

# PRESENTATION

## **Giving Voice: Exploring the Lived Experiences of African Immigrants and Refugees in the City of Regina**

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# Outline of Presentation

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- ❖ **Research Methodology**
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# Introduction

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- ❖ **A qualitative study that explored the lived experiences of a sample of twelve African immigrants and Refugees living in the City of Regina, Saskatchewan (7 immigrants and 5 refugees).**
- ❖ **Like other third world immigrants, African immigrants and refugees to Canada contend with a variety of adjustment and integration issues and challenges.**
- ❖ **The transition from a third world culture into an industrial one means new immigrants and refugees have to adjust to new concepts, new information, new ways of life, and new political and social relationships**



# Introduction cont'd

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- ❖ **The purpose of this research project was to find out the specific issues and challenges African immigrants and refugees living in the City of Regina encounter in their efforts to integrate and adapt to the Canadian culture.**
- ❖ **With regard to objectives, this study was to collect data from individual African immigrants and refugees about their immigrant experiences regarding (1) adjustment to the Canadian culture, (2) family life, (3) social relationships, (4) racism and discrimination, and (5) access to integration services. In addition, how the findings from the data collected could be used to assist new African immigrants and refugees as well as other immigrants and refugees to ease their integration and adaptation efforts.**



# Literature Review

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- ❖ **All literature examined for this thesis explains the integration processes of new immigrants under some aspects of “pre-migration” and “post-migration” themes.** [A. G. Jacob (1997), D. Durst & A. Lange (2002), B. L. Nicholson (1997), U. George & A. Ka Tat Tsang (2000), H. A. Kanya (1997), E. Schuur, R. Koffler, N. Wimpenny, H. Giller & E. N. Rafield (1995)]
  - ❖ **Pre-migration:** reason for departure, age, gender, and marital status as four socio-demographic factors that affect integration.
  - ❖ **Post-migration:** integration policies, family life, social relationships, future plans, and isolation as variables that can affect the process of adaptation.
- ❖ **Impact of Literature on this Study:** Direction of research in terms of choice of methodology, sample selection, design of interview questions, process of data collection and analysis.



# Theoretical Concept

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## ❖ Unique Perspective of Racism and Discrimination

- ❖ The past and present Western perception of the image of the continent of Africa and its people is necessary for understanding the feelings and expectations of Africans who immigrate to North America.
- ❖ **“Racial Deficit Theory”** by Deirdre A. Royster (2003)
  - ❖ attempt to explain the differences between the black and white races as well as identify the characteristics that, supposedly, make white people superior to black people.

## ❖ Media Portrayal of Africans

- ❖ Negative image of Africa that are reinforced and perpetuated by the North American media are as follows:
  - ❖ Primitive African Image (Hawk, 1992)
  - ❖ Impoverished African Image (Hacker, 1995)
  - ❖ Diseased African Image (Hooper, 1999)



# Research Methodology

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- ❖ **Qualitative Exploratory-Descriptive study undertaken from a phenomenological perspective.**
  
- ❖ **The samples: selected from the population of the African immigrant community in the City of Regina.**
  - ❖ **6 Males & 6 Females**
  - ❖ **18 years or older independent immigrant or refugee**
  - ❖ **Permanent resident of Canada for at least 2 years.**
  
- ❖ **Sample Selection: contacted the selected persons and requested their participation.**
  - ❖ **Sought verbal consent to participate**
  - ❖ **Followed up with an official cover letter**
  - ❖ **An official written consent form signed prior to the interview process.**



# Research Methodology cont'd

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## ❖ Research Method:

- ❖ **Data Collected:** the subjects' lived experiences as immigrants in their efforts to integrate into the Canadian society, and the subjects themselves represent both the source and the objects of the information.
- ❖ **Method of Data Gathering:** involved an interview guide approach. The interview involved a one-time only, audio-taped activity and took approximately one-half to two hours at a convenient location of the participant's choice.



# Research Findings

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- ❖ **The Lived Experiences:**
  - ❖ **The Effects of the Absence of Extended Family Support and Network**
  - ❖ **The Clashes of Cultures**
  - ❖ **Experiences with Perceived Racism and Discrimination**
  - ❖ **Portrayal of Africans in North American Media**
  - ❖ **Law Enforcement Agents and Immigrant Relationship**
  - ❖ **Other Challenges to the Adjustment and Integration Process**
  - ❖ **Access to Services**



# Absence of Extended Family Support and Network

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- ❖ **Family Support:** Financially, Socially and Childcare.
  - ❖ The transition from the African concepts of kinship, family and community and their functions to, what they consider, individualistic and less community oriented society in Canada had made their initial adjustment and integration process quite challenging.
- ❖ **Isolation:** The lack of strong social support network is cited as the reason for the feeling of isolation.



# The Clashes of Cultures

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- ❖ **Respect for old age (or the lack thereof):**
  - ❖ The older generation in African societies are considered wise and experienced in the matters of life as well as looked upon as role models and advisors to the younger generations.
- ❖ The practice of children leaving home at eighteen or younger to live on their own is also considered by the participants as not African.
- ❖ The practice of looking straight into people's eyes while talking to them is not an African practice.
  - ❖ Looking down with one's hands behind one's back is considered a sign of respect in the African culture.
  - ❖ Some participants felt some Canadian employers consider this as being timid, unsure of oneself, or lacking self-esteem and confidence during job interviews.



# Experiences with Perceived Racism and Discrimination

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- ❖ **The African immigrants' experiences with racism and discrimination are related mainly to their perceived impediments encountered in their efforts to secure jobs or employments.**
  - ❖ **frustrations at their inability to secure jobs in spite of applications and resumes placed at several workplaces that advertised for workers.**
  - ❖ **being treated differently at their workplaces by either given heavier workloads or reprimanded more severely or seriously blamed for common mistakes than white co-workers.**



# Portrayal of Africans in North American Media

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- ❖ **The lack of balance in reporting news about Africa and its people by the western media with the focus always on the negative is the reason some of the participants felt that certain Canadians, particularly employers, see African immigrants as not good candidates for certain jobs or managerial positions.**
- ❖ **This negative portrayal is the only image of Africa that most people in western world get to see.**
- ❖ **Africans have always been seen as primitive, needy and incapable of functioning effectively and efficiently within the western civilized world.**



# Law Enforcement Agents and Immigrant Relationship

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- ❖ Conflicts with Regina law enforcement agents over the appropriateness of their child raising methods.
- ❖ Received warnings of arrest from the police and threats of possible removal of children from their homes.
- ❖ The need for sensitivity and understanding on the part of the law enforcement agents toward immigrants parents particularly from third world countries.



## **Other Challenges to the Adjustment and Integration Process**

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- ❖ **Adjustment to the cold winter weathers:**
  - ❖ Their initial shock at the extreme cold temperatures they experienced with their first winter seasons.
- ❖ **The use of foreign degrees and credentials:**
  - ❖ Experienced difficulties in having degrees or credentials recognized or accepted in Canadian context
- ❖ **Difficulty in communicating in the English language:**



# Access to Services

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## ❖ **Language training programs:**

- ❖ Some African immigrants found their inability to speak English fluently a great hindrance in their adjustment process.
- ❖ Some refugees unable to speak English complained about the inadequacy of the English language instruction programs and the limited access available to them to receive further instructions.

## ❖ **Settlement programs by the Open Door Society (RODS):**

- ❖ RODS needs to expand its integration services to cover all categories of immigrants who require such services

## ❖ **The African Association:**

- ❖ To provide integration programs for independent African immigrants who are unable to access these programs on their own.



# Implications For Social Work

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## ❖ Social Work Implications

- ❖ Knowledge and awareness of African traditions, cultural values and beliefs, religions, family organization, and history be part of social work education.
- ❖ Service delivery tailored to the unique needs of African immigrants

## ❖ Future Research

- ❖ For results that can be generalized, a larger sample is needed and location extended to cover other cities in Saskatchewan.
- ❖ Further research is also needed to identify the integration issues unique to each gender separately.
- ❖ The issue of negative media portrayal of African image in North America could also be pursued further in terms of its legitimacy as a factor in affecting the transitional adjustment of African immigrants