Chapter 10
Transforming Methods for Research With Indigenous Communities:
An African Social Sciences Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, indigenous communities are seeking ethical and meaningful research to be done in their communities, using transformed research methodologies. Consequently, researchers and practitioners need to be well equipped with integrative, systematic, and practical guidelines on how they can use transformative research, specifically Afrocentric or indigenous research paradigms, in the African milieu. This chapter defines how social scientists can make use of a transformative research methodology to conduct research with indigenous communities. The findings reveal that there is a need for Afrocentric or indigenous research paradigms in the social sciences. This paradigm introduces research processes that are both indigenous and transformative in nature. Additionally, the findings indicate how traditional research approaches can be transformed in practical ways unique to the African context. Furthermore, the chapter provides remedies for issues and controversies arising from using Western or conventional research processes in indigenous communities.

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the standards, ethical guidelines, research norms and applications established in research methodology by Western or Eurocentric researchers were obsessed with finding answers to "indigenous problems" thus relegating indigenous people to a position of passive research objects who were not able

to solve their own problems. In response to a growing concern for inclusion and diversity, the same Western researchers are tasked with addressing those research disparities (Chiblow, 2020). However, indigenous communities are increasingly becoming more assertive so that research methodology needs to be both transformative and beneficial to their needs (Chiblow, 2020; Chingwe & Makuwira, 2018; Mertens, 2017). Goduka et al. (2013) argue that, for research to be relevant to, and improve the quality of life of indigenous participants, it needs to be rooted in indigenous worldviews, cultures, languages and ways of knowing. Furthermore, research conducted in the African context needs to adopt methods that align with the lived experiences and cultural values of the community in which research is being conducted (Khupe & Keane, 2017). This means that African research must place local culture at the forefront when shaping research studies (Khupe & Keane, 2017).

Indigenous knowledge underpins the philosophies, values, and practices unique to a specific environment. These beliefs and practices have been used by people living in that environment to interact with their community over a long period of time (Munyaradzi, 2015). Goduka et al. (2013) opine that knowledge must speak to the aspirations of indigenous communities as well as their efforts, which should lead to the transformation of their existing socio-economic and political solutions through indigenous-based instead of Western-based research principles and practices.

This chapter reflects on transforming methodologies used by social science researchers to conduct research with indigenous people. Thus, it is guided by the following research question: *How can transformative research methodology shape social science research?*

Social science is a discipline concerned with the study of individuals and their relationships in the context of the societies they occupy. Social science includes various academic disciplines such as psychology, political science, economics, criminology and anthropology (Backhouse & Fontaine, 2014). Both authors of this chapter are criminologists. Indigenous communities want ethical and meaningful research to be done in their communities, using transformative research methodologies (Peltier, 2018; Reano, 2020; Snow, 2018). Consequently, researchers and practitioners need to be well equipped with integrative, systematic and practical guidelines on how they can use transformative research methodologies in the African milieu.

The chapter makes use of a literature review as a research methodology. The development of sound knowledge production is dependent on conducting a thorough literature review that synthesises research findings on a meta-level and identifies common themes, disparities, and future research areas. Subsequently, a literature review is a key element needed to design theoretical frameworks and conceptual models (Synder, 2019). This chapter will use an integrative review, a sub-type of a literature review, to evaluate, critique and integrate literature on transformative research methodologies to be followed when conducting research with indigenous communities. Integrative reviews address emerging topics by blending perspectives and insights from various authors and themes.

BACKGROUND

South African social science research, aiming to redress the wrongs of the past by the inclusion of pluriversal views, still follows Western processes of conducting research which continue to place African histories, knowledge, culture, and experiences of reality at the periphery while centring Eurocentric views. The hesitancy by researchers, who have received Western training, to use guiding frameworks of research that consider the sociocultural or historical relations of power, which perpetuate power imbalances

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