

EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF  
CULTURALLY SPECIFIC  
COMMUNITY-DRIVEN  
PROGRAMS ON THE LIFE  
JOURNEY OF AFRICAN NOVA  
SCOTIANS

Rajeane Boudreau, MSW, RSW  
Masters of Social Work Thesis  
Dalhousie University

# Outline

- Reasons for Conducting Research
- Background
- Research Question
- Methodology
- Participants Profile
- Recruitment
- Findings & Analysis Highlights
- Implications
- Strengths & Limitations
- Recommendations

# Why this topic?

- ◉ My experiences  
(broad participation)
- ◉ Reflection over My Life Journey
- ◉ Impact

Why a thesis?

- ◉ Give Back
- ◉ Is anybody looking at this?

# Background

- People of African Descent in North America (Education, Economic Exclusion)
- Building Resilience (AUBA, Community, family, spirituality)
- The need for culturally-specific initiatives
- BLAC Report on Education 1994

# Key Components

- ◉ Identity/ Cultural Identity
- ◉ Mentorship & Academic Achievement
- ◉ Interconnectedness of Human Life, Nature & Spirituality – holistic view to life
- ◉ Self-Esteem & Self-Evaluation

# Research Question

- How do culturally specific 'community-driven' programs impact the life journey of African Nova Scotians?
- Definition of:

Participation - "having a part in a program as learner or facilitator where learning was encountered and an impact was left on one's life journey."

Community-Driven - "any culturally specific program that has been developed and/or implemented by a community based organization including government or institutional services and resources that have been implemented as a result of a community-driven initiative."

# Methodology

- Qualitative Research – collection of narrative & story, way for people to interpret their experiences, also looks at understanding the social phenomena that can be achieved through observation, make sense of what cannot be predicted
- In-depth individual interviews – 8 question questionnaire
- Purposive Sampling
- Demographic Survey

# Methodology Cont'd

- Auto-ethnography – include myself as the researcher in the study, my own narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation, reflects on personal experience in a systematic way, positions the author and starts with my experiences of investigates a group or activity in which author has participated in
  - > Wrote a whole chapter on this – used question guide to form this
  - > Inserted it throughout the analysis chapters
  - > See it as a strength – embeds the researcher in the study, familiar with the topic
- Encoded in Atlas TI
- Thematic Analysis – making sense of seemingly unrelated data, systematically observing a person interaction or group, a situation, an organization or culture
- Definitions – Participation & Community Driven
- Strengths - in-dept studies and analysis of personal experiences, understanding experiences – studies how and why
- & Limitations – can be perceived as generalizing, lower credibility

# Participants Profile

- 31 participants – 17 female and 14 male, 20-34 (11), 35-50 (12), 51-65 (8)
- Rural (17) & Urban (14)
- Broad range of programs – academic, spiritual and recreationally based
- Pseudonyms used to identify participants

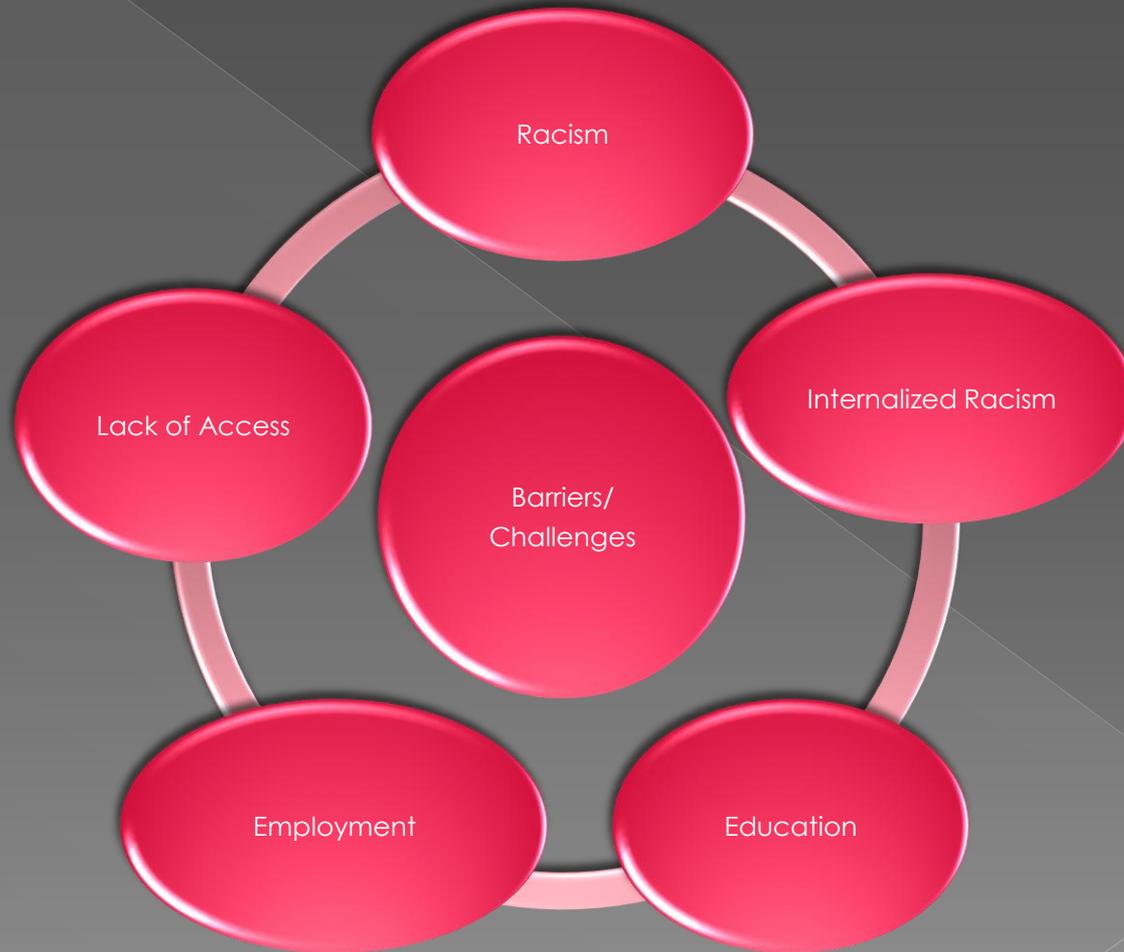
# Recruitment

- Poster
- Inclusion, exclusion criteria ( poster specifically says voluntary recruitment – mitigates conflict of interest as most participants were known to the researcher )

# Findings & Analysis

- ◉ 4 Major Themes
- ◉ Subthemes
- ◉ Framework
  - > Africentric Theory
  - > Critical Race Theory

# BARRIERS/CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED THROUGHOUT THE LIFE JOURNEY



# Participant Quote

*“it definitely pushed me to work harder. It pushed me to work harder especially in academics because I didn’t want to be looked down upon, I didn’t want to feel belittled because I wasn’t as smart as those other folks and whether or not that is true I don’t know but I felt that way.. that I wasn’t as smart so it pushed me to work harder, to be successful, to pursue post-secondary education, to get good grades in school. It was almost to prove a point.” – Tyler*

# Auto-ethnography – text box

Reflecting back, I can recall situations where I too, felt belittled in education settings. I can remember in grade primary raising my hand to answer a question that the teacher asked and then being the last to be picked if at all and wondering why. Thinking back to this incident, which occurred over 20 years ago reassures me that this left a lasting negative impact on me. It also encouraged me to continue to challenge myself and do what my parents expected of me even if the teacher did not expect the same.

# Supports



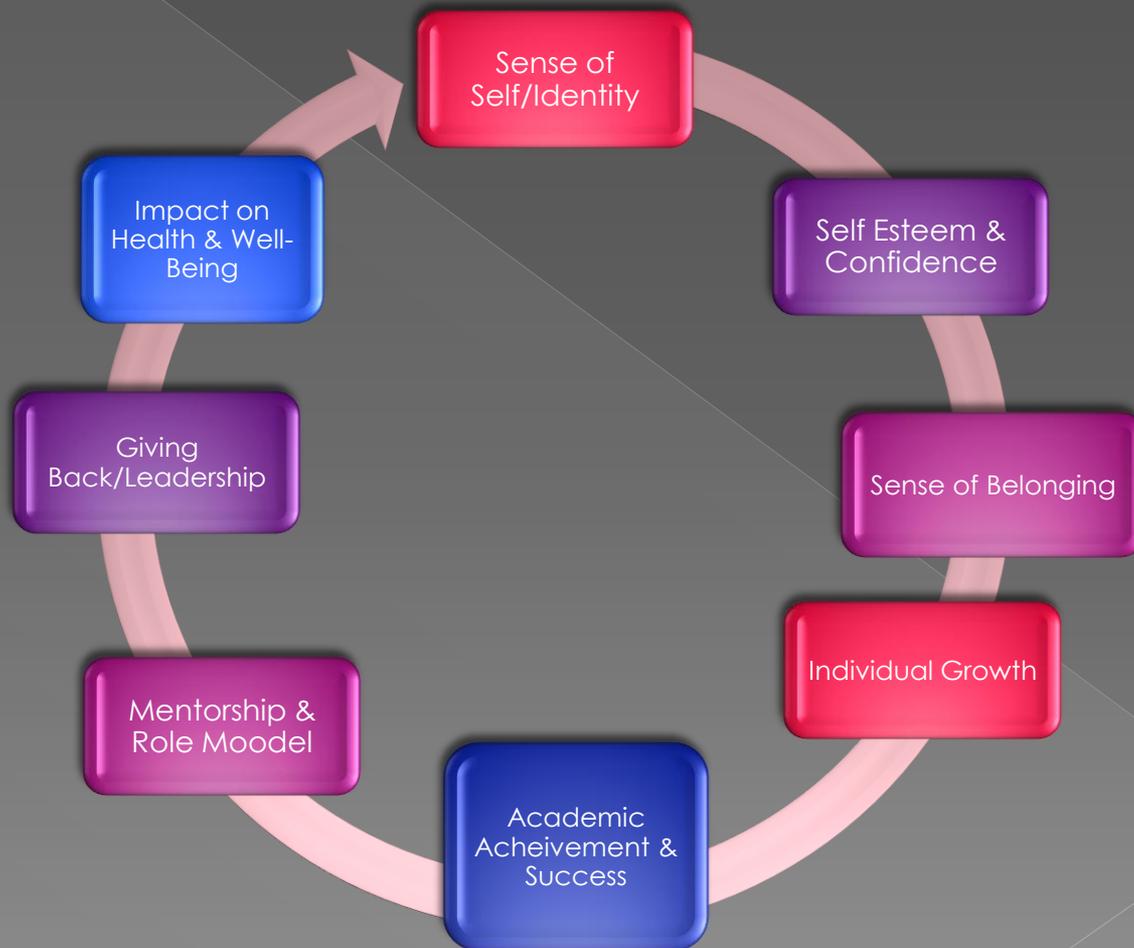
# Participant Quotes

- *“my family dynamics or values like instilled on me from my parents.” – Lee*
- *“family. It first starts with the family because like I said, this stuff that I talk about, this stuff I see around, I was exposed to that at like a very early age so that seed was planted.” – Malik*

# Auto-ethnography – text box

- My parents' teachings of family values has shaped and currently how I present myself as a young Christian ANS female, who is now also a professional. I believe that as a result of my upbringing which was founded on family values, that I have found great support and resiliency. Family support is one of the key contributors of survival and building resilience within this study.

# Impact of CS-CD Programs



# Participant Quotes

- *“ they all kind of had like a sense of pride like it all kind of helped give me a sense of pride in myself and the community like just not being afraid to kind of be yourself like to be that person from North Preston .” – Omar*
- *“so looking back it builds strong self, it builds your own character, you take that pride in yourself and in your culture.” – Chester*

# Auto-ethnography – text box

Finding pride in myself has never been something that I struggled with and I believe that this has to do with the pride that was instilled within me through my family, spiritual affiliations, and as a Saturday School program participant. Attending this program two decades ago and having vivid memories of my experience is evidence that this program meant a great deal to me and the development of the pride that I hold around my identity even as one of the few ANS students in my classes. Through a strong racial identity comes self-pride and self-acceptance which aids in one's character and sense of self.

# Participant Quotes

- *“So I think, it's instrumental in laying the foundation so that people can learn about their history, where we come from, our contributions to society. It doesn't leave me to feel intimidated by mainstream society. Because of that, I feel I have more confidence in my personal self and in my professional world.” – Betty*
- *“I felt empowered when I was a facilitator with the adult education and literacy and numeracy programs and life skill programs.” – Ben*

# Auto-Ethnography Text Box

When beginning my social work career, I struggled with my confidence in some aspects as I was often perceived as a student and sometimes intimidated by the amount of knowledge and experience that others more seasoned than I had. However, this did not last long with the support of ABSW and their encouragement and mentorship. This example, although more recent in my life, again supports the positive impacts that these programs have had and continue to have on my life despite age or current social location.

# ANS Community as the Foundation



# Participant Quotes

*“I remember there was a particular time when I actually did experience mental health issues when I was younger in high school and at that time I felt like I didn’t have any support because I didn’t even really know myself what was happening. I didn’t really know how to talk to anybody about the experience. The thing is that the relationship that I had with that you know, with the person that ran [community program] and the minister that I had, she recognized that there was something wrong. So because she knew me so well, she was able to ask what is going on. I felt like being in a relationship with that woman and like she was able to kind of prevent me from having further mental illness issues because like I was acting different than what I usually do because of mental health situation and she was able to kind of identify and check in with me further. Had I not had that person [...] mental health issue may have lead into a full blown mental health issue.”*

# Auto-Ethnography Text Box

It is through culturally specific programs that I found where I fit into society as a racialized person which evidently impacted my health and well-being. I would say that holistic health and well-being cannot be achieved without the consideration of one's culture and how that has impacted their lived experiences. For ANSs the necessary supports to aid in a state of well-being is quite multilayered as identified above.

# Recommendations

- ◉ Communication Within Communities to Establish Unity
- ◉ Equitable Access for ANS within Community, Education and Employment
- ◉ Marketing & Promotion of Culturally Specific Community-Driven Programs
- ◉ Evaluation of Culturally Specific Community-Driven Programs

# Implications

- ◉ Social Work Practice
- ◉ Education – Informal/Formal Learning
- ◉ ANS Community

# Study Strengths

- New Research
- Supports previous research based on the need for culture
- Specific to ANS community members
- Auto-Ethnography Chapter
- 31 participants – gender balance, ages, location
- Broad implications
- Can lead into future research

# Study Limitations

- Sample Size
- Most participants well educated, now established and had positive experiences in programs – class bias
- Scope of Project – age groups

# Conclusion

- ◉ Overall positive impacts identified by project participants
- ◉ Inline with Literature reviewed
- ◉ Necessary for Health & Well-Being
- ◉ Incorporation of certain components
- ◉ Age differences
- ◉ Gender differences
- ◉ Responsibility to give back

Thank you!

Questions