

# Community engagement with a postcolonial, African-based relational paradigm

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## Abstract

The article engages with debates on democratizing and decolonizing research to promote multi-epistemological research partnerships that revolutionize the research methods landscape, bringing new paradigms onto the map to advance new research methods that engage and transform communities. The argument in the article is that people of all worlds irrespective of geographic location, colour, race, ability, gender or socio-economic status should have equal rights in the research scholarship and research process to name their world views, apply them to define themselves and be heard. An African-based relational paradigm that informs a postcolonial research methodological framework within which indigenous and non-indigenous researchers can fit their research is presented. The article further illustrates how an African relational ontological assumption can inform a complimentary technique of gathering biographical data on the participants and how African relational epistemologies can inform partnership of knowledge systems. The use of proverbs and songs as indigenous literature and community voices that researchers can use to deconstruct stereotypes and deficit theorizing and community-constructed ideologies of dominance is illustrated.

## Keywords

African-relational paradigm, indigenous literature, multi-epistemologies, partnership of knowledge systems, self-identity narratives

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## Introduction

African indigenous scholars, students, and non-indigenous researchers and scholars can benefit from exposure to the diversity of research paradigms ranging from the dominant Euro-Western paradigms to the historically marginalised indigenous research paradigms. In recognition of the need for this diversity, there is a call for a fifth paradigm (Buntu, 2013; Chilisa, 2012; Romm, 2015; Russon, 2008; Wilson, 2008) to add to the typology of the current four Euro-Western paradigms: post-positivist, constructivist, transformative and pragmatic. Indigenous and non-indigenous researchers are encouraged to adopt multi-paradigmatic research perspectives (Johnson 2015) and delve in multi-epistemologies (Berger-Gonzalez, 2016) that accommodate indigenous paradigms and epistemologies. The challenge is for indigenous and non-indigenous scholars interested in the debate to define and illustrate research conducted from an indigenous perspective. Discourses on indigenous research often pose questions including: Is there one indigenous paradigm that one can roll out in any setting? How much commonality is there across indigenous methods? What is the role of non-indigenous researchers in indigenous research? What makes the relational indigenous research frameworks different from relational qualitative perspectives and relational feminist methodologies in conventional research? The argument in this article is that a postcolonial indigenous paradigm with ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions emanating from the cultures, histories, philosophies and lived experiences of those marginalised by Euro-Western paradigms is the foundation of conceptual frameworks that can be tools used as part of indigenous-centred research methodologies.

### *A postcolonial indigenous paradigm*

Any paradigm with an indigenous label has a decolonisation intention as its driving axiological characteristic. Decolonisation refers to a critique of the dominance of Euro-Western language and thought, cultural and academic imperialism.

To decolonize the research methodologies is to argue that people must enter the world of scientific and scholarly analysis from the path of their historically and culturally developed perspectives.

These perspectives are not counter to universal truth, but imply that we access the universal through the window of one's particular view. (Naim Akbar, 1991: 248, as cited in Chilisa 2012)

Decolonisation is followed by indigenisation, where researchers invoke indigenous knowledge embodied in languages, proverbs, folktales, stories, songs, music, taboos, artifacts, cultural and lived experiences to envision new topics, themes, indigenous-centred conceptual frameworks, methods, processes and categories of analysis not easily obtainable from conventional methods. The decolonisation intent further challenges researchers to make explicit the ontological, epistemological and axiological standpoints that inform the research process. What follows is a discussion of the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions that inform research from an indigenous relational perspective.

Ontology addresses the question of what it means to exist. Common in any indigenous paradigm is a relational ontology. The assumption in a relational ontology is that the

reality that is investigated can be understood in relation to the connections human beings have with the living and the non-living (Kovach, 2012; Wilson, 2008). People have connections with the land, with the earth, with animals and with other beings. Among the people of Southern Africa the nature of 'being' is captured in the adage *nthu nthu ne bathu* (I am because we are). This is in direct contrast to the individualistic approach of 'I think therefore I am' (Goduka, 2000). This way of thinking is embodied in the philosophy of *botho* or *Ubuntu*, (humanness). *Ubuntu* 'is the very essence of being human', according to Desmond Tutu:

It is not, 'I think therefore I am.' It says rather: 'I am human therefore I belong. I participate, I share.' A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he [or] she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than they are. (Tutu, 1999: 33)

Ubuntu requires respect and recognition of all things living and non-living. Relatedness is therefore at the core and permeates all research activities. A relational ethical framework invites researchers to see 'self' as a reflection of the researched 'Other', to honour and respect the researched as one would wish for oneself, and to feel a belongingness to the researched community without feeling threatened or diminished (Chilisa, 2012). A relational ethical framework requires fairness, realised through research that grows from people's needs, experiences and indigenous knowledge systems. It safeguards the growth of indigenous knowledge systems and sustains a balanced representation of the multiple realities and multiple epistemologies. Lastly, it embraces methodologies that integrate indigenous knowledge systems with other knowledge systems and promotes social relevant research by the people, with the people to address their needs. The four 'Rs' of relational accountability – respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation and rights and regulations (Louis, 2007) – form the core of this indigenous relational ethical framework.

A relational epistemology expresses African indigenous ways of knowing which entail the ways and practices of doing and the networks, relationships, connections and systems that make up and inform the reality that can be known and how it can be known. Elsewhere (Chilisa, forthcoming) it is noted the Afrikology epistemology derived from the African cosmology of connectedness and spirituality, promotes harmony and balance as well as critical inquiry and 'fearless aspiration for new paradigms' (Buntu, 2013: 6). Deriving its assumptions from the 'we-ness' and 'us-ness' (Nyasini, 2016), and the I/we relationship, it proposes an epistemology that is not African-centric or Afro-centric but a universal relational epistemology that cuts across and go beyond geographic borders and forms of Eurocentrism or other forms of ethnocentrism (Nabudere, 2011). The Afrikology epistemology is:

A universal scientific epistemology that goes beyond Eurocentricism, or other ethnocentrism. It recognises all sources of knowledge as valid within their historical, cultural or social contexts and seeks to engage them into a dialogue that can lead to better knowledge for all. It recognises peoples' traditions as a fundamental pillar in the creation of such cross-cultural understandings in which the Africans can stand out as having been the fore-bearers of much of what is called

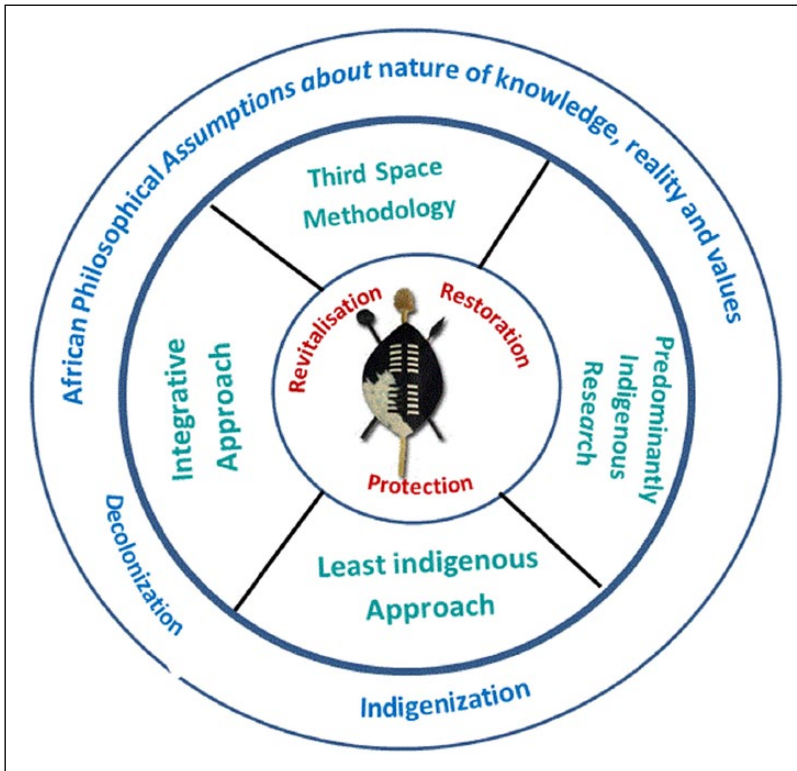
Greek or European heritage as fact of history that ought to be recognised, because from this fact alone, it can be shown that cross-cultural interactions has been a fact of historical reality (Wanda, 2013: 2).

From the discussion above, we can conclude that an indigenous paradigm, no matter what the label – post-colonial indigenous paradigm (Chilisa, 2012) or indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2008) – expands the epistemological and ethical framework options available to both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars. The epistemological diversity also informs multiple methodological frameworks that are accessible to all.

## Postcolonial indigenous methodology frameworks

Relational indigenous methodologies advance collaborative research that is inclusive of communities' voices. It revitalises and restores lost identities and value systems, and legitimises indigenous knowledge as content and as a body of thinking (Chilisa, forthcoming). A relational indigenous methodology is driven by decolonisation intent and a reflection on the philosophies and world views that inform the research process (Figure 1). The shield illustrates the importance of protection, restoration and revitalisation of valuable local knowledge. The outer circle captures the influence of African philosophies on methodologies, while the middle circle shows the methodological frameworks that grow from these philosophies. The relational indigenous methodologies can thus be viewed along a continuum scale that ranges from the least indigenised to the geocentric methodologies (Chilisa, forthcoming). Indigenous and non-indigenous researchers can reflect on their work and place themselves along an indigenous research continuum scale that ranges from least indigenised methodologies to geocentric or third space methodologies. Researchers can place themselves along the indigenous research continuum scale by reflecting on the following questions:

1. Does the research have social relevance and is it transformative?
2. Is the decolonisation and indigenisation intent explicit?
3. Does the research take a stance against political, academic and methodological imperialism of its time?
4. Does the research highlight potential areas of Western research incompatibility with local and indigenous epistemologies as well as areas of convergence?
5. Is there any concept or variable that is unique to the local phenomenon of study?
6. Does the unique concept or variable contribute to building a new theory or modifying existing ones?
7. Is there a local perspective, indigenous conceptual or theoretical framework that is used to inform a reflection on the specific context?
8. Are there unique ontological, epistemological, cultural and value assumptions that inform the study that are different from the globally generic or other culturally approaches.
9. What are the local or indigenous methods that are in contrast to globally applicable methods that are generic?
10. What are the locally relevant constructs that are in contrast to globally applicable approaches that are generic



**Figure 1.** Indigenous research frameworks.

11. Does the research contribute towards a new research approach that develops from an indigenous conceptual or theoretical perspective?
12. Does the research contribute towards the documentation and restoration of historical marginalised indigenous knowledge, cultures and values?

### *Least indigenised approach*

In this approach, indigenous and non-indigenous scholars agree on the need to contextualise the research to suit location-specific contexts. There is, however, limited attention to decolonising relationships between knowledge systems and to reflect on the diversity of indigenous ways of knowing and how they can be aligned to the methodologies, choice of data collection methods and reporting of findings (Chilisa et al., 2016). There is generally a limited attempt to equalise power differentials between knowledge systems and addressing prejudices and biases that privilege Western knowledge systems. There is cosmetic indigeneity displayed in the use of local languages to conduct research, translating research instruments to local languages and observing cultural taboos without necessarily translating them into research procedures that contribute to the research process. Ping Li (2011) argues that taking location-specific context into consideration is not

sufficient for such practice to qualify as indigenous research. The argument in this article is that indigenous and non-indigenous scholars can contribute to an evolving indigenous research agenda and research methodologies that start and go beyond just paying attention to location-specific context.

### *Integrative approach*

The second relational indigenous methodology along the continuum scale is the integrative approach. In this approach the decolonisation intent is explicit. Researchers draw from the relational, ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions to build and sustain relations and connections between knowledge systems, between academic and communities, and between people and ecological systems. African-centred conceptual frameworks serve as critical tools to provide insights into a researcher's beliefs about the research process, the research goals, its methodology and interpretation of its findings. It is an approach that promotes multi-epistemological research partnerships. In this approach, researchers address power differential between knowledge systems, engage in respectful criticism and build bridges for cooperation. They highlight areas where there are possibilities of knowledge integration and, alternatively, where each knowledge system can legitimately remain distinct. Berger-Gonzalez et al. (2016) describe a multi-epistemological research partnership where indigenous Maya medical specialists from Guatemala worked with Western biomedical physicians to study cancer healing systems. The Bidirectional Emic-Etic tool (BEE) tool was developed to promote reflexivity, reduce power differential between knowledge systems and promote knowledge integration. The BEE procedure is anchored on the assumption that Mayan indigenous healers' knowledge and that of the Western physicians are both the products of a rational processes of hypothesis testing and therefore valid. The BEE tool consists of five steps. Step one is the emic of self where each cultural group reflects on the variability of its knowledge and approaches to gain a clear understanding of the essential features of the knowledge system that guide the study. The second stage is the ethics of the other where the two groups try to understand each other's knowledge system. In step 3, each group presents its understanding of each other's knowledge system and highlight areas where integration of knowledge seems possible and where there is divergence. The fourth stage is etic of self where groups explore possible contradictions between mental constructions and actual practice. The last stage is joint ethics where both groups come up with an integrated research protocol to address the object of study. Berger-Gonzalez et al. (2016: 86) report that some of the Mayan criticism of the western physician knowledge was the logic of Biomedicine in 'treating the disease instead of the whole patient with his or her social support system' and 'the inhumane way in which the hospitals treat patients independently of their family support system'. In turn, the westerners questioned the accuracy of Mayan diagnostic tools for disease affecting internal organs.

### *The predominantly indigenous research framework*

There is a view that where the subject of inquiry is a local or indigenous phenomenon, methodologies derived from African epistemologies and world views should be dominant. The starting point for this view is that indigenous knowledge should not be

mainstreamed into conventional knowledge but should be allowed to coexist with Western sciences, because they are two distinctly different systems. Take, for example, a potential study of indigenous marital counselling in Botswana. The first step for the researcher would be to locate the study within a relational world view by addressing questions on networks of relationships that sustain marriages and looking for conceptual frameworks emanating from relational indigenous epistemologies to inform the methodology. The researcher in this context would go further to analyse and interpret dance, songs and rituals performed during wedding ceremonies to complement other conventional techniques of gathering data.

### *Third space methodologies/Afrikology*

Third space methodologies is a culture integrative approach involving balanced borrowing of less hegemonic Euro-Western knowledge and its democratic and social justice elements, and combining it with the best of indigenous methodologies that have a decolonisation intent. Ping Li (2011) proposes a mosaic style geo-centric research approach built on the Chinese philosophy of the ying-yang balance and the golden rule of balanced harmony as a framework that is inclusive of all cultures. The philosophy promotes a holistic, dynamic and dual perspective to remedy Aristotle's either/or Western logic or Hegel's both/or logic that has led to fragmented knowledge. In Africa, Nabudere (2011) proposes Afrikology as a philosophy that also promotes balanced and sustained relationships with all relations including people of other cultures, the environment and the living and non-living.

From this discussion, we can conclude that indigenous paradigms create space for indigenous and non-indigenous researchers and communities to build multi-epistemological research partnerships that legitimise all knowledge systems. In this multi-epistemological research, indigenous methods that communities use to produce knowledge are documented and revitalised, and new methods and procedures that evolve from the coalition of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems are recognised. In the BEE study where Maya indigenous medical specialists from Guatemala worked with Western biomedical physicians to study cancer healing systems, for example, while the Western physician used the conventional interview method for data collection, the Mayan indigenous medical specialists interviews included bringing a gift and sharing food with the interviewee and providing a ritual moment for requesting spiritual permission prior to the interview (Berger-Gonzalez et al., 2016). It is against this background that we present self-praise narratives as complimentary methods to collect participants' biographical data. We also present proverbs and songs as indigenous local literature that researchers can use as counter-narratives to the deficit and victim blaming theorising about Africans. Self praise, proverbs and songs are driven by a decolonisation intent and a multi-epistemological research practice.

### **Decolonising identities with a relational African ontology**

The indigenous protocol of a participant introducing one-self has become a common practice in indigenous research (Goduka and Chilisa, 2016; Karen, 2003). In mainstream research a participant identity becomes known through questions such as: What is your

name? What is your age? Where do you come from? This type of identity protocol leaves unchallenged negative identities of Africans 'in the heart of darkness' (Conrad, 1990) in disease-ridden Africa and of helpless people in a place of 'doom and gloom'. Identity narratives decolonise negative stereotypes and deficit literature about indigenous people by chronicling powerful stories that give back to the people, confidence and pride in who they are, their histories and their culture (Drahm-Butler, 2016). Identity narratives provide information about one's physical space, cultural location, ecological connection and relationships to others and to the living and the non-living. Through African ontologies of connectedness and relatedness to the living and the non-living, research participants come to develop awareness of oneself and of belongingness and of their responsibilities to one another and to the environment (Karen, 2003, Chilisa, 2012). Narratives can be at individual level or at community level.

In an edited ontology (Goduka and Chilisa, 2016), authors begin their narratives with panergic legends or self-praise stories which connect family members to one another, land and nature and also serve as historical and cultural journeys that they with members of their families or as communities have travelled. A self-praise story or panergic legend is a story that tells the history and the family tree of the individual, the valued attributes of the family lineage and any marked historical developments. The definition of the self is also in relation to the living and non-living, for example, the land, the animals, the birds or the environment in general. The legends affirm African ethnic and individual identities and cultural pride restore and re-establish spaces for African world views, histories and contribute to a process of decolonising the mind through a conscious effort of self-reflection and a reflection of the place of Africa in the global world (Mpongwana, 2016).

Africans suffer from loss of ontological security. Ontological security is defined as '... the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity' (Khudu-Petersen and Mamvuto, 2016: 59). This has resulted in an internalised unidirectional borrowing on knowledge from the West, and a 'captive mind' (Alatas, 2004) that is prone to uncritical imitation of Western research paradigms. At times, African scholarship exhibits intellectual's cultural betrayal, self-dehumanisation and inferiority complex' (Nyasini, 1997, Makgoba et al., 1997). In post-apartheid Africa, for example, one of the Black scholars at a workshop on research methods reflected that 'research is still a monster that can only be tamed by intelligent white researchers' (Zeelen, 2002: 68). While this may reflect a colonised mind, it also shows how the research process is divorced from the Africans and other indigenous people's world views and ways of knowing. A history of colonisation and racial discrimination in South Africa, for example, has only served to build and sustain a colonised mind with an inferiority complex. We live in:

an Africa where people have lost their self-pride. An Africa where Africans are not proud of their things ... An Africa where in the hotels of Dar es Salaam or Nairobi, even food has foreign names. When we fry potatoes, we call them French fries even when they are fried in Dar es Salaam ... an Africa that does not tell her histories. An Africa whose story is told by Europe and America (Lumumba speech, 2010).



African self-identity narratives are thus a necessary research tool in transforming communities and giving them back their histories, their identities and enabling healing from cultural violence that resulted from academic imperialism. Through these narratives, researchers can understand the participants as they define themselves in relation to others around them, the land and the environment. As one author in the anthology commented, his answer to the question ‘where do you come from?’ has always remained the same: ‘I never came. I am the son of the soil’ (Mpongwana, 2016: 67). The question he maintains, serves to disconnect Africans from the land on which they stand. In contrast, demographic variables in the conventional research process are individualistic and seek to understand the participants independent of their environment (Chilisa and Preece, 2005).

From an African indigenous perspective, social reality cannot be divorced from the self in relation to others, the spirits and the environment. Such perspectives have to be built into a democratic and transformative research process so that at every point, the researcher is aware of the participants’ self-definition. Below is an identity narrative that comes in the form of self-praise. The self-praise depicts Rampane’s genealogy; his father is *Rampape*, the son of *Mothofela*, the son of *Ntwayapele*, son of *Sekhutlo*. The buffalo is his totem. Through these descriptions of the strength and fierceness of the buffalo, *Mothofela* proudly likens himself to this animal:

*Ke Moruakgomo waga Rampane* (I am Moruakgomo the son of Rampane). *Wa ga Mothafela* (Of Mothafela) *Wa ga Sekhutlo* (Of Sekhutlo) *Mosimane wa goo-Motshwane* (Of Motshwane)

*Mmina kgodumo ya moselesele* (My totem is the buffalo) *Ya re goo! Ya re goo!* (Sound of the buffalo) *Monna fa a elosa o ipotsa a ikaraba* (You have to think twice if you want to fight the buffalo)

*E lathisa monna thobolo* (A man would throw away his gun and run away in fear of the buffalo) *A bo aikanye Setlhare* (A man would climb up a tree)

*A lebala gore tlhobolo ke tsala ya gagwe* (Forgetting that they have a gun)

(Chilisa and Preece, 2005: 53)

Some narratives generate knowledge on the history of communities. The Bakglagadi narrate a story on how a hyena led the people of Luuzwe to their source of water. The story shows the origin of the name of their community and how the community from time in memorial have co-existed and learnt from nature and the environment. According to the story, a Bakgalagari community (people of the Kalahari Desert), were in need of water source for domestic use and to water their livestock. Besides lack of water, the people had to guard their animals against predators. The duty of guarding livestock included studying directions of predators, through observation, the people can tell paw prints of each of the troublesome animals. They also studied the direction and times these animals moved. The people of Luuzwe were troubled by a hyena which came at night to steal animals from their stalls. Every morning, men would trace the spoors of the hyena, in order to follow it and kill it. The people soon noticed that the animal’s prints were wet

as it passed by their kraals. The men of Luuzwe found this discovery important. It indicated a possible water source located at the direction where the hyena came from. When the people traced back the animal, they arrived at a salt pan which had natural water holes. A man was sent down the water hole to taste the water checking whether it was too salty or safe to drink. The explorer went down the well, tasted the water and passed the gourd back to his people and called out *Tshola leuzwe!* (take and taste it yourselves). The water turned out to be good to drink. The community moved from their settlement which had little water, to settle in a place where they had discovered water. They then named their village: Leuzwe! The name of the village was later distorted to Dutlwe, clearly marking colonial intrusion and lack of respect for people's identities and their connections to their land and environment.

## Deconstructing, re-constructing and transforming identities through songs and proverbs

Women's identities suffer triple oppression that come from colonising cultural hegemony of Western feminists 'othering' theories and indigenous community constructed ideologies of dominance. Indigenous community constructed ideologies of dominance can come through proverbs or songs. In a study on adolescent sexual risky behaviours (Chilisa et al., 2009), the researchers asked adolescents to list proverbs that communicated messages about sexuality. Among the proverbs they listed were four on multiple partners as follows:

*Monna poo ga a agelwe lesaka* (A man is like a bull, should not be confined to one kraal). *Monna phafana o a hapaanelwa* (A man is like a calabash, he must be shared). *Monna selepe o a adimanwa* (A man is an axe so he can be shared). *Monna nawa o a nama* (A man, like a bean seed, spreads out).

The dominant discourse coming from these proverbs is that a woman should accept male promiscuity. Invoking proverbs allows researchers to engage in a dialogue with participants about people's lives using their own literature as a frame of reference.

In general, narratives in rituals, proverbs, songs, revered traditions, myths and folktales invite participants and their communities to engage in identity discourses, to deconstruct and reconstruct some of the negative ideologies that have caused psychological harm, embarrassment or humiliation, and to bring to the centre positive stories that repel shame and restore confidence in people's cultures. The engagement of communities in research also helps the researcher to understand different discourses that can be used to deconstruct some of the socially constructed beliefs. For example, Chilisa (2012) has used proverbs to explore community constructed gender ideologies, while Musyoka and Mertens (2007) used proverbs to challenge stereotypes about people with disabilities. Generally, proverbs can be analysed to reveal and express social, cultural, natural, and community events and practices. They can form sound theoretical frameworks that move away from conceiving the researched as participants to seeing them as co-researchers with authentic literature about their communities. Proverbs and languages as theoretical frameworks is now a common practice with research that has decolonisation intent (Chilisa, 2012; Chilisa et al., 2016; Easton, 2008).

Songs are another form of literature that can illustrate how hegemonic culture and power structures can impose knowledge on the powerless. Opara (2012) has shown how songs can be a source of literature that reveals African resistance to cultural hegemony and how they can also provide insights into indigenous philosophy and ways of life. The song *Mary Merima M'* illustrates African resistance to western cultural hegemony. The song has been translated from Igbo to English. This song according to Opara (2012) is a love story. The love song raises issues 'surrounding naming and identity, representation, gender, hybridity, language and religion' (2012: 78). Indigenous peoples have different self-naming or different ways of identifying themselves as individuals and marking their space within their society and their home land. Naming in the indigenous context can be equated to an ethnological research phenomenon. Having been born into the family, lived in the society and experienced positive and negative events affecting the people and their land, you name your children according to these experiences. In the song below, Willy's parents gave him a Christian name at baptism, and got him a wife with a Christian name, Mary. Willy's mother believes that Western ways are better than African ways of life. She sees African ways of life as a burden and a heavy yoke. In contrast, Willy, her son, believes in reclaiming one's lost past especially one's identity. In the song, Willy's mother wants him to call his wife by his first name. In Western cultures, calling an individual by their first name, is a sign of friendship. In many indigenous cultures, names/or reference to individuals change as their societal and family roles shift. For example, once a woman or a man marries, she/he is commonly referred by (her in-law family) as 'wife of' or 'husband of'. The speaker would illustrate ties to the in-law by qualifying this married person as 'wife or husband of my brother, or of my uncle or of my cousin. In culture abiding families, it is considered disrespectful and a sign of non-acceptance of the in-law relatives if their given names are used. As soon as the married couple has a child their reference or naming shifts again, to mark their position as parents. They will now be named 'mother and/or father of ...'). In the song Willy protests to calling his wife by her first name.

### **Mary Merima M'**

Since I began to go by the name, Willy, and my wife answers  
 Mary, it is now for me to be leaping for joy when Mary begins to  
 subdue me. That's an insult for me to bear. At birth, my mother  
 called me a beautiful boy. At birth, my father called me a fine boy,  
 they now decided that they would baptize me and took me to the  
 Rev Father, The Rev Father looked at me and I began to smile. He  
 told them to bring him candle and holy water, With which he will  
 baptise me. The Rev Father asked my mother 'what will you call  
 your child?' My mother said, she called me Willy. Willy - to be  
 jumping up! My mother decided to get me a wife. Got me a very  
 beautiful woman, Astonishing beauty - with an attractive waist! A  
 waist that fits woman's attire. I swear to God, I so loved her! And I  
 desired her! I took her home and we lived together. We lived for  
 one full month. Then, one Sunday, My mother came; asked me

what I call my wife, I replied that I call her my wife, She said do I want the yoke to weigh me down? 'Her name is Mary!' You mean it? I am delighted, my dear!)

(Opara, 2012: 79).

According to Opara this song illustrates how some Africans like Willy were resisting cultural imperialism and colonising ideologies. For Willy, changing people's identity through baptism disturbed gender relations and turned the family life upside down.

## Conclusion

Indigenous paradigms, more specifically their epistemologies, offer opportunities for researchers and participants to co-produce knowledge and for indigenous and non-indigenous scholars to engage in multi-epistemological research that is revolutionising the research methods landscape, creating techniques and procedures that make it possible to legitimise all knowledge systems. Indigenous research has a decolonising intent and predominantly works with theoretical, conceptual and methodological frameworks derived from indigenous knowledge, worldviews, philosophies and culture in general. African oral traditions for example, self-praise, proverbs and songs, form a solid foundation of indigenous literature that invite communities to dialogue with researchers and decolonise the academy so that we do not only hear the voices of the researchers. They also form the basis for conceptual, theoretical and methodological frameworks.

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### Author biographies

In the past 25 years Professor Bagele Chilisa has taught Research Methods and Evaluation courses to graduate and undergraduate students and has authored and co-authored 3 research methods books. She is author of *Indigenous Research Methodologies* published by SAGE. Her research interest are on transdisciplinary research and evaluation approaches; decolonizing methodologies and developing democratic and culturally appropriate research and evaluation methodologies.

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Dr. Kelone Khudu-Petersen is currently an Art Education lecturer in the University of Botswana. She completed PhD studies in the University of Edinburgh, Scotland 2008. Her field of research is in collaboration of indigenous community members and teachers for education of learners of marginalized ethnic groups. Kelone co-founded an NGO supporting women of ethnic minority backgrounds by giving them second chance to re-enter formal education and to equip them with life skills for personal empowerment