and feeling a burden to challenge problematic viewpoints in the classroom on their own.

In addition, participants expressed that, by teachers challenging discriminatory statements and viewpoints made in the classroom, not only does the teacher aid in the growth of all students in the classroom but also, helps the teacher to provide a safe classroom environment for all students. bell hooks illuminates this idea clearly in her book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. The following quotation exemplifies the notion of the potential of education as an act of liberation. “...I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994, p. 12). My research participants also shared similar sentiments of liberation when so called controversial topics are discussed in the classroom. The following is Kokos’ response:

Even though in school the teachers didn’t mention the histories of African peoples or people of African descent... But hearing about the experiences of First Nations peoples in my Native Studies class, their struggles and power relationships, issues regarding

racism, I felt a connection, felt solidarity and it helps me to understand my own experiences in Canada.

Lucky also stated that:

High school was Rough! In university I began to look at education as something that you can challenge. It is not like one way. Because when I took Native Studies in university the perspective was different. Learning about it was what really helped me see it as liberating that it really got me thinking. I would say it had a lot of impact on me.

Tanangachie stated that:

High school wasn't liberating at all. Like Lucky said it was ROUGH! When I came to university it was so shocking for me. It was like what?! I have an opinion?! Seriously? But seriously though, I think that in high school it was kinda like you are robots pretty much. This is because they pick everything like your classes for you, well, up to a certain point.

hooks (1994) sums up the notion of education's potential to be liberating in the following quote:

The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (p.207)

In the next section, I explored the second theme which rose out of the Deka wōwō focus group which was the promotion of Antiracism education as an essential aspect in how histories are taught in classrooms and a move towards socially just classroom environment.

Offering available alternatives: What about antiracism?

As noted in the individual interviews research participants mentioned that in terms of their school curriculum they didn't see it as liberating in regards to the content being presented. The idea of an oppressive educational curriculum was also discussed at the Deka wōwō focus

group discussion. For example, History and English, social studies classes there were instances where participants found that knowledge provided in the classroom was very limited not only about themselves as racialized peoples in the classroom but that of the history of Canada and the history of colonialism. Living in a country undergoing colonialism research participant felt that they did not know very much about the history of Canada coming out of high school. They only became enlightened when they entered university where they deliberately chose classes to inform themselves or they did their own individual research. Research participants' enlightenment narratives are recorded in chapter four.

The inception of racism in Canada: A historical account

Much like Lawrence and Dua (2011), I strongly believe that the root of racism in Canada is the unjust appropriation of Indigenous land. This historical and continuous colonialism yielded notions of superiority and inferiority, which continue to be used to relegate racialized people to the status of inferiority, simply based on the colour of their skin (Baker, 2006). The history of racism is interwoven into the fabric of Canadian society. Racism in the social consciousness of Saskatchewan permeated into Saskatchewan schools as well, where racism and various forms of oppression are produced and reproduced. To comprehend the extent to which racism is prevalent in Canadian society and ultimately, Saskatchewan schools, there must be an analysis of how the idea of race has been conceptualized and used as a tool for social control. The following section provides a brief historical account of some of the ways race has been socially constructed, informing my understanding of its contemporary implications—informing my understanding of the experiences of immigrant Black African female students in Saskatchewan high schools.

Anti-racism education promotes effective and constructive means of eliminating the racism embedded in these places of schooling. It acknowledges the history of racism, over 500 years of historical trauma, unjust appropriation of Indigenous land, internal displacement and genocidal attempts on the indigenous peoples of Canada. The anti-racist education I speak of advocates not only for the recognition and inclusion of this Canadian history which has been dismissed and subjected to silence, but also recognizes that this history is manifested in contemporary Canadian society, schools. It adversely impacts the lives of Indigenous children

and youth. These involve high dropout rates in among Indigenous youth, due to the unaccommodating and unwelcoming school environments. The question is, why do we continue to remain silent and ignore these injustices? It raises the question of whose life is valued and whose is devalued. How can we call Canada a “democracy,” when such injustices are happening to our youth? In addition, I argue that immigrant racialized minorities in Canada, such as myself, should become cognisant of their status in Canadian society as peoples implicated and benefiting from this ongoing colonial project. By being cognisant of the history and its contemporary implications we can serve as genuine allies in solidarity with Indigenous brothers and sisters in using anti-racism education as a form of resilience to counter and combat these hegemonic practices in schools.

Anti-racism education is necessary because the historical oppressions of Indigenous peoples are inextricably linked and inform the contemporary racial discrimination in Canada. Ultimately, I argue that anti-racism education should replace the food and dance multiculturalism which does not effectively address issues of racial inequality; especially, in the case of racial discrimination. The following quotation from Dua’s (2008) article, *Thinking Through Antiracism and Indigeneity in Canada*, exemplifies this notion clearly: “Being true allies requires thinking through the way in which people of colour are positioned, and must be accountable, within a white settler nationalist project” (p.32). Furthermore, recent work by Dei and McDermott (2014) also explored and emphasized the importance of understanding how racialized new immigrants are invited to partake in the “...white settler nationalist project” (Dua, 2008, p.32).

Implications of multiculturalism

Canadian multiculturalism has been official policy since the 1970s and is reflected in Canadian law through the Multiculturalism Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The policy is upheld as the tolerance of various cultures in Canada and is viewed as a binding force for society Roth (1998). As a result, the promotion of multicultural education is viewed as a symbolic progressive step towards a unified Canada. Upon closer investigation, however, the assumptions of multicultural education are fundamentally flawed. There is debate whether multiculturalism and multicultural education as an ideal, is a desirable model. One

major criticism of multiculturalism is what some academics refer to as ‘food and dance multiculturalism’ Fleras and Elliot, (1992). This relates to the idea that, “the celebration of “cultural difference” and the narrative of the nation as raceless, benevolent, and innocent has implications for the reproduction of racial privilege” (St. Denis & Schick, 2005, p.296). St. Denis and Schick (2005) assert that instead of addressing this threat, the struggle to combat racism has been reduced to cultural days at schools, where food, dance and cultural attire are placed at the focal point and has served as distracting forces to addressing racial inequality in Canada.

The idea is also expressed by Thobani (2008): “...I teach and I have young students of colour, they come, and they completely bought into this multiculturalism ideology. They have no language to talk about racism. They know that if they talk about racism, they will get attacked” (Thobani, 2008, p.1). The quotation notes that multiculturalism has been an effective way of silencing voices to the injustices in Canadian society. In my experience, when racism emerges as an issue to discuss, it is almost always put in the context of cultural misunderstanding or it is seen as a problem of individual racial prejudice. Racism in Saskatchewan is rarely seen as a social problem that developed in the historic differences between a dominant group, the white settlers, and the subordinate group, the indigenous population. It is not seen as an institution that gives one group of Canadians social advantages and economic benefits over other groups in society.

Multiculturalism aids in the production and reproduction of racism and the various inequalities in the Canadian educational system and as a result, Canadian society. In essence, Multicultural education is false charity; Freire (1970) reflects this sentiment:

Any attempt to soften the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity; indeed, the attempt never goes beyond this. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their “generosity,” the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. (p.44)

Furthermore, “...multiculturalism is a form of colonialism and works to distract from the recognition and redress of Indigenous rights” (St. Denis, 2011, p. 308). As a racialized minority in Canada, I recognize that I am living on lands owned first by Indigenous peoples. I have been given some privileges (though not supported institutionally and systemically) — and took part

in the ongoing colonialism in Canada. I recognize that multiculturalism has been used as a tool to undermine Indigenous sovereignty and to perpetuate varying forms of racism towards Indigenous peoples of Canada St. Denis and Shick (2011).

Ultimately, multiculturalism aids in masking differing forms of racism and has rendered anti-racist education, as extreme politics. It has deflected attention from patterns of structural discrimination in the school system Cummins (1997). “That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source” (Freire, 1970, p. 44). The source in this case is Eurocentrism. When the core assumptions of Eurocentrism are questioned there is a sense of threat. There is fear of losing control and thus there is a need to hold on tightly to the reigns of the tools of oppression to ensure that surface value change is masked and presented as real change, when this is not the case. These sentiments lead to “...assumptions that racism is a specific thing whose effects can be neatly isolated” (Pulido, 1996, p.149). There is the suggestion that racism can be eliminated because it is not inextricably linked to other forces Pulido (1996). The sentiment is disingenuous and reductionist. “Racism can scarcely be extricated from our collective social life and structures...” (Pulido, 1996, p.149).

CHAPTER SEVEN – SANKOFA

In this chapter I proposed Sankofa, as a theoretical concept. I discussed the ways in which Sankofa embodied the stories of resilience and social resistance of my research participants in reclaiming and reviving a vision for The Good Life, as characterized by, the Canadian Indigenous values, Miyo-Pimatisiwin. Keeping my overarching research questions in mind, I recognized the potential in Sankofa in guiding my research participants investing hopes and aspirations to succeed.

Realizing hidden potentials: Making a case for Sankofa as a theoretical concept

The Ghanaian, Akan cultural value called Sankofa I claimed in this research to be a theoretical concept that allowed individual users to evoke resilience and social resistance while reclaiming and being able to revive a person to envision a good life. As mentioned in my earlier chapters a person is able to gain insights to the past to be able to see purpose in the future. In this section, I have discussed my first thematic finding, the potential of Sankofa as a theoretical concept.

I have a great deal of respect and admiration for antiracist and feminist theories, as a matter of fact, as discussed earlier, in my high school years and undergraduate years, my discovery of antiracist and Black feminist theories lifted my spirits through various trials and tribulations. These theories have shaped the ways in which I have come to understand myself as a woman and as a racialized individual. Therefore, it was not a surprise that I was enticed to use these theories to inform my masters of education thesis. However, through this research process, influenced by the data that I have collected from research participants, I have come to realize the unique ways in which immigrants of African descent, specifically, immigrant Black African female students, are positioned in the Canadian settler colony. I realized that by virtue of being a part of this society, immigrant Black African female students, such as myself, have been influenced by Eurocentric ideologies which have shaped our ways of thinking. Similarly by virtue of living in Saskatchewan, in particular, on Treaty Six Territory, I have been influenced by Indigenous knowledge and I have recognized how such knowledge has shaped my thinking about myself as an individual and about the world around me. Through my research participants retelling of their stories I have realized that their understandings and

evocations of resilience and social resistance to reclaim and revive a vision for a brighter future, are heavily shaped by their socio-cultural backgrounds which I have identified as Sankofa. Furthermore, participants' articulation of feeling liberated and empowered by being cognisant of Canadian colonial history and identified similarities between Canadian Indigenous experiences and their own experiences, shows the influences of Canadian Indigenous histories and experiences in shaping immigrant Black African female students' development of resilience and social resistance. In understanding my research participants' development of resilience and social resistance I have identified the interconnectedness of Sankofa, an Akan cultural value to Nehiyaw (Cree) concepts of the medicine wheel embodied in the Nehiyaw (Cree) theoretical framework, Miyo-Pimatisiwin. And I proposed Sankofa, influenced by Fiddler's (2014), conceptualization of Miyo-Pimatisiwin, as a theoretical concept which has been birthed through this unique of Akan and Cree cultural values and ideas. In my research, I used Sankofa as a cultural value that represents one of the core social resistance and resilience strategies used by immigrant Black African female students in Saskatchewan high schools. Sankofa which has been used in understanding resilience through various contexts has been used in my research as a framework that became the foremost theoretical concept that I have proposed for this work. The particular ideas of social resistance and resilience are based on the notion of reclaiming and reviving our pasts, in order to understand the present and to map out a brighter successful future. Furthermore, the qualities found in Sankofa are accessible to anyone regardless of gender, much the same as the medicine wheel as represented by Miyo-Pimatisiwin which provides well-being to its informants/performants (Fiddler, 2014). In the next section I have discussed the ways in which Sankofa contributes to the development of resilience and social resistance.

Reclaim and revive

For Africans living in the diaspora, living outside of the African continent, Sankofa teaches that in order to survive and succeed wherever we are, while trying to pave a path to a bright future, we must not lose sight of our identity. We must always look back and carry our history and culture. Also, we are not to simply carry the (egg), which represents our history, along with us on the journey. But we must also protect our history, culture and who we are as

Africans. Furthermore, for Africans in the diaspora who may be experiencing various adversities, Sankofa says that there must be an acknowledgement of ancestors who have paved the way for the future generations (Pearman, 2009).

As I noted in the literature review McAdoo (2002), Peters (2002), Thornton (1997), and Sanders-Thompson (1994), in exploring the experiences of African American youth in overcoming various forms of discrimination, the authors, whom I consulted, noted the importance of what they called “race pride,” as an essential component to the development of resilience.

The concept of race pride was evident in my research participants’ responses. In particular participants expressed race pride through Sankofa. My research participants noted that, as they sought to rediscover their identity as Africans and as they discovered their histories, they felt a sense of pride in where they were as individuals, but more importantly, in who they were as a collective—peoples of African descent.

Anaya, one of my research participants discussed, in the individual interview, the idea of racial pride as a result of reclamation and reviving of her history—essentially, her identity. She reclaimed and revived her identity as a woman of Black African descent, an identity she once shunned when she first arrived in Canada. But after being exposed to literature which emphasized the triumphs of peoples of African descent, Anaya found renewed strength in embracing her history—her identity.

Moreover, as I noted in the literature review, the work of (Moriah, 2011) which explored ways in which peoples of African descent, specifically, children and their parents developed their self-worth, self-value, and self-esteem through regaining and embracing their African histories. For example, one of the research participants in Moriah’s (2011) work stated that “I think the parenting program helped them, the little children as well as the parents develop a sense of self-worth, self-value, self-esteem. All of those things that they cannot...may not be feeling good about themselves but they’ll say, I know how to tackle that big R word” (Moriah, 2011, p. 82). In my research, Black African female students’ shared similar values as Moriah’s (2011) research participants. From my research participants’ responses, it was evident that they wished to discover, reclaim their histories and wished to revive their histories as a form of social resistance and resilience.

In my literature review, I discussed Robinson and Ward's, (1991) contribution to the idea of being conscious in regards to the ways in which African American women are discriminated against. The idea is described as a collective recognition and awakening of a group of people to collectively resisting oppressive and hostile situations. I find Robinson and Ward's, (1991) contribution to be relevant to my research. The authors described the consciousness developed by African American women, specifically, youth which has helped these youth to be better prepared to enter and face/combat hostile, oppressive environments. Furthermore, (Robinson & Ward, 1991) encouraged the importance of knowing one's history and being cognisant of how that history manifests in the lives of adolescent women of African descent. For the purposes of my research, the idea of consciousness was pertinent to understanding the experiences of my research participants. Much like the research participants in (Robinson & Ward's, 1991) study, Black African female students developed strategies and ways to be better prepared to enter and resist historically and contemporarily hostile environments.

As previously discussed in the literature review, Robinson and Ward, (1991) defined their understanding of resistance in two ways: resistance for survival and resistance for liberation. For the purposes of my research, I recognized the connection of the second form of resistance, resistance for liberation was pertinent to my research participants' experiences. Black African female students' exposure to literature which highlighted African histories (past) and experiences was found to be liberating. My research participants felt a sense of belonging and more importantly a sense of pride in who they were as African women, evidenced in their transcribed stories.

As was evidenced in my research participants' responses, participants linked the concepts of resilience and resistance very much to Sankofa. For example, research participant came to understand resilience and resistance as concepts that are interconnected and coexisting. Additionally, my research participants' understood that their own oppressions are inextricably linked to the historical and continuous process of colonization and ongoing neo-colonial manifestations. Research participants also noted the importance of active engagement in resisting hegemonic practices. Overall, research participants' experiences are inextricably

linked to a broader historical context. Therefore, a recognition and understanding of the interconnectedness of social resistance and resilience has helped my research participants.

The significance of Sankofa as a theoretical concept and future recommendations

The unearthing of Sankofa as a theoretical concept, an Akan cultural value and its compliment Nehiyaw (Cree) concepts of Miyo-Pimatisiwin and the medicine wheel is a unique contribution to the academy and may well be the first time that an African cultural value has been uniquely interconnected and compared to Canadian Indigenous cultural values and knowledge. As I mentioned earlier, the birth of Sankofa as a of Akan and Nehiyaw (Cree) theoretical concept is reflective of my own unique socio-cultural positioning in Saskatchewan, Treaty Six Territory, and that of my research participants social positioning in Saskatchewan, as a relatively new settlers, influenced by African cultural values and that Canadian Indigenous cultural values. My recommendation would be for others pursuing scholarship in the areas of resilience and social resistance strategies, to realize the potential of reclaiming Indigenous knowledge whether they be African or Canadian in exploring the ways in which resilience and social resistance are understood from socio-cultural contexts as encouraged by Ungar (2005, 2008) and Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, and Jessen Williamson (2011).

The following section highlights my second thematic finding, the notion of shared experiences of historical and contemporary forms of discrimination. Here, I discussed my research participants' relatable experience with African American peoples and relatable experiences with Canadian Indigenous peoples. I also, discuss the notion of shared experiences and their importance in helping my research participants cultivate social resistance and resilience strategies.

Shared experiences: "I am because we are..."-Desmond Tutu

In the first section of this chapter, I explored my research participants' social resistance and resilience strategies rooted in the idea of shared experiences. I emphasized how research participants' knowledge of African American history and experiences in the United States of America has helped participants to develop social resistance and resilience strategies. In the second section, I explored participants' development of social resistance and resilience

strategies through the knowledge of Canadian history, specifically, Canadian colonial history. I discussed how knowledge of this history and its contemporary manifestations play a major role in the development of participants' social resistance and resilience strategies.

“My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, “a person is a person through other persons.”- Desmond Tutu

Desmond Tutu's quote characterizes a South African, Xhosa cultural value called Ubuntu. The idea emphasizes the importance of human interconnectedness rather than individualism. This idea has also played “...a significant role in the psychological well-being and resilience of Indigenous Africans for countless generations...Providing a way of life that has nourished and sustained many communities against obstacles great and small” (Hanks, 2008, p.50). Shared and relatable experience was one of the core social resistance and resilience strategies used by participants in my research. In this research, I link the value of Ubuntu to the idea of shared experiences discussed in my research participants' stories. My research participants have experienced similar adversities and that others have been there before and have endured, overcome, survived, and challenged great adversity and have risen up with renewed strength and hope. Therefore, Ubuntu says, the participant can also do the same. In the following section I discussed my research participants' relatable experiences to African American experiences, in the United States of America.

Shared experiences: African American relatable experiences

In exploring my research participants' social resistance and resilience strategies, I found that participants' knowledge of African American experiences in the United States played a major role in helping participants understand their own social positioning or reality in Canadian society. Participants expressed how, though their histories and experiences are vastly different from African American ones, participants still felt connected to African American experiences of injustice, historical racial prejudice, power struggles and other contemporary manifestations in North America. For the participants, being conscious of history and understanding its implication in present day society empowered them and helped them to place their own experiences into perspective—that their individual experiences are not aberrations but are rather are rooted in a broader historical context. For research participants, recognizing these

shared experiences of enduring and overcoming adversities has helped participants to understand themselves as racialized peoples in Canada. Theron and Phasha (2015) shared similar results when exploring the resilience of South African students. They state that student's acceptance and embrace of Ubuntu helps the students to develop resilience (Theron & Phasha, 2015).

In exploring participants' social resistance and resilience strategies in Saskatchewan high schools, I found that one major area of inquiring was to explore participants' overall experiences in the education system through the individual interviews. The questions I asked were as follows:

Question 1: What were some of the challenges you experienced in high school as it relates to racism?

Question 2: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

I encouraged research participants to retell the details of experiences within the context in which they occurred. This referred to their experiences of racism in Saskatchewan high schools. Research participants were encouraged to provide detailed examples of their experiences. In answering these questions, participants expressed similar sentiments. They noted that they did not experience forms of what they would call overt, individual acts of racism. However, they recognized what they would categorize as "institutionalized racism". When I probed further on what that term meant to them and what they would categorize as institutional racism, participants referred to their high school curriculum.

Participants expressed that they were comfortable with the general subject areas of Mathematics and Science but when asked about English and Social Studies or History, participants shared discomfort: Generally, participants felt that their African histories were not represented in the classroom. As a result, my research participants felt a sense of alienation in classrooms where Eurocentric ideals were elevated while other ways of knowing and histories were silenced. In various studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at the University of Toronto, conducted by Dei (1996) scholars noted similar trends which have led to the advocacy of optional alternative schooling at the elementary and high school levels called

Africentric schools and have advocated for and developed curriculum called Afrocentric/Africentric curriculum in Toronto.

The aim of these schools is as Dei (1996) stated, promote “the intellectual and social growth of...[Black/African-Canadian high school students], but plays a part in the multi-centric education of all students. A curriculum which is inclusive in this broad sense will entail transformation of educational structures in Canada” (Dei, 1996, p. 170). Furthermore, the aim of Afrocentric schools and curriculum was to address the increasing number of dropout rates among Toronto youth of African and Caribbean descent; and to resolve the issue of student disengagement and alienation in the classroom, by teaching relevant literature to students in the classroom, that would not have been introduced in conventional White dominant classrooms.

The next section deals with provides a discussion of the significance of the notion of shared experiences and offers recommendations or advancing the idea of shared and relatable experiences.

The significance of shared experiences and recommendations

Exploring the experiences of Black African female students in Saskatchewan schools has not been done prior to my work. When I started this research, I had my own assumptions of what kind of responses I thought I would receive. I planned to keep these assumptions in a private journal—keeping them in mind to ensure that I would not allow the assumptions to bias my findings; however, finding that students felt alienated fulfilled one of my expectations. I anticipated that response because like my research participants, I shared similar experiences in my high school years. Research participants’ responses and experiences sounded all too familiar to me. However, I was surprised to discover another aspect of research participants’ experiences and development of resilience and resistant strategies. Though research participants found that high school curriculum significantly emphasized European history and Eurocentric ideals and said little about their own African histories, these students were not surprised. Participants’ narratives clearly showed their desire to learn about and see themselves as Africans represented in the classroom; however, they realized that it was unconventional for African studies to be taught in the Western classroom, especially when a great emphasis is placed in teaching and upholding Eurocentric histories.

Furthermore, participants' reflections revealed that though overt forms of racism are not common, covert forms of racism, such as institutionalized racism, the exclusion of other ways of knowing history, were prevalent. In addition, participants noted that though the study of African history was virtually non-existent in Saskatchewan high schools, and though they had a desire to see the histories represented in the classroom, they felt that in order for that to be considered in the future, colonial history in Canada and its ongoing manifestations should be taught. As Tanangachie stated in her individual interview: "I mean...if they will not teach us what really happened in this country how can I expect that they will teach us about my history, my African history." Tanangachie's thinking is rare, at least in academic circles which study the experiences of racialized peoples and specifically, the experiences of students of African descent. Tanangachie's statement and the various narratives of my research participants on this topic, illustrated in chapter four, spark an interesting dialogue that is pertinent to my analysis of social resistance and resilience and I believed was an essential theme to expound upon.

Shared Experience and Understanding: An act of social resistance and resilience

In exploring participants' actions in response to their experiences, I encouraged research participants to identify social resistance strategies which they employed to challenge the institutionalized form of racism which they encountered in their Eurocentric high school curriculum. The question asked was:

Question: What challenges did research participants experience while in high school and how did they respond to them?

In participants' responses, as I noted in chapter four, the women discussed how they actively challenged the silenced histories, by actively doing their own research, since the classroom was silence on African histories and Canadian colonial history. For example, research participants' questioned their teachers on various ideas presented in the classroom. Tanangachie discussed in her individual interview how she questioned the line of thinking presented by a teacher in comparing Canada to the United States of America. Tanangachie challenged the teachers' assumption that Canada should somehow be exempt from critical analysis since their track record on discrimination is comparably better than that of the United States. Tanangachie instead noted that the national narrative of Canada as a peacekeeping

nation has become well-accepted narrative to the extent that as Canadians we do not recognize various inequalities in Canadian society.

Participants' responses to the question asked brought about the idea of immersion. This idea suggested that we have all been immersed in the history of colonialism and that its remnants remain with us, interwoven into the social fabric of Canadian society and embedded in our social psyche. Due to the years of colonization and their influence on Canada's social psyche, some have internalized racism and adhere to Eurocentric assumptions and ideologies. Those implicated in colonization do not realize, in some instances, that they are perpetuating Eurocentric ways of thinking and knowing. Through my research inquiry, I realized that I also share similar thinking with my research participants. In the following section, I will share my own experiences as it relates to the high school curriculum. In the following section I shared my own experiences.

The New Immigrant: Negotiating Identity and Cultivating Solidarity

As an immigrant from Ghana, West Africa, and now a Canadian citizen, I recognized that I am also a settler on Indigenous land. I also implicated in the ongoing colonialism in Canada. From my own primary and secondary schooling experiences, I was not well informed to the historical trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada (Daschuk, 2013).

The school system that I experienced did not place much emphasis on the year's historical trauma experienced by Canadian Indigenous peoples. In addition, contemporary issues informed by colonial history were hardly addressed. There was an overwhelming silence on how European settlement affected Indigenous peoples and how policies such as multiculturalism serve as invitations for new settlers, racialized minorities, to partake in the ongoing colonialism. Instead, I often received the usual rhetoric of how the 'great' explorers voyaged to the land currently known as Canada, and how the Founding Fathers formed the confederation through many compromises. And somehow, Indigenous peoples chose to cede, release, surrender, and yield their land to the Government of Canada I recognized, even now, that there is still an overwhelming silence on how Indigenous ways of life existed and have been dramatically altered (Daschuk, 2013).

Throughout my high school and undergraduate years, here at the University of Saskatchewan, I have had an inner battle of trying to understand my own position in Canadian society. Being aware of Canadian colonial history, the oppression that Indigenous peoples have been subjected to in this country, and the ongoing colonialism in Canada, I have wondered what it means for me as a racialized minority living in Canada, accepting Canadian citizenship and calling myself a Canadian. I have wondered whether by being here in Canada, if I'm not also "a settler?" Am I being hypocritical for criticizing the history and ongoing colonialism in this country, when I too, as an immigrant racialized minority, am implicated? I have struggled to find answers to my questions and to make sense of that reality. As a new immigrant in Saskatoon, I am also a part of Treaty Six land, a nation to nation agreement which the government that gave me citizenship is not honouring, in my opinion.

In my research, participants reflections on experienced institutionalized forms of racism embedded in the high school curriculum, further revealed an important area of research that has been left virtually unexplored—the identity negotiation of new immigrants who settle in Canada. In my opinion when the history of colonialism in Canada is discussed, it is seen as comprised of relationships between White settler colonies and Indigenous peoples.

White settlers are often defined as the former colonial powers, the British, French and those of European descent, who settled on Indigenous land. The focus is often placed on these White settlers, and not on racialized minorities. Participants' narratives reveal the notion of who is considered a settler on Indigenous land and showed that there needs to be an expansion to include racialized minorities who have newly immigrated to Canada. As Anaya, Koko, Tanangachie, Lucky and Blessing shared in their narratives, they viewed their social positioning in Canada as that of settlers on Indigenous land. They recognized what citizenship in Canada meant and the responsibilities included in accepting that citizenship. Through the individual interviews I recognized this common theme, of what it means to be a Canadian. In the following section I shared participants' reflections on how they have come to understand their role in Canadian society and what solidarity means to them.

What it means to be a Canadian: Cultivating solidarity as an act of social resistance and resilience

For my research participants, what it means to be a Canadian is through solidarity which was understood as an act of social resistance and resilience. With the aim of promoting solidarity, there should be an understanding that though the racial injustices of the past were not directly committed by those currently occupying Indigenous land; the responsibility to recognize its manifestation in contemporary society and the responsibility to combat racism is up to the current and following generations. There should be an owning of that responsibility. Furthermore, there should be an understanding that owning up to the responsibility does not mean being crippled by guilt. It is the recognition that racialized minorities and non-racialized minorities can come together as allies to combat varying forms of racism through education. Owning up and taking responsibility for the inherited injustices are necessary. These are the ways in which my participants have come to understand their social position in Canada, specifically, Saskatchewan. In my estimate the ways in which these issues have been addressed in education has been through anti-racist education. These were discussed earlier in Chapter Six.

Concluding remarks

In my opinion, the struggles Canadian Indigenous peoples faced and still face today, shapes Canadian history and thus, should be taught in the schools especially from the early elementary stages and should be reiterated moving towards the upper years, high school years. Due to the lack of emphasis about the historical trauma, how it continues to shape Canadian society, promotion of Indigenous worldviews regarding nature and ways of life, there has been development of disrespect. The disrespect has led to continuous exploitation of Indigenous land and a disregard to the Treaties embodying the relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Therefore, I am arguing that, as immigrants in Canada, holding the status as settlers, it is also, our responsibility to recognize that, the land in which we occupy is Indigenous land. In addition, I advocate that as allies we should ensure that such feelings of solidarity reflect a genuine commitment to active engagement and partnership with Indigenous peoples, in addressing the inequalities encountered. My story and the stories of participants note these as the core of their social resistance and resilience strategies denoting recognition that their own

liberation from discrimination is directly tied to the struggle for justice for Indigenous peoples in Canada. The following quotation by Desmond Tutu, reflects this idea well, "...my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in [yours]..." Ultimately, for participants, the knowledge of the history, stories of triumph in the face of adversity and shared experiences of oppression in Canada empowers them. The knowledge of colonial history helps participants place their own understanding of their social positioning in Canadian society into a broader context.

In the first two themes of the analysis, I introduce Sankofa as a theoretical concept capable of aiding in the understanding of immigrant Black African female high school students development of resilience and social resistance. I also defended its viability helping my research participants reclaim and revive their histories. Second, I discussed the concept of shared experiences as another important component in research participants' development of social resistance and resilience. I have highlighted the importance of the study of history in creating opportunities which empowered my research participants.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, I conclude by noting the importance of investing Indigenous knowledge's of Sankofa in identifying the resilience and social resistance strategies employed by Black African female students. I also proposed some recommendations for further studies in the scholarship of resilience and social resistance.

Exploring my research participants' experiences it is evident that as African's we need to start telling our own stories. An Ewe proverb states that: "Gnatola ma no kpon sia, eyenabe adelan to kpo mi sena" (Adagba, 2006, p. 1) which literally means: "Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story" (Adagba, 2006, p. 1). The proverb describes the unknown realities of hunting. In the story telling nature of the Ewe people, there is great value placed on story telling as a form of self-expression and most importantly as a form of carrying, remembering and maintaining history. The oral history story telling tradition is essential; therefore, this proverb plays a major role in Ewe tradition and culture because it places a major emphasis on a highly valued practice of hunting. Hunters are seen as individuals who have special talents; therefore, the stories and experiences of a hunter are highly regarded and celebrated. However, there is also an understanding and recognition that there are multiple sides to a story. Therefore, in the story of the hunt, people recognize that the stories they hear from the hunter is merely the hunters' interpretation and reiteration of the hunt (Adagba, 2006). They recognize that they cannot rely solely and take as gospel the stories of the hunter because the hunter tells the stories in ways that glorifies their exploits and showcases their bravery and skillfulness as hunters. The hunted story in most cases is unheard.

For the purposes of my research, I have recognized the gap of knowledge in regards to the experiences of Black African female students in Saskatchewan schools and have attempted to share their social resistance and resilience to hegemonic practices rooted in racism and gender discrimination. As evident in my research participants stories it is clear that African histories have been silenced, unheard, overlooked and devalued in their schools. Also, through my research participants' experiences, we have seen how research participants have attempted to reclaim and revive their identities and histories through the Sankofa. The theoretical concept was used in identifying the ways in which Black African female students developed their resilience and social resistance.

Furthermore, research participants have outlived and continue to outlive the stereotypes, preconceived notions set up their school environments and curriculum. This idea of outliving preconceived notions and stereotypes was inspired by my research supervisor, Dr. Jessen Williamson (personal communication, December, 2014). After collecting my research data and transcribing the data collected from the individual interviews and focus group discussion, I went through a phase of confusion where I tried to make sense of the data collected. I was struggling with tying my findings to the purpose of my research. So, my supervisor and I scheduled some meetings to discuss how I was seeing the research unfold and I told her about my road block. She gave me a knowing smile and decided to share a poem that she had written. (See Appendix F for Jessen Williamson poem titled “Sleep”).

Jessen Williamson uses sleep as a metaphor, where sleep and rest signify rebirth and rejuvenation. Jessen Williamson’s quotation of sleep in the fetal position symbolizes a return to one’s self. After reading and re-reading her poem I began to recognize sleep in the fetal position as Sankofa—a return one’s origins, a return to one’s past. The return to the fetal position, the return to fetch one’s history and identity is essential when one is faced with the racist preconceived ideas and hegemonic practices, as exemplified in my research participants’ experiences and my own experience in Saskatchewan schools. Returning to the fetal position—Sankofa, has helped and equipped research participants and myself—to resist and be resilient and ultimately, outlive the intent of hegemonic practices and recover.

After reflecting on the poem that my supervisor shared with me I recognized that my road block was that I had my own conceptualization of what research responses are supposed to look like. I eventually recognized the way in which my thinking and conceptualization of research was influenced by Western ways of research analysis. I was lost and confused trying to find meaning to my findings, without acknowledging the (egg) I was sitting on (that egg being Sankofa as a theoretical concept). I did not initially realize the potential of Sankofa in serving as a theoretical concept in understanding my research participants’ development of resilience and social resistance. Much like (Jessen Williamson, 2011) I was caught up with what my western education wanted me to become and I extended that to ways of analyzing collected data. I caught myself in that process and realized that my Western education would

disallow reclamation of my cultural identity and using my Indigenous knowledge (Sankofa) passed down to me by my parents.

After reclaiming Sankofa as theoretical concept I began see my research findings in a new light. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of my research participants who freely gave me parts of themselves by participating in my research. Their stories of adversity, aspirations, fears and ultimately hope for a brighter future and the good and beautiful life (Miyopimatisiwin) were embodied in their resilience and social resistance strategies. I can honestly say, I know who I am. I know where I come from. I understand my current situation. And I certainly know where I am going—future. Your preconceived ideas do not faze me because I am above those ideas. I stand on the shoulders of giants who have come before me and have paved a way for me. I have drawn strength from those who have come before me. That is where my strength (energy)—resilience and social resistance lies. Ultimately, the strength that I have will outlive these racist preconceived hegemonic practices and I will no longer be the hunted. From now on I will tell my story. That is the message research participants shared with me through their stories.

I am deeply grateful to Blessing, Tanangachie, Anaya, Koko and Lucky who shared their stories with me and I am grateful to my supervisor Dr. Jessen Williamson shared her powerful poem with me which has helped me to understand the experiences of research participants in the bigger context. Much like Jessen Williamson (2015), I have come to realize the potential of self-expression through poetry. Richardson (1998) also states that “poetry wants us to see...those instantaneous sights, when things stand so clearly before us, when truth shows its face” (p.453). In exploring the experiences of research participants through poetry there was the revelations of their truths.

Furthermore, research participants exemplified ways in which African histories can be reclaimed, revived and perpetuated through their social resistance and resilience. In line with the Ewe proverb, my research participants have showed that their experiences and histories are valuable and worthy of acknowledgement and respect. Research participants have exposed how African histories have been devalued, silenced, and due to the silencing and devaluing the story of the (hunt) European and Eurocentric ideals have been glorified and placed on a pedestal.

For research participants it is evident that there needs to be a radical change in how history and social studies is taught in Saskatchewan high schools. If we can't even talk about issues regarding privilege and power relations and how they unfold in Canada then how do we even begin to imagine how a multicultural curriculum let alone an antiracist one would look like.

So it seems for participants, the focus is not necessarily on which countries should we learn about, what foods they eat, how they dress. The focus seems to be on how we discuss issues of marginalization; essentially, how do we move away from a society where we "tolerate" other cultures into a society. There needs to be a radical shift of thinking where the history of colonialism and its contemporary manifestations are viewed as a historical process that affects lives. Essentially, we need to directly challenge hegemonic practices and issues of marginalization which is resultant of privilege and power relations. Ultimately, I am arguing that, there needs to be a movement beyond the promotion of cultural days in Saskatchewan schools and begin to consciously, deliberately, discuss and teach the historical injustices and its manifestations in contemporary Canadian society. It is an advocacy regarding a move away from multicultural education which has masked inequalities in Canadian society, producing and reproducing these inequalities.

Recommendations

My research offered Sankofa, as an African Indigenous value comparable to Canadian Indigenous value, Miyo-Pimatisiwin as a theoretical concept which contributes to the resilience and social resistance scholarship. I have offered some recommendations for further scholarship into this area of research

1. Further theorizing of Sankofa as a theoretical concept which evokes resilience and social resistance.
2. Further exploration of Sankofa and how it relates to influenced by Miyo- Pimatisiwin to understand that approach to immigrant experiences in Canada.
3. A gendered analysis further exploring the ways in which gender is socially constructed in influencing resilience and social resistance strategies among racialized peoples.
4. An exploration of the ways in which African Indigenous knowledge and Canadian Indigenous knowledge can inform the resilience and social resistance scholarship.

5. An exploration of the interconnections of gender, sexuality and class in the scholarship of social resilience and resistance.

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Appendix A

Title: *Immigrant African Female High School Students Experiences in Saskatchewan: Social Resistance and Resilience.*

The Overarching Questions

1. As racialized minority during high school years in Saskatchewan, what kind of experiences do immigrant African female students have?
2. In what ways were the high school years hostile to the presence of immigrant African High School Students?
3. As high school students how have they negotiated and challenged tensions provided by racism?
4. How would immigrant African female high school students invest their hopes and aspirations to succeed?

Individual Interview Guide

I conducted one individual interview with each participant. The research is case study presented in the form of persona narratives. The framework for organizing the research is applying Seidman's (2006) three series interview method: Focused Life History Stage, Details of Experience Stage and Reflection on the Meaning Stage. For the purposes of this research, Seidman's three series interview third stage was advanced by a creation of a fourth stage DeKa Wo Wo Focus Group. The following are the overarching questions and the above mentioned four stages with related questions.

Stage 1: Focused Life History

In the first stage of the study, I will begin by asking you questions regarding your family and migration background. This refers to your construction of ethnic identity and immigration to

Saskatchewan. Here, you may detail your goals and aspirations in terms of educational and career aspirations and social interactions.

The articulation of these stories will serve as the foundation for contextualizing your schooling experiences in Saskatchewan high schools.

Question 1: What were your goals and aspirations when you first came to Saskatchewan?

Stage 2: Details of Experience

In the second stage of the study, I will encourage you to reconstruct the details of experiences within the context in which they occur. This refers to your schooling experiences regarding racism in Saskatchewan high schools. Here, you may provide examples of your experiences and detail social interactions with peers, teachers and school personnel.

Question 1: What were some of the challenges you experienced in high school as it relates to racism?

Question 2: Can the experiences be explained by institutional, systemic and individual acts of racism?

Stage 3: Reflection on the Meaning

In the third stage of the study, I encourage you identify social resistance strategies which you employed to challenge the racism you experienced in helping you get through times of adversity. Here you may detail resources, people, peers or anyone who may have helped you develop your social resistance strategies.

The following is a guiding question:

Question 1: What challenges did you experience while in high school and how did you respond to them?

Focus Group Guide

Stage 4: Advanced Reflection on the Meaning Stage (Deka Wo Wo -Focus Group)

After the individual interviews I conducted one focus group discussion with research participants. The Deka Wo Wo stage was inspired by Seidman's Reflection on the Meaning Stage.

Deka Wo Wo, in the Anlo-Ewe language Ewe, means togetherness, community and unity, in the English language. There is the idea that as a community we are able to come together in times of adversity. We come together to share our experiences (stories) in order to help one another understand our past experiences, current experiences and to share in the hopes and aspirations for the future. For the purpose of this research, I will be linking the idea of Deka Wo Wo to the notion of Sankofa as a theoretical concept. The Akan, cultural value, Sankofa, is a way of viewing oneself, community and world. It "...symbolizes the African belief that the past serves as a guide for planning the future; it is the wisdom in learning from the past as one builds the future" (Pearman, 2009, p.75).

In the third stage of the study, I will encourage you to engage in the reflection.

Question 1: What did these experiences mean to you at the time?

Question 2: What do these experiences mean to you today?

Question 3: What do these experiences mean to you as you look towards the future?

Question 4: What do you think these experiences mean to the schooling experiences in Saskatchewan high schools?

The nature of participants' involvement in this stage is that of collaboration in analysis. Together we will engage in a focused group discussion whereby each participant can pose questions. We will work together to answer these overarching questions and discuss ways in which social resistance strategies can be employed in Saskatchewan schools to promote change.

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form Individual Interview

Title: *Immigrant African Female High School Students Experiences in Saskatchewan: Social Resistance and Resilience.*

Researcher: Fafali Ablavi Ahiahonu, (Graduate Student), Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 306-381-9781, faa315@mail.usask.ca.

Supervisor: Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson, Department of Educational Foundations, 306-966-5262, karla.jwilliamson@usask.ca.

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- The aim of the proposed research is to explore the school experiences of five immigrant African female students who have graduated from a Saskatchewan high school and are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at the University of Saskatchewan. My assumption is that such students may have experienced challenges in Saskatchewan high schools and each participant has employed social resistance strategies to combat challenges.
- The data collected from this research study will be used for the completion of a Masters of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, journal articles, and conference presentations.

Procedures:

- As a research interviewee you will be asked to participate in one 60 minute interviews.
- All interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location.
- The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will conduct regular checks with you and present you a copy of transcribed interviews to ensure that transcriptions reflect what you want to convey for the final product.

Confidentiality:

- The data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym.
- All efforts will be taken to keep participants identity confidential through fictionalization or removal of any identifying characteristics. For example, your name, place of birth, institution of study and any other identifying characteristics will not be displayed. However, you may choose to reveal your own identity if you desire.
- While this is the intent of the study, as a researcher, I cannot guarantee confidentiality.

Potential Risks:

- There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. Should there be periods of upsetting situations, the researcher will ensure to stop the interview until such time that the interviewee feels comfortable in continuing or request ceasing the interview.

Potential Benefits:

- There is a relative lack of research on the successful educational experience of immigrant African students in Canada. This gap is even greater in relation to successful educational experience of immigrant African female students. The bulk of literature focus on poor academic achievement and issues regarding increase in high school dropout rates. This study will explore social resistance strategies that you have employed and I will attempt to link these to the idea of resilience which I define from sociological perspective. This viewpoint emphasizes human agency, which is "...the capability of individuals to construct and reconstruct their world—against abuses of power, discrimination and inequality," (Sage, 2007, p.1). While this is the intent of the study, as a researcher I cannot guarantee that the finding will align with my assumptions.
- Ultimately, this research study seeks to invest the schooling experiences of the overlooked group in Canada. My attempt would be to reap from their experiences in resisting hegemonic practices and using social resistance strategies as a tool to overcome obstacles and this way fill in the gap in literature.

Storage of Data:

- All data will be protected including audio recordings, transcriptions and additional notes. These will be stored on University of Saskatchewan Electronic Server. Only I and my supervisor will have direct access to data. Furthermore, the signed consent forms will be stored with my supervisor Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson, in locked cabinet for 5 years.

Right to Withdraw:

- Participation in this research is voluntary and you can choose to answer only questions you are comfortable with. As a participant you have the right to withdraw from the study, without any explanation or penalty.
- Please keep in mind that, there is a time frame for data withdrawal. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data has been pooled and disseminated.

Follow up:

- As the researcher, I will provide a copy of the research findings to all participants.

Questions or Concerns:

- **Researcher:** Fafali Ablavi Ahiahonu, (Graduate Student), Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 306-381-9781, faa315@mail.usask.ca.
- **Supervisor:** Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson, Department of Educational Foundations, 306-966-5262, karla.jwilliamson@usask.ca.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study and/or your role.

Continued or On-going Consent:

- For the follow-up, I will provide you with another consent form inviting you to participate in the Deka Wo Wo focus group. You may choose not to be part of the Deka Wo Wo focus group.

Signed Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the above description. Furthermore, you sign on having had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the 60 minutes interview and that your questions have been answered. You agree to participate in the research on volunteer basis and that a copy of this Consent Form has been given to you for your records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>	

Title: *Immigrant African Female High School Students Experiences in Saskatchewan: Social Resistance and Resilience.*

Researcher: Fafali Ablavi Ahiahonu, (Graduate Student), Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 306-381-9781, faa315@mail.usask.ca.

Supervisor: Karla Jessen Williamson, Department of Educational Foundations, 306-966-5262, karla.jwilliamson@usask.ca.

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

- The aim of the proposed research is to explore the school experiences of five immigrant African female students who have graduated from a Saskatchewan high school and are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at the University of Saskatchewan. My assumption is that such students may have experienced challenges in Saskatchewan high schools, and each participant has employed social resistance strategies to combat challenges.
- The data will be used for the completion of a Masters of Education at the University of Saskatchewan, journal articles, and conference presentations.

Procedures:

- As a focus group participant (which is second stage of interviews) you will be asked to participate in one 90 to 120 minute long interview involving group discussions. I call this stage Deka Wo Wo which in my Anlo-Ewe language means unity. The five individuals who are interviewed are each invited to become members of the focus group and essentially become the Deka Wo Wo committee of this research. As a focus group/committee the group will discuss and advise on the deliberation of gathered information. Depending on the advice from this collective group this may be delivered in form of, for example, journal writing, music, poetry and in other forms that make sense to the community in question and themselves.
- The focus group (Deka Wo Wo committee) discussion will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and location.
- The focus group will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will conduct regular checks with Deka Wo Wo committee and each member will be presented with copies of the transcription.

Confidentiality:

- The data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information.
- All efforts will be taken to keep participants identity confidential through fictionalization or removal of any identifying characteristics in the final report. For example, your name, place of birth, institution of study and all other identifying characteristics will be deleted.
- While this is the intent of the study, as a researcher, I cannot guarantee confidentiality.

Potential Risks:

- From the outset participants will be notified on the limitations of confidentiality. As the researcher, I cannot guarantee that other members of the group will keep the identity of the research participants confidential. As a researcher, I appeal to you that you respect the confidentiality of the other members of the group by not disclosing the contents of this discussion outside the group, and be aware that others may not respect your confidentiality.
- By agreeing and signing this consent form, you accept to respect and are responsible for protecting the confidentiality of other participants.

Potential Benefits:

- Ultimately, the focus group will serve as a safe and open environment where participants can come together as a community to share their thoughts and ideas in investing social resilience strategies and resisting hegemonic practices.
- Employing the notion of Deka Wo Wo each of the focus group members will have a taste of processes involved in seeking unified voice.
- While the above are expected outcomes, as a researcher I do not guarantee that my assumptions will be fully realized.

Storage of Data:

- All data will be protected including audio recordings, transcriptions and additional notes will be stored on University of Saskatchewan Electronic Server. Furthermore, all data will be stored with my supervisor Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson, for 5 years. Only the researcher and the supervisor of this research will have access to the data.

Right to Withdraw:

- Participation in the focus group is voluntary and you can choose to answer only those questions you are comfortable with. As a participant you have the right to withdraw from the study, without any explanation or penalty.
- Please keep in mind that, there is a time frame for data withdrawal. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data has been pooled and disseminated.

Follow up:

- As the researcher, I will provide a copy of the research findings to all participants.

Questions or Concerns:

- **Researcher:** Fafali Ablavi Ahiahonu, (Graduate Student), Department of Educational Foundations, University of Saskatchewan, 306-381-9781, faa315@mail.usask.ca.
- **Supervisor:** Karla Jessen Williamson, Department Educational Foundations, 306-966-5262, karla.jwilliamson@usask.ca.
- This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.
- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role.

Signed Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the above description; that you have had an opportunity to ask questions and that your questions have been answered. You

consent to participate in the research project on voluntary basis. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to you for your records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>
_____	_____	

Appendix C
Letter to Potential Participants

College of Education
28 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Canada S7N 0X1

Dear

My name is Fafali Ahiahonu and I am a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan. I am writing you to invite you to participate in my research as a part of my Master's degree in the Educational Foundations, under the supervision of Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson. The research study is titled: *Immigrant African Female High School Students Experiences in Saskatchewan: Social Resistance and Resilience*.

The aim of the proposed research is to explore the school experiences of five new immigrant African female students who have graduated from Saskatchewan high school and are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program at the University of Saskatchewan. My assumption is that such students may have experienced challenges in Saskatchewan high schools, and each participant has employed resistance strategies to combat the challenges.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The research will involve one 60 minute interview and one 90 to 120 minute long involving focus group discussions. The latter stage I call Deka Wo Wo which in my Anlo-Ewe language means unity. I intend to interview five individuals who will then be invited as a focus group; and focus group may deliver their contribution through journal writing, music, poetry and in other form of your desire.

Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. Copies of the transcriptions will be given to each participant to confirm the accuracy. Your identity will be confidential by using fictional name or you may reveal your own identity if you desire. As a participant you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty. Data collected from participants will be protected including audio recordings, transcriptions and additional notes. All these will be stored on University of Saskatchewan Server. All data collected after research will be stored with my supervisor Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson for five years. The data will be used for the completion of a Masters of Education thesis, journal articles, and conference presentations.

If you have any queries concerning the nature of the research or are unclear about any questions, please contact me, Fafali Ahiahonu , Master's Student, Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan by telephone (306) 373-3044, or E-mail: faa315@mail.usask.ca. You can also contact my supervisor Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson. She is Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, and can be reached at (306) 966-5262, or by E-mail: karla.jwilliamson@usask.ca.

Thank you for considering taking the time to help me with my research.

Yours sincerely,
Fafali Ahiahonu

Appendix D
Letter to the African Students Association (AFSA) President

College of Education
28 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Canada S7N 0X1

President of the African Students Association
136 Peter MacKinnon Building
107 Administration Place
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 5A2 Canada

Dear,

My name is Fafali Ahiahonu and I am a graduate student of Educational Foundations at the University of Saskatchewan. I am writing you this letter to seek guidance in circulating information regarding my research titled: *Immigrant African Female High School Students Experiences in Saskatchewan: Social Resistance and Resilience*.

With your permission, I would like to join you during one of the African Students Association general meetings to discuss with the members the aims of my research in hopes to generate interest. The following is some information regarding the research project:

I plan to explore the experiences of five immigrant African female students who have graduated from a Saskatchewan high school and are currently enrolled in an undergraduate program, at the University of Saskatchewan. Participants will be asked to take part in one 60 minute interviews and one 90 to 120 minute focus group; I call this stage Deka Wo Wo in my native language, Anlo-Ewe, which means unity. The focus group interviews will involve five research participants and me, as a researcher. Each research interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. I will conduct regular checks with participants where I will present each participant with copies of the interview transcripts—to ensure that I have presented and interpreted the stories according to the participants' expectations. The data will be used for the completion of my Master's Degree in Education and will be largely the foundation for thesis writing. The data will also be used for scholarly work such as journal articles, and conference presentations.

Should you have any questions concerning the nature of the research, please contact me at: Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. You can reach me at (306) 373-3044, or by E-mail: faa315@mail.usask.ca.

You are also welcome to consult with Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson, my research supervisor. She is Assistant Professor of Department of Educational Foundations, and can be reached at (306) 966-5262, or by E-mail: karla.jwilliamson@usask.ca.

Many thanks for giving this your attention and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,
Fafali Ahiahonu

Appendix E

My Emancipation

Come, come, rug doll
Come to me
Let me comb your hair
Make it straight
Come--now it won't hurt that much
Why don't you munch on this sour fruit?
I'm here because I care
Come rug doll
Don't worry about the stares
These ppl are telling you
What's not there
But-we need to change that—Hair
Come, come rug doll
Let me dress you up in the finest material
All that print makes you a puzzle
Here—take these colors
Green, brown, blue
Maybe some red—but that might be too much
Let's stick to the earth
Come with me rug doll
Let me teach you a few things—walk behind me
In--a single file—the assembly is about to begin and
Why is your uniform stained—come with me
We need to get you cleaned
Come—I am your road to success
Come now—why the sad face
Relax those eyes, those lips, those hips
Chocolate has always been my guilty pleasure
they all had to held like this
 But the roots of this tree are suspended in blood
I am a rug doll no more
Come, come rug doll wait!! Come back to me
To come to you is to dance with lions
Is to be move from being cat-like to be more lion-like
It is to like pain
I am re-in-venting
But rug-doll—I am your home

You are house--never home
You are prison—freedom is never home
You have been making tea from the leaves on your tree
No
You do not drink me
But how can I link you if you have left me rug doll
How can you refuse to come in-to opportunity; in-to success
I am in-troducing you to the world
I am in-viting you to be in-vited
But to be in—is to be out
I am out-standing with-out-you-standing-in
I am en-visioning myself
Im-aging myself
Imaging against your image
I'm of age
Never a doll
You don't get control
No—you can roll out the tongues infiltrating the lungs
Because you are after my heart
But rug doll you are art
In-deed that is your excuse on your pathway to delusion
you do—Not—get—to call me
I
Call
Myself

Appendix F
Karla Jessen Williamson Poem: *Sleep*

SLEEP

Would you know the sleep
that makes you surrender
directly to the forces of life
when encountering
opposers and doubters
of your soul and purposes of life
that prevents your breath
and heartbeat?

Little idea do they have to
the act of returning
to the position in womb
that
prepares you to the stage
to find
the assurance the rhythm of life.

So bow your head
and being
back to fetal position
to return back to the posture that knew
what purpose
of life the spirit brought you to life.
The stance that allow
the creative forces and juices
to inundate you
with creativity to tackle
the purpose of life.

Would you know that sleep?

Did you know that bowing
your head
allows you dignity to life
to not people incent
on status and power?

That shortage of breath,
the choking, the dizziness,
compressed heart;
all of these compare to the pressures
of the corridors

of creation.

So, bow your head.

Get that deep, deep sleep
that so awaits
the rebirth that awakens
your commitment
to your purpose of life.

Do bow your head
And get that deep, deep sleep.

(Jessen Williamson, November 2014)

**Appendix G
Sankofa Bird**

Photo Credit to: <http://www.berea.edu/cgwc/the-power-of-sankofa/>



APPENDIX H

Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview and focus group with Fafali Ahiahonu. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Fafali Ahiahonu to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher