

RESILIENCE AND HEALING IN EXPRESSIONS OF AFROCENTRIC EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK IN CANADA

Somnoma Valerie Ouedraogo, PhD, MSW, RSW | Chika Ikeorji, BSW, MSW

Faculty of Health and Community Studies | School of Social Work | MacEwan University

BACKGROUND

- People of African Descent (PAD) around the world constitute some of the most marginalized groups in many countries and are a specific marginalized group who continue to suffer discrimination and racism today (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2016).
- In 2016, the United Nations (UN) International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD), visited Canada and recommended - recommendation 94 (e) the need for Afrocentric education in Canada.
- Contemporary social work must constructively face the growing diversity of populations by aligning culturally grounded social work practice for marginalized groups like PAD (Schiele, 2017).
- Although Afrocentric approaches to social work hold significant potential for developing culturally informed models of intervention within the Black community, these approaches face challenges from mainstream social work.

The objective of this study is to focus on how Black communities navigate the challenges of embedding Afrocentric perspectives within social work education and practice drawing from their lived experiences with resilience and healing.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Afrocentricity

- Propounded by Molefi Kete Asante in the year 1988
- A mode of thought or action that places African people at the center of inquiry.
- It holds that Blackness is a troupe of ethics that involve religion, language, and power.
- Built on the premise for the transformation of attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors to achieve a new consciousness that allows Africans and Diaspora to view and evaluate everything from an African core (Asante, 2017).

METHOD AND MATERIALS

- Purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants.
- 16 participants (9 females and 7 males) from 3 provinces Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Ontario.
- Semi-structured interviews with key role players, actors and stakeholders such as educators, community workers, government workers and leaders.
- Key documents of seminal works from Education Resources Information Centre, Internal documents of the UN and UN Associations, Community Stakeholders, and other academic sources.

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis and profiling (McDougal, 2014).

Thematic analysis:

- themes were generated and discussed based on the responses of participants
- Profiling:
- reporting participants' responses in their own words

RESULTS

RESILIENCE



"Despite the suffering, humiliation, rotation, discrimination, and marginalization, Africans remain focused and strong and that is what makes the black personality strong" (Participant 7, Male, Alberta).

- Resilience means carrying languages, culture, and identity throughout over 100 years of slavery.
- Resilience is a word used to deny blacks of the change they desire.
- Resilience is blacks thriving in Canada despite what they have been through.
- Resilience is used to discredit or take away support that people do need.
- Resilience is to continue to march on, empower, and bring more allies and community members to advocate for themselves.

RESULTS

HEALING



"Healing comes when you connect to various aspects of our life such as the physical, culture and spiritual" (Participant 2, Female, Ontario).

- ✓ Healing is being able to impact and contribute.
- ✓ Healing is psychological and emotional safety.
- ✓ Healing is challenging the internalized beliefs.
- ✓ Healing is using theoretical approaches that form actions.
- ✓ Healing is unity and liberation.

WAY FORWARD/APPROACHES

- Educators should recognize the strength of Afrocentric education.
- Social work should apply practical knowledge and information from communities in education.
- Current curricula should include every aspect of Africa's history and culture.
- Adult blacks should be present for the younger generations because of their different experiences.
- Materials and resources should be designed based on the voices and experiences of Blacks.

REFERENCES

- Asante, M. K. (2014). Afrocentricity: Toward a new understanding of African thought in the World. In M. K., Asante, Y., Milke, & J., Yin, (Eds.). *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader* (2nd ed., pp. 101-110). Routledge.
- Bisams, (2022). Beautiful tree of life, mythological sacred tree, spiritual healing life concept (Image). <https://www.dreamstime.com/beautiful-tree-life-mythological-sacred-tree-spiritual-healing-life-concept-beautiful-tree-life-mythological-sacred-tree-image267434011>.
- McDougal, S. III. (2014). *Research Methods in Africana Studies*. Peter Lang.
- United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner (2016). *Statement to the media by the united nations' working group of experts on People of African Descent, on the conclusion of its official visit to Canada, 17-21 October*.
- Schiele, J. H. (2017). The Afrocentric paradigm in social work: A historical perspective and future outlook. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 27(1-2), 15-26. 35.
- Stockcake (n.d). Resilience amidst rocks: A small green plant emerges boldly through a crack in parched gray concrete, symbolizing resilience (Image). https://stockcake.com/i/resilience-amidst-rocks_930835_825321

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research project is led by Dr. Somnoma Valerie Ouedraogo [Principal Investigator] and Drs. Duhaney, P. King, R., Massaquoi, N. and Nyaga, D. [Co-applicants], Research Assistants: Chika Ikeorji (Current), Nafisa Moallim, and Precious Osadjere (Previous). It is funded by Insight Development Grant of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the MacEwan University Research Ethics Board on July 20, 2022.

ACT Now! 3rd National Conference, March 19-21, 2025 - Rooted in Traditions: Healing Through Ubuntu.