

Salvaging African Perspectives of Reality via Afro-centric and Intersubjective Methodologies

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Cultural studies conducted by local and foreign Africanists put the African continent on the world ethnographic map. However various errors and misrepresentations punctuate attempts at depicting African socio-cultural phenomena reliably. While it is true that other researchers and local people may realize the errors published work often pass as the truth about local realities. Some social and cultural anthropologists attribute deficiency in current representation of the social and cultural images of Africa on philosophical and linguistic gaps between the researchers and the research. This results in the trend where etic perspective is ever overshadowing the emic point of view about local phenomena. This paper assesses the relevance of afrocentricity and intersubjectivity as methodological approaches to construction of good-enough representation of African reality. The paper discusses how Africa can be made central in the study of African experiences as well as how the data collected can be interpreted from an African perspective. For the native and other Africanists, this may involve co-production of knowledge drawing on shared experiences, language and worldviews. This calls for an analysis of how the construction of shared meanings can contribute to the presentation of local realities in terms that underpin authentic African experience. The paper will show how a departure from the conventional approach of making people objects rather than subjects of research contribute to under- or misrepresentation of realities in local indigenous contexts. This will be realised by discussing the implication of the interactions between the researcher and the researched on the quality of the data produced. The paper will conclude by discussing ways in which mistranslation and misrepresentation of African realities can be remedied in revised and new ethnographies representing African social and cultural experiences today.