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## Beyond Binary Boundaries: Exploring the Complexities of Insider Versus Outsider Paradox in Indigenous Research

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### ABSTRACT

The positionality and reflexivity of the researcher within indigenous research, as well as the dynamics between insiders and outsiders, are examined in this paper. My motivation for writing this paper stems from my interest in indigenous research methods and their applicability to indigenous research, especially concerning autoethnographic research. Understanding the insider and outsider views in indigenous research, as well as how they influence positionality and reflexivity in qualitative and indigenous research, is another area of interest for this paper. Writing this paper, in my opinion, would help better grasp the insider-outsider dynamics of indigenous research as well as the functions of autoethnography in qualitative and indigenous research methodologies. To challenge the idea of the insider versus outsider dilemma in indigenous research, the paper reviews pertinent literature in qualitative and indigenous research. I have done this by pointing out that the concept of self-locating in indigenous research is complex and multifaceted. The body of knowledge on insider and outsider dynamics in qualitative and indigenous research is used to accomplish this. Therefore, the paper's premise rests on the claim that the researcher's self-location within the context of indigenous research is complicated and is not always the result of the researcher's initiative but rather results from discussions and engagement between the study community, participants, and the researcher so to speak.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Research, Qualitative Research, Autoethnography, Insider and Outsider, Positionality, Reflexivity, Self-Locating.

### Introduction

The paper examines the insider versus outsider dynamics and the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher within indigenous research. The reason for writing this paper stems from my interest in indigenous research methods, particularly autoethnographic research, and their relevance to indigenous research. I am also interested in understanding the insider and outsider perspectives in indigenous research and how they inform and shape positionality and reflexivity in qualitative and indigenous research. I believe well that writing this paper will provide insights into understanding the insider and outsider dynamics of indigenous research and the roles of autoethnography in qualitative and indigenous research approaches.

In writing this paper, I review existing relevant literature in qualitative and indigenous research to problematize the idea of the insider versus outsider dilemma in indigenous research- pointing to the argument that the notion of self-locating within indigenous research comes as intricate and multiplex in nature (Ademolu, 2023; Bashir, 2023; Tewolde, 2023; Bridges, 2017; Trulsson and Burnard, 2016). This is done with the existing literature on the insider and outsider dynamics in qualitative and indigenous research. Hence, the paper is premised on the argument that the self-locating of the researcher within the process of indigenous research is complex and not always and necessarily initiated by the researcher but comes because of the negotiations and engagement process that comes between the study community/people or participants and the researcher in question (Ademolu, 2023; Jabiri, 2024; Bridges, 2017; Innes, 2009).

From this, it is important to emphasize that because indigenous communities are part of the current globalization trend and transformations within the global society, with its processes and challenges, indigenous research is not only meant for indigenous researchers but counts as research that could be carried out and contributed to by both indigenous and non-indigenous scholars (Friel, 2024; Ademolu, 2023; Beals et al. 2020). With this, a critical concern and attention for a reflexivity approach within the processes and facets of indigenous research methodologies and methods will help shape the learning and unlearning of knowledge for both indigenous and non-indigenous researchers (Cowley and Kelliher, 2023; McEntyre et al. 2019; Kelly, 2014), while undertaking research and beyond. The reflexive practice in this sense should consider the socio-cultural, experience, values, belief systems, exposure, knowledge systems, and processes of the indigenous communities, groups, or participants who are involved in the research process.

The paper is structured into nine main sections. Following this introduction, the second section looks at the methodology used in the paper, while the third examines the evolutions and propositions of indigenous research. The fourth section looks at understanding the methodologies and processes of indigenous research, with the fifth section examining autoethnography as a decolonial methodology and process. The sixth section also looks at the insider versus outsider

dynamics and reflexivity in the indigenous research process, with the seventh section examining the researcher's positionality and the insider versus outsider perspective in qualitative and indigenous research. The eighth section investigates the complexities of positionality discussions and the ethnic bias assumptions within qualitative research. The ninth section then concludes the paper highlighting the significance of having a broader, nuanced, and critical perspective and evaluation of the insider versus outsider bifurcate in qualitative and indigenous research.

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## Study Method

A thorough analysis of the body of existing literature serves as the paper's methodology. To do this, a thorough search was carried out across several scholarly databases and search engines, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. This led to the employment of some keywords, including "indigenous research", "positionality", "reflexivity", "insider/outsider dynamics in research", "decolonizing methodologies", and "autoethnography". Additionally, to generate new sources and works from the papers that were found throughout the literature search, the references utilized by those publications were critically examined.

Numerous articles, book chapters, books, and other materials were found during the first literature search and were later examined concerning the paper's research topic and issues. The articles were chosen based on some important factors, including publication date and acknowledgment of the source, as well as their applicability to the ongoing research on the insider versus outsider perspectives in indigenous research. Throughout this procedure, a lot of literature from reputable institutions, books, chapters, project reports, and peer-reviewed papers was consulted.

Finally, a thorough grasp of the research on insider and outsider dynamics was achieved by analyzing and synthesizing the chosen literature. This made it possible to examine the research on how the self-locating of the researcher within the process of indigenous research is complex and not always and necessarily initiated by the researcher but comes because of the negotiations and engagement process that comes between the study community/people or participants and the researcher in question (Jabiri, 2024; Ademolu, 2023; Bridges, 2017; Innes, 2009). Finally, understanding the conceptual underpinnings of the insider versus outsider dynamics in indigenous research and its relations with reflexivity and positionality was made and analyzed comprehensively by the literature review. The literature also made it possible to identify the research gaps, with special emphasis placed on the necessity of conducting additional research on the principle of self-locating of the researcher in the indigenous research process and how it is characterized by complex and intricate dynamics and as such not just a mere process or instance of self-locating with a specific position or identity as a researcher. In the next section of the paper, I look at the evolutions and propositions of the indigenous research approach.

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## The Evolution and Propositions of Indigenous Research

Research has shown that many indigenous communities and their people throughout history till date continue to experience oppression and marginalization when it comes to their representation in research (Jabiri, 2024; Datta, 2018; Chilisa, 2012). The many aspects of knowing, unknowing as well as learning and unlearning have been largely questioned and opposed within mainstream research (Kilian et al. 2019; Kelly, 2014). Nevertheless, dating back to the early 1990s and beyond indigenous researchers started making significant attempts at questioning the processes of mainstream Westernized approaches toward research (Fournier et al. 2024; Cook, 2023; Chilisa, 2012). Thus, they questioned the notions of the mainstream research of truth as being single and reality as being objective.

Furthermore, there were questions regarding the idea of what encompassed research, inquiry, and the process of knowing and unknowing (Kilian et al. 2019; Chilisa, 2012) that has been dominated by the mainstream Westernized approach. This gradually led to the evolution of indigenous research as a new and alternative approach that is centered on indigenous knowledge as a way of learning, unlearning, and unpacking knowledge. These methodologies have come to largely be referred to as "culturally responsive methodologies", "indigenous research methodologies", and "decolonizing methodologies" (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). The indigenous research approach has therefore created space for critically looking at the dominant methodologies and Westernized worldviews that have dominated the process and methods of inquiry.

This has provided critical insights in reexamining the dominant notion of understanding how social reality is and the ways of knowing and unknowing. It has opened avenues for comprehending and revisiting as well as reexamining the sources, ethics, and values that underpin the inquiry process employing an indigenous lens that factors in the experiences, values, and knowledge systems of the indigenous communities (Muller, 2024; Moore, 2023; Kovach, 2009). The indigenous research approach is therefore premised on the argument that the process of inquiry should incorporate a methodological stance that takes as its primary concern the experiences, knowledge, and socio-cultural dynamics of the indigenous community as a way of building and ensuring reciprocity, reflexivity, and accountability within the research process (Kovach et al. 2013, p. 490). Indigenous research also encompasses the elements of positionality and ethics as its key values. This also brings attention to the idea of the insider and outsider dynamics and the notion of self-locating within research. The next section of the paper looks at an understanding of the methodologies and processes of indigenous research.

## Comprehending Methodologies and Processes of Indigenous Research

Within the indigenous research approach, it is argued that the idea of a single reality of objectivity is not valid, and as such an alternative that emphasizes a new process of inquiry that is centered on indigenous and culturally driven approaches of communities and people is much more important (Mckivett and Paul, 2024; Kovach et al. 2013; Chilisa, 2012). Indigenous research has primarily been characterized by four main facets that work in determining and enhancing the research process (Kovach, 2009). This according to Kovach (2009) “encompasses epistemology, ontology, axiology, as well as methodology”. With this, Kovach (2009) points out that within an indigenous ontology, there is a consideration for diverse realities that come concerning an epistemology that encompasses a structure of knowledge and experience that gives significant attention to histories, cultures, language, and multiple discourses across time and space. It also characterizes the very relationships that communities may have with the available structures, systems, and processes (Berryman et al. 2013; Kovach, 2009).

In addition, indigenous axiology as noted by Kovach (2009) encompasses the ethics as well as norms, and value systems which are primarily constructed with an accountability and relational lens. Attention is drawn to how the researcher is inextricably intertwined with the research and the communities as well as methodologies and methods that form and shape his inquiry process.

This also underscores the processes that shape the relational accountability that drives and influences the research. Therefore, the indigenous research approach proposes for research to be guided within a system of interconnectedness that paves the way for building reciprocity and accountability (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012), and concerns for the cultural sensitiveness of research. This provides avenues for ensuring the incorporation of people’s experiences and knowledge in a way that enables the multiplicity of realities and ways of knowing (Conrad et al. 2024; Datta, 2018; Kovach et al. 2013; Chilisa, 2012). This fosters a kind of inquiry process that facilitates self-determination, respect, representation, and above all social justice.

Another important aspect of indigenous methodologies of research has to do with the decolonization of research and the move away from the traditional methods of inquiry that have dominated the research process. This comes with the idea that the process of research design, data collection, as well as analysis and interpretation of the results, must reflect and emphasize the oppressed and marginalized realities that characterize indigenous communities and the indigenous inquiry process (Swartz et al. 2023; Yvonne and Collins, 2023; Kelly, 2014). This should be geared towards an indigenous epistemic notion that considers and facilitates cultural sensitivity and reciprocal relationships with the community. Chilisa (2012, p. 13) has noted that decolonization within indigenous research encompasses an approach towards centering the challenges, experiences, and knowledge of the colonized and the oppressed to create a space for self-determination, in recognizing their perspectives and ways of knowing in research. Through this, the perspectives, cultures, and values of the historically oppressed communities are brought to light- providing them with communicative avenues for voicing out their concerns and experiences. Diverse methods including the sharing of live stories and experiences from indigenous communities, songs, proverbs, as well as narratives, spirituality, and the cultural practices of the indigenous people all come as methods within the indigenous research framework (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009). The methods provide space for ensuring a relational process of accountability and agency for the communities, groups, and participants concerned.

Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the decolonization of research within an indigenous lens is not just about dismantling colonial and Eurocentric underpinnings in research, but it calls for a more critical approach that sees to the embracement of cultures and experiences of the study community (Chilisa, 2012, p. 14; Kovach, 2009) and their participation in the process of knowing and unknowing. Also, it is important to point out that the indigenous approach to research with its cultural-responsiveness character calls for the promotion of cultural sensitiveness within research.

This takes into consideration the engagement of critical theories which emphasizes the incorporation of diverse realities, ideologies, knowledge systems, dialogue, and the building of accountability within research (Friel, 2024; Berryman et al. 2013; Chilisa, 2012) with a concern for a reciprocal relationship with communities. In the next section, I delve into autoethnography as a decolonial methodology, approach, and process of conducting and engaging in qualitative research.

### *Autoethnography as a Decolonial Methodology and Process*

Autoethnography comes with the prospect of entailing a significant approach that tends to dismantle the norms and structures of the Western-centered notions and representations within research and the entire inquiry process (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p.4). The emergence of autoethnography back in the 1990s came as a response to the dominance of the Western-centered voices that characterized social science research and beyond.

However, it should be noted that despite the coming of the autoethnography approach to research, it was realized that the traditions, voices, cultures, ways of doing and undoing, making, and unmaking as well as knowing and unknowing from the marginalized underrepresented, and oppressed groups in society were still limited and less heard of when it comes to social scientific research and processes of inquiry. Chawla and Atay (2018, p.4) have posited that despite the coming of the autoethnographic methodology as an approach to social and human research, there are still limitations that in a way limit the voices, ways of knowing, and traditions of the less privileged and the oppressed in the human society. Therefore, it is imperative to approach autoethnography through a decolonial lens towards effectively and significantly addressing the challenges that come with the Westernized and Eurocentric dominance and characterization

of social research. This will help in adequately bringing forth the voices, cultures, traditions, and knowledge of indigenous communities and groups who are under the oppressed and marginalized umbrella of research.

This draws attention to the significance of embracing the post-colonial theory as a path towards decolonizing autoethnography and setting and recentering the voices, traditions, cultures, knowledge, and experiences of the indigenous communities and oppressed groups in research. That is, drawing an integration that encompasses postcolonial theory and autoethnography will go a long way to create important avenues for centering minority and oppressed voices, thoughts, experiences, and ideas in research. Post-colonial theory in this sense entails significant attempts and indigenous approaches to centering the experiences, historical underpinnings, traditions, and cultures both past as well as present at the center of the inquiry process and the larger research landscape (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p.5). Autoethnography entails bringing to light and centering the experiences, historical struggles, and cultures of the post-colonial and marginalized subjects and communities at the center and core of any research process. This should embrace both the present and past experiences and struggles of the post-colonial subjects and their communities in the larger approach and processes within research.

As noted by Madison (2012, p. 55) employing a post-colonial lens within the processes of autoethnographic methodology and research allows for creating spaces for centering and incorporating the dynamism within the processes and situations. This constitutes the present and past experiences and struggles of post-colonial subjects, indigenous communities, and the oppressed- in understanding their present experiences, and struggles, as well as ways of navigating and dismantling the Westernized and Eurocentric views and approaches to research and knowledge-making and unmaking. In the same way, the autoethnography approach comes with a self-reflexive underpinning and process that calls for a centering of the post-colonial and oppressed community within historical as well as local structures and contexts (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 5). It paves the way for ensuring the centering of the subject/object in the indigenous, historical, and local contexts and underpinnings within the inquiry process at large.

Approaching decolonization as an experience as well as a process provides a transformative structure in terms of reconceptualizing and reshaping the process of autoethnography (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p.5). According to Sium et al. (2012, p. II) decolonization by its nature and approach entails the processes of creating transformative avenues for the colonial subjects, oppressed, indigenous communities, and underrepresented groups in voicing out their experiences, knowledge, cultures, traditions, ideas, and concerns in the research process. This provides the enabling grounds for incorporating and bringing to the center of the inquiry process counter-narratives and approaches of the indigenous communities and groups within research and knowledge-making.

Similarly, Chawla and Atay (2018, p. 6) argue that the decolonization process encompasses the processes of seeing to and incorporating as well as bringing to light and centering the daily practices and performances of the post-colonial subjects, indigenous communities, and oppressed groups in the larger societal landscape. This paves the path for dismantling and resisting the dominant scopes and ideologies of the Westernized and Eurocentric perspectives and narratives when it comes to approaching research and the larger inquiry process. It further allows for bringing into close look and in tandem the colonial subjects and the indigenous communities and groups alongside the colonizer within an inherent process of self-reflection and engagement on both sides from the oppressed and marginalized within the research process.

Furthermore, autoethnography as a decolonial process draws significant attention to the ideas of history, resistance, home, as well as hybridity which come as essential elements within the postcolonial theorization scope (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 7; Sium et al. 2012, p. II). Chawla and Atay (2018, p. 7) point to the ways through which dislocations can stand to shift the understanding of what we mean by “home” as well the ideas of the “academic home” and the very ways that post-colonial scholars who are trained in the Western environment navigate their identities, the notion of “home”, “resistance” and make attempts in employing decolonial autoethnography as a means of dismantling the dominant Westernized and Eurocentric perspectives and underpinnings within social research and the entire processes and scopes of knowing and unknowing. It creates room for using the postcolonial theory alongside autoethnography in challenging the oppressive and dominant underpinnings, understandings, and structures that encompass the research process.

Another decolonial lens that becomes important to consider is the notion of hybridity, for instance as seen in Gloria Pindi’s examination regarding her subjectivity in terms of her Congolese identity and culture alongside her education and training in America and overall worldviews (Pindi, 2018). Hybridity in this way and regarding the decolonial process entails the emergence of hybrid identities as well as cultures which come to be reproduced within the evolving and continuous negotiations and navigations between the postcolonial subject and the colonizer (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 6) An example of this would be to consider Satoshi Toyosaki’s exploration of what is described as the “academic persona” alongside the colonial effects and implications that it renders regarding autoethnography and the entire process of learning and unlearning in research (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 8). With this, it is important to emphasize that hybridity comes as essential within the process of decolonizing autoethnography. It provides space for the post-colonial researchers and scholars to embark on recognizing and bringing to light their own cultures, identities, history, values, norms, and experiences alongside their current location and the surrounding cultures of the new environment and space where they find themselves in the research process. It further allows for reflecting on their historical struggles, cultures, knowledge, and experiences and at the same time seeing the very structures and cultures of the foreign environment where they find themselves- in navigating the research journey and its paths. It also allows for creating a centering of the indigenous cultures of the postcolonial subjects and their experiences as a way of challenging and dismantling the oppressive systems and structures of the dominant perspectives and approaches in research.

In addition, attention could also be drawn to the notion of resistance as a decolonial process and path within the autoethnographic approach to research. Resistance concerns a decolonial process that incorporates elements and structures that center on indigenous and postcolonial identities, cultures, values, and experiences as well as practices and performances of the oppressed and marginalized as a means of challenging and dismantling the dominant Westernized

approaches and perspectives in research (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 6). Postcolonial scholars could employ the post-colonial lens and narratives of autoethnography as an indigenous and resistant approach to research in engaging in cultural performances and practices that could go a long way to dismantle the Westernized and Eurocentric perspectives that have tended to control and dominate the inquiry process. An example that could be considered is “Presley and Presswood’s exploration of the Women’s March in Washington using dual-autoethnography” (Presley and Presswood, 2018). A similar example is that of Chandrashekar Santhosh’s “Not a Metaphor” which focuses on “the struggles of natives regarding life and access to land” (Chandrashekar, 2018).

Through all these, the emphasis is significantly placed on the giving of space for hearing postcolonial subjects and their voices as well as their performances, practices, and experiences and how it comes as a path for resisting and dismantling the Westernized and dominant scopes that shape and informs knowledge making and unmaking and the wider research process. This gives room for ensuring and creating space for an inclusive landscape embracing social change and indigenous concerns within a postcolonial lens.

The postcolonial approach to autoethnography paves a significant and effective space for carving a decolonial process that sees to the centering of the knowledge, values, cultures, norms, traditions, and experiences of the post-colonial subjects and indigenous communities. This goes toward providing a solid avenue for challenging the dominant Westernized and Eurocentric narratives in research, which allows for resisting the oppressive structures and systems that characterize the research process (Chawla and Atay, 2018, p. 8). Through the embracement of postcolonial scopes and perspectives in research as well as engaging in various autoethnographic methods and processes- including storytelling, narratives, performances, and practices, spaces are provided for the postcolonial scholars and indigenous communities and groups in resisting the Westernized ontologies and approaches to research. For the next section, attention is drawn to the insider versus outsider dynamics and the reflexivity processes in qualitative and indigenous research.

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### **The Insider Versus Outsider Dynamic and Reflexivity within Indigenous Research**

The idea of reflexivity within indigenous methodologies of inquiry is largely inseparable from the indigenous research approach. This is a result of the fact that the indigenous approach to research is significantly shaped by an adherence to the essence of giving critical attention to the ways of knowing the indigenous communities and their experiences as well as a priority for relational accountability (Friel, 2024; Cowley and Kelliher, 2023). It also comes with the idea of viewing reality as multiple (Chilisa, 2012, p. 167). This brings attention to the point that reflexivity is an important facet of research that is relevant for indigenous as well as non-indigenous researchers. For Chilisa (2012, p. 168-169) reflexivity encompasses a process in which the researcher's active involvement and engagement in the research does not pose a threat regarding the efficiency, effectiveness, and above all the credibility of the research. Reflexivity occupies the inquiry process that examines and reflects the influence of the researcher's background knowledge, perspectives, assumptions, and biases within the research (Berryman et al. 2013). This stems from the fact that the researcher is primarily the one who takes charge of gathering the study data, analysis, and interpretation and as such should consider their position and reflexivity in the research.

Therefore, it is worthy of note that researchers who follow the principles of reflexivity within research will work towards reflecting on their positionality and recognizing the cultures and experiences of the communities (Ademolu, 2023; Bashir, 2023; Cook, 2023). Researchers working within indigenous research structures are in turn characterized by the frames or elements of studying “on”, “for”, “by”, as well for “with” the communities in question (Blix, 2015; Evjen, 2009). This highlights the functions and relations that encompass the researcher regarding the “us/them” idea of power dilemma. It also looks at the expected outcomes and relevance of the research for the indigenous people, groups, and communities in question. Conducting research “with” and “by” indigenous communities consists of studies that engage with the indigenous communities as collaborators as well the studies that are fully carried out “by” the indigenous people themselves (Blair, 2015; Blix, 2015).

Also, research on indigenous communities primarily concerns the classical as well as the historical construct of studies where the researcher moves to the indigenous community, or ethnic group to study them (Blair, 2015; Berryman et al. 2013). In addition, research that is carried out for the indigenous communities comprises studies that are essentially undertaken to benefit the ethnic/ tribal/indigenous community. It is important to point out that this kind of research could come in the form of studies “by” and or “with” the community (Blix, 2015; Evjen, 2009). An important concern that comes in is about who gains from such research, as well as the ones who take the role of designing, structuring, and planning the research. Despite the complexity of the frames that entangle indigenous research, indigenous researchers are still faced with the questions of the kind of studies undertaken on indigenous people and the issues that are to be studied (Blix, 2015). This draws attention to the challenges that characterize the positionality of the researcher and its location in research.

It also draws attention to who should conduct indigenous research which brings in the idea of the insider and outsider dynamics. Considering the characterization of indigenous research, the “who conducts indigenous research” (the insider and outsider narratives) turn out to be much more challenging, complex, and intricate (Tewolde, 2023; Beals et al. 2020; Kilian et al. 2019). It is therefore important to consider who determines and influences the positionality of the researcher regarding whether the researcher is an outsider or insider. That is, is it the researched community or the researcher that determines the positionality of whether an outsider or insider? Another concern is whether an indigenous researcher who is a native qualifies as an unconditioned insider in the research (Innes, 2009). That is, could there be an ideal insider or outsider within indigenous research and who qualifies as such? With this said, the following section delves into the researcher’s positionality with the insider versus outsider perspective in qualitative and indigenous research.

### ***The Researcher's Positionality and the Insider/Outsider Perspective***

The idea of self-reflexivity is very important in qualitative research. This is very important when looking at the insider versus outsider dynamics in qualitative research. With regards to the insider perspective, it is seen as more of an emic view and analysis that is concerned with the behavior, attitudes, and experiences of the community or people who are studied as well as the meaningful comprehension of the social, cultural, and ecological distinctions of the people and communities become very important (Ademolu, 2023, p. 345; Kusow, 2003). On the other hand, the outsider lens is seen mostly to come with an "etic" view and analysis that deals with explaining a sort of cross-social and cultural distinctions within a scope that may be detached to an extent (Hellowell, 2006; Kusow, 2003). Nevertheless, it is imperative to be critical when looking at the insider and outsider perspectives and not just simplistically look at a narrow comprehension of the distinctions and their meanings and contributions to qualitative research.

Merton (1972, p. 24) draws attention to not viewing the insider and outsider dynamics with a simplistic lens and cautions about the dangers of having a narrow view of the concepts and how this can lead to a fallacy of incompatibility of the two, namely the outsider versus insider positions in qualitative research. Similarly, Brun-Cottan (2012) points attention to the problems that emerge from the so-called credibility regarding an insider perspective in research. This points to the fact that making a theorization in terms of the structural detachment and this case regarding the outsider could lead to a much bigger liability about the event that is been studied (Ademolu, 2024, p. 345). Within anthropological research and ethnographic studies, for instance, it has been problematized regarding the power as well as the oddity structures and dilemmas that become embedded within the positionality of the researcher (Ademolu, 2023, p. 345; Kusow, 2003). This brings to light multiple and unclear boundaries that lie within the outsider and insider perspectives and positions in research (Fayard et al. 2016).

The epistemologies that surround poststructuralism, postmodernism, as well as postcolonialism also in a way, influence the complications that characterize the narrow distinctions regarding the outsider and insider status within research. For instance, assumptions within a poststructuralist lens rail against the secureness and immutability in terms of the researcher/study community's functions and roles in the research process (Savvides et al. 2014; Angrosino, 2005). Postmodernism also places attention on centralizing researcher's analyses within their positionality contextually, with a recognition that the positionality of the researcher should be largely constructed in making and unmaking knowledge with the study community (Ademolu, 2023, p. 345; Angrosino, 2005) or group. The postcolonial lens and its overarching approaches also highlight the need for retheorizing the outsider versus insider distinction (Ademolu, 2023, p. 354; Hall, 1990). This is particularly regarding the bracketed and concourse positionalities in terms of the diasporic communities and groups that are racialized to an extent.

Within this intellectual framing regarding negotiation and pluralism in terms of identity, it is imperative for scholars within the research process, particularly for qualitative researchers to critically employ a reflexive approach that recognizes positionalities within the research. This reflexive approach helps in acknowledging what and how the positionality of the researcher influences and impacts the making and unmaking of knowledge (Ademolu, 2023, p. 345; Temple and Edwards, 2002). It brings into the picture the idea of a "critical reflexivity" which comes to be expressed in many means but more importantly highlights the need for scholars to employ more of a recursive and critical examination regarding their biases, assumptions, values, and experiences alongside the research under consideration (Attia and Edge, 2017; Berger, 2015) and the community, people, or groups concerned.

In doing all these, there is the need for scholars to make a continuous and transformative process in dealing with and addressing the positionalities in their interactions and renegotiations with the communities and groups under study (Zempi, 2016). In giving a critical look and in-depth insights and examination of the methodological as well as epistemological, and conceptual underpinnings and multiplicities that characterize the outsider/insider positionalities (Savvides et al. 2014), researchers can make a significant enhancement and work towards addressing the challenges that come with bringing out, making, and producing knowledge and research that is ethical and trustworthy.

Attention should also be placed on the imperativeness of scholars who are engaged in research and its approaches and methods to make it a point to acknowledge and recognize their positionality within the research and reflect on the experiences, biases, assumptions, values, and knowledge systems that they bring into the research process (Ademolu, 2023, p. 346; Boateng et al. 2021; Savvides et al. 2014). This is with regards to reflecting on all aspects of their research-including the design, methods, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data concerning the researched and the community under consideration and their values and experiences (Savvides et al. 2014). Above all, this will allow space for addressing the normative assumptions and underpinnings of a so-called advantageous and expedient insider position and role in the research process broadly speaking. The next section takes us to the complexities of positionality discussions and the ethnic bias assumptions within qualitative research.

### ***The Complexities of Positionality Discussions and the Ethnic Bias Assumptions within Qualitative Research***

Qualitative research continues to be shaped by a large array of complexities and discussions regarding the positionality of the researcher as well as the assumptions concerning ethnic bias in the research process (Ademolu, 2023, p.345). This takes our attention toward the outsider and insider perspective as noted in the previous section. Concerns have therefore been raised about the supposed automatic methodological privilege of the insider position of the researcher in comprehending the community, population, participants, or people under study.

Over the years, it has been observed that the insider versus outsider dilemma has occupied a significant point of attention when it comes to engaging in qualitative research. This has drawn a focus on the essence of looking critically into and examining the assertions that have been raised about sameness concerning an “ethno-racialized” and a straightforward assurance about having a wider understanding of the phenomena that are being studied within the research process (Ademolu, 2023, p. 348). An example that can be looked at is that of Abdi Kusow, who as a person of Somalian origin and his experience as an ethnographer brought him to a position in research as the object of the so-called “collective suspicion” when conducting research with people who could be referred to as co-ethnic participants (Kusow, 2003). This was in terms of issues that are related to the political, social, as well cultural dynamics of Somalia (Kusow, 2003). Collective suspicion encompasses a group or community's generalized sense of mistrust, caution, or skepticism (Ademolu, 2023; Hellowell, 2006). Another example that can be considered is the experience that was encountered by Moroşanu regarding the conceptualization of the “We/Us” dynamics in her research with her Romanian natives as participants- where notwithstanding being an insider herself, there were clear instances of distance and ambivalence that came up in the research process (Moroşanu, 2015).

The instances that are shown here come to point out that, is not in all cases that an individual or group shares commonalities that are always expressed as having an interpretation and or comprehension of the actual realities of the research community or participants. As human groups or communities, it is not necessarily always that we have a broad array of characteristics and systems that are always undifferentiated and absence of contradictions (Ademolu, 2023, p. 349; Bridges, 2017). It is important to emphasize that the heterogeneity that groups may have in terms of elements including gender, social class, age, sexuality, as well as paths of migration and the like may stand to override aspects of racial positions and the supposed commonalities, shared beliefs, and values.

It is imperative therefore to continuously revisit any form of narrow and simplistic view concerning the perceptions of co-ethnic or group insider status when it comes to qualitative research projects and beyond. Scholars could overlook and give less attention to the actual realities and characteristics of research groups, communities, and participants in the research process which may end up creating a kind of misinterpretation in terms of the research data, knowledge, and information that is being gathered and analyzed in the research project (Ademolu, 2023, p. 350; Bridges, 2017). The communities, participants, indigenous groups, and people involved in the research project may decide to hide some peculiar knowledge, information, and experiences as well may decide to adopt a mechanism of utilizing some form of bounded terminologies that could be culturally driven as a result of a so-called shared belief system, values, and assumptions of comprehension that could be implicit (Ademolu, 2023, p. 350; Hellowell, 2006) in the course of the research process. This may end up affecting and distorting the data and information gathering as well as the analysis of the research.

It is important therefore to also consider the potential advantages that may with an outsider-centered research approach within qualitative research as it could provide some kind of independence and objectivity in the short and long-run process of the research project or study that is being conducted. The impartiality of the outsider which may be assumed may provide some form of unbiased observations, data, and information gathering during the process (Ademolu, 2023, p. 350; Bridges, 2017). This could allow for achieving to some extent a form of data and information gathering as well as evaluation and analysis that is independent and objective because of the “naïve questioning” mechanisms that may be employed by the researcher in obtaining information (Ademolu, 2023, p. 350; Fay, 1996) from the participants, indigenous groups, people, and communities involved in the research. It is important to emphasize that just being a member of a group, community, or ethnic enclave does not necessarily guarantee the capacity and strength to know and comprehend the overarching and specific lived experiences and realities of the community that are being studied.

However, it is important to also emphasize the point that engaging in objective and fair research as an outsider scholar could also be problematic to some extent. This is because even though the scholar may be an outsider in the research context of the study they conduct, they may still have some biological traits or characters as well as identity elements with the study community, group, or participant, which could end up affecting or influencing the study been conducted (Hellowell, 2006). It is also significant that the strangeness and the unfamiliarity of the community under research or the participants are critically looked at as they may in some instances facilitate a kind of misunderstood and or decontextualized representations of the study community's belief systems, experiences, knowledge, and values in the research process (Ademolu, 2023, p. 351; Boateng et al. 2024; Bridges, 2017; Hellowell, 2006) and the broader research scope or study under consideration.

Furthermore, giving a critical look into the bifurcated discourse regarding an outsider versus insider perspective and scope within the positionality of the researcher becomes very important. It is also imperative to recognize the fact that collectives as well as individuals may have an inherent homogeneity to an extent and hence not recognizing this heterogeneity or characteristics can result in a misapprehension of any form of cultural, racial, or ethnic essentialism broadly speaking (Ademolu, 2023, p. 351). It is therefore significant to emphasize the benefits of engaging in a conscious and critical intentionality (Boateng et al. 2024) of the insistent and set positionalities that influence the study process and the larger research, especially when researching on a less-privileged, oppressed, and indigenous community.

To sum it up, it is important to critically investigate and revisit the simplistic and narrow bifurcate regarding the insider versus outsider perspective in qualitative research. This will provide avenues for significantly welcoming and analyzing the fluidity as well as complexities that may characterize the participant-researcher relations in the research process (Bridges, 2017). It will also help to give recognition to the shared beliefs, characteristics, and experiences and acknowledge the fact that they may not in all cases come with an automatic conferring of the methodological interpretation and analysis authentically or advantage in the research process (Ademolu, 2023, p. 351). This helps in addressing the researcher's positionality and reflexivity in the entire research process.

The next part concludes the paper by highlighting the significance of having a broader, nuanced, and critical perspective and evaluation of the insider versus outsider bifurcate and self-locating in qualitative and indigenous research.

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## Conclusion

From the discussions, it has been seen that multiple positions and identities could be taken by the researcher while conducting indigenous research. This largely concerns the communities and the people with whom the researcher carries out their research with. It is therefore clear from this that the researcher's position and identity regarding their engagement in indigenous research could take several and multiple forms encompassing taking an insider role or position or an outsider position within the same research process. The position and identity of the researcher may also shift from an insider to occupying an outsider position in the same research, as well as taking both the outsider and insider position on the research. With this, it could be emphasized that the principle of self-locating of the researcher in the indigenous research process is characterized by complex and intricate dynamics and as such not just a mere process or instance of self-locating with a specific position or identity as a researcher. This draws attention to the multiple dynamics within the indigenous research approach and process and the very ways and structure entailing power dynamics, social, political, cultural, economic, and historical concerns, and underpinnings that shape and influence the study community and its people together with the researcher who carried the research. It also has a lot to do with how the researcher sees their knowledge, skills, experiences, and beliefs alongside the value systems, experiences, knowledge, and concerns of the community and its people.

In critically looking into the dynamics of conducting indigenous research and the arguments concerning who qualifies for carrying out indigenous research, I am convinced that any researcher who has the necessary training in indigenous research approaches and processes and has learned and been trained with a substantial understanding of the philosophical foundations of indigenous research has the potential and capacities to undertake indigenous research. Moreover, it should be noted that in research approaches and processes, particularly within the processes of indigenous research, reflexivity should be a key element in the entire facets of the research project. Regarding this, the researcher within the indigenous research landscape should make it a point to ensure reflexive research conduct and process, where they recognize and identify their own biases, assumptions, beliefs, experiences, orientations, and concerns in the research they undertake and make provisions for not allowing these aforementioned characteristics to influence and distort their approach and processes of data collection, interpretation, analysis, and discussion of study results. In employing a significant amount of reflexivity in the research process, a space and enabling environment are provided that allows the researcher to give significant consideration for effectively recognizing their own experiences, interests, and beliefs about what the study community and its people hold and uphold in their social, cultural, and historical life. This provides the necessary structure and process through which the researcher does not influence the processes and outcomes of the research in meeting their interest at the expense of the study community.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that the indigenous research process although characterized by an intricate and multifaceted structure and approach that is complexly entailing and demanding, the adherence to the reflexivity principle within its research processes and systems allows for conducting transformative research which gives space for encouraging and developing the agency, self-determinism, independence, as well as the cultural-specific underpinnings of the study community and its people as a whole. This allows for all researchers, both indigenous and non-indigenous who are inclined with dynamics and complex knowledge and philosophical structures in indigenous research to undertake indigenous by adhering to the principles and tenets of reflexivity, reciprocity, and accountability in the entire research process and its approaches.

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