

Chapter 13

The Importance of Underpinning Indigenous Research Using African Indigenous Philosophies: Perspectives From Indigenous Scholars

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ABSTRACT

This study uses secondary data to discuss views of indigenous scholars on the importance of using African indigenous philosophies as underpinnings for indigenous research in order to reclaim the dignity of African indigenous knowledge. For many years, African indigenous knowledge has been marginalized and constructed using Western worldviews and methods. African indigenous philosophies were deemed non-existent and non-fitting to be in the academic space by many non-indigenous scholars who believed that indigenous research methods cannot be developed because there are no specific generalized frameworks. In correcting and reclaiming the knowledge and dignity of African indigenous knowledge, this study argues for the decolonization and indigenization of research by utilizing African indigenous philosophies which focuses on African philosophical beliefs and values, that constitute their own way of living, doing, and being. Such research will prevent indigenous people's knowledge from being misrepresented, divided, mystified, commodified, condensed, and misinterpreted.

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INTRODUCTION

Indigenous perspectives on research have been written about by foreign and interdisciplinary academics since the mid-1990s. Work is related to colonization and racism from an Indigenous viewpoint, and it must be decolonized (Harvey, 2003; Thaman, 2003; Absolon & Willett, 2004; Howitt & Stevens, 2005; Shaw et al., 2006). Indigenous people have been cut off from their traditional beliefs, spirituality, property, families, community, spiritual leaders, medicine people, and the list goes on because of the legacy of invalidating Indigenous knowledge (Absolon & Willett, 2004).

By resisting the use of dominant western worldviews of knowing and information creation as the only way of knowing, African intellectuals will help Africa close the gap created by over 400 years of dominance and marginalization of African people's knowledge systems. Indigenous scholars around the world began to criticize and reject Eurocentric dominance in research and academia in the late 20th century by articulating and reclaiming their peoples' research methodology and paradigms. (e.g., Battiste, 2000; Dei, 2000; Graveline, 2000; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012).

In order to reframe, rename and reclaim the research processes, African indigenous philosophies such as Indigenous worldviews; Ubuntu philosophy; indigenous research methodologies, indigenous research paradigms and indigenous languages are required (Chilisa, 2012), so that indigenous people have ownership over what they see as cultural identities, emancipate voices concealed in the shadows, and accept indigenous realities (Steinhauer, 2002). The indigenous philosophies and study of African Indigenous Knowledge have continuously existed. Established among the world's most seasoned civilizations, they are a key component in defining the identity and relationship of a person within their community (Langton & Rhea, 2005). Liquid and dynamic in nature, this knowledge and these philosophies are 'living knowledge' passed on and through eras forever advancing and developing, never static (Louis, 2007; Whap, 2001).

Smith (1999) proposes that indigenous research should be developed and led by indigenous researchers, analysts and community individuals to be authentic and to involve non-indigenous researchers, researchers, and community individuals to improve their understanding of indigenous knowledge and theories in order to ensure the assurance of indigenous knowledge and research that is relevant to indigenous peoples. Indigenous research could be a tool used for survival, mending and self-determination by satisfying a need to know and a have to be extend the boundaries of existing knowledge through a prepare of precise research.

Using African indigenous philosophies in indigenous research forms part of decolonizing and indigenization process. Decolonizing and indigenization of indigenous research, using African indigenous philosophies is crucial in the development of new ways to reclaim control over Indigenous ways of knowing and to reinstate lost ancestral teachings, values and goals (Gone, 2019). This requires a "long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power" (Smith, 1999: 98) in which First Nations, people have the right to self-determination through principles of "ownership, control, access and possession" of research in order to transform change for and by Aboriginal people (Schnarch, 2004: 94).

The aim of this paper is to provide different perspective from indigenous scholars and guidelines on how to conduct indigenous research. They argue that a research conducted using an indigenous lens that is guided by African indigenous philosophies is a contribution towards indigenization and decolonization on indigenous research. Therefore, any scholar who conducts research on, with or about indigenous

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