Black Based Research for practice and policy

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Abstract. This article attempts to argue for a broader discussion on what constitutes Black and Blackness and the need to reimagine research through a Black based perspective. To make this claim, this paper helps multiple aspects of conceptualizing Black and Blackness beyond the current singularity. Black communities are not a one-sided object that can be added and subtracted and have a conclusion or answer a research question. Such forms of universal western metrics of accountability have a way of discounting the variousness and compound-ness of Blackness. That is to say that Black communities are various and cannot be collapsed into a singular ensemble. Such a collapse of Black and Blackness that is supported and rooted in rational colonial scientific quantitative methods and performed numerically in such of truth has equally and unverifiable expunged Black life from knowledge making in ways that socially choke them. Such an expulsion is violent and connected to colonialism; and has contributed to social death of Black communities.

Keywords: Blackness, colonialism, anti-Black racism, research, ethics

Introduction

"...we begin to read that gap into every facet of the landscape, and the accompanying sense of exhaustion" (Glaude, 2021, p.130)

He describes how the white man had "woven (him) out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories." A history can make it hard to breathe, a circle "drawing a bit tighter (p. 104; Sarah Ahmed)

This paper 'attempts' to engage with the 'how' of doing research (among and with Black/African communities without necessarily having a final ending to what counts as Black (Burkhard, 2022; Nyaga, 2023; Gonzalez, 2022). I declare this as an 'attempt' since there is no one singular or linear way of doing research in and with Black communities (Nyaga, 2021; Torres and Nyaga,2021; Nyaga and Nyaga 2023; Nyaga, 2023; Gonzalez, 2022). There is not singular model or metric of measure that counts Black with finality. To finalize is to render Black immovable and objectified which in of itself is social death. Rather what we as researchers encounter within and without Black communities is an imagination rather than knowing what composes or is composed of Black and Blackness (Nyaga, 2021).

Such an encounter is a violent one and borrowing from historical and present-day colonialisms that continue to shape and give form to how we get to know what we know and the eventual denigration of Black communities (Torres and Nyaga, 2021). What this means is that if we must know Black communities and their everyday issues (eg. Mental health and addictions) we must be shaped by what is within and without what we consider as knowledge and its production (Nyaga, 2021). This means that we must work with Black historical trauma, values and realities in ways that are spurious and unending. Such a wager, I argue must be thought of from an ethical and broader intersectional politics of what counts as Black and how such counting might equally be a form of violent discounting of other lives that fail to add up to what is universal Black and Blackness all because they exist otherwise in terms of their age, sexual orientation, race and other social markers of life. I want to quickly add a note that intersectionality cannot be imagined without dropping Blackness into the mix and seeing the cascading power of disorientation and displacement of neatness and quietness of identify singularity. Blackness elicits tidal waves of a singular, lean and neat world. To make this claim is to agree that Black and Blackness cannot be reduced into a single rational truth (Torres and Nyaga, 2021). Such a claim must equally look at Black and Blackness as various (Nyaga, 2021), and always failing our effort as rational western researchers to know what we claim to know as Black (Nyaga, 2023).

To argue of such an epistemological failing of rational knowledge in terms of knowing Black and Blackness is to understand that Black and Blackness as a research methodology must resist universalism of what gets to be tagged as Black and the symbolic and material consequences of such

neoliberal market labels to those who count as lying outside the frame of what is universal border of being Black (Nyaga, 2023). This paper therefore calls for a reimagination of Black and Blackness to start ethically and politically imagining how Black is beyond colour coating performative actions (Nyaga, 2021) that are not socially and substantively transformative (Nyaga and Nyaga, 2023). Such a wager is grounded on the concept of intersectional Blackness to ethically start accommodating various innumerable aspects of social life shaped by class, gender, sexual orientation, and other social markers and for which Black researchers must consider in the process of knowledge making. The paper argues that for researchers to participate in transformative Black research, ethics must take precedent beyond the now fixation with pure knowledge which has become the ultimate measure of fixing the world. Black research must be seen to imagine rather than understand Black communities.

Black communities are not a one-sided object that can be added and subtracted and have a conclusion or answer a research question. Such forms of universal western metrics of accountability have a way of discounting the variousness and compound-ness of Blackness. That is to say that Black communities are various and cannot be collapsed into a singular ensemble. Such a collapse of Black and Blackness that is supported and rooted in rational colonial scientific quantitative methods and performed numerically in such of truth has equally and unverifiably expunged Black life from knowledge making in ways that socially choke them. Such an expulsion is violent and connected to colonialism; and has contributed to social death of Black communities.

I have argued in other works that even before a Black man is in chokehold by a police officer, there are hidden social and historical mechanisms that have earlier been prepared and suctioned through research to deal with the violent Black men (Torres and Nyaga, 2021). I cannot breathe is a common statement whenever there is a violent encounter between a police officer and a Black man. The chokehold locks out life. I argue that to breathe is to live. To breathe is to speak out. To live is to speak out and yet the current research methodology fails to give account of the Black speech. I argue therefore that before the violent encounter between the Black man and police officers, a psychic ground had already been prepared to stifle life out of the Blackman. There are other lifes that have already been slaughtered even before we see the physical operation of power on the Black man. To understand the death of the Black man in the hands of the police officer, we will need to give an account of those others who died before them.

I therefore argue from the start that research is the vehicle of violent colonization of Black communities; and as such is implicated in anti-Black racism. I want to also add a word of caution that Black research must not be an exercise meant to paint a surface and assume all is well with such a broad brush (Nyaga, 2021); commonly sanctioned by quantitative studies that seek to look for singular truth and generalize to the population. The

ethical question we need to ask is what happens to the compounded factors that gets to be expunged so that this truth about Black people can be exalted? Are there spaces of resistance for those marked as compounding the truth; more so when they are discounted as not part of the truth for white researchers to claim that there is a particular singular and linear truth about Black peoples? What gets to be forgotten and are there ways that we can compound this singular truth about Black communities to start thinking of the ways we can substantially transform the living condition of Black communities? These questions are grounded on the value system in terms of what gets to be counted and how that is mattered. It is a question of the value gap (Glaude, 2016) that continues to mark out Black communities as value less and as bodies that fail to matter.

To take an ontological stand on Black as compounded and intersectional is to remember their values and realities as part of the process of getting to know how we know what we know. What I mean is that we cannot generalize one truth about a Black community and paste it another (Nyaga, 2021). This epistemological cut and paste is in and of itself a form of social loss and death of Black peoples. To cut is to take out life, and the process of pasting that lifeless truth about Black people is met with translational loss. Such a loss is never seen as a loss because in the first place a colonial imagination of Black as already lost pervades the very process of knowledge making. Such an assumption must be called out as a form of Anti-Black racism that has and continues to perpetuate hate against Black peoples in the name of research.

This paper is calling out western research as foundational to anti-Black racism that continues to affect Black communities everywhere in the world in unique and compounded ways. To make such a claim is therefore to call for another form of methodological re-orientation in ways that decolonizes research toward ethically reconciling colonial atrocities caused on Black communities (Nyaga, 2021). This will mean a form of remembering the histories of colonization and perpetual anti-Black racism that inform research and how that is reflected in policies and practices (Nyaga, 2021). The attempt to mark and wage that the current research is white centric and works in ways that reduce, quantify, and simplify Black communities into a problem that can mathematically be solved or fixed is in and of itself colonial and violent to Black values and realities.

Such violence is an epistemological chokehold meant to take away Black life in the name of research. This argument is based on the position that research is a policing and profiling technology that is bent towards destroying, digitizing, and collapsing Black life in the name of truth. That truth must not be understood as belonging to Black communities, but rather market priorities. This argument places research as another form of plantation where black bodies are reduced into a property that can be sold in the marketplace for profits. This argument extends another argument by (Walcott, 2021) on property and policing and the ways in which Black was reduced into property that could be owned. Therefore, to rethink policing in

today's life and more especially within research on Black, where Black men continue to die in the hands of police officers and researchers, we will need to rethink the concept of property toward abolition of the research process. This paper follows this argument to start thinking of ways of abolishing how we conceptualize research more so when it comes to Black lives.

But to do that, I will have to conceptualize what anti-Black racism is in the context of research and attempt to open various ethical conversations through which research perpetuates anti-Black racisms. According to King, et al (2023),

> *Anti-Black racism is pervasive. Manifestations of anti-Black racism (e.g., Jim Crow, redlining, mass incarceration, organizational discrimination) are key contributors to current disparities in the health, education, and economic status of Black people in the USA (see (Bloome, 2014; Hammond et al., 2020; Hetey and Eberhardt, 2018)).*

All the social aspects of life named by King et al have material and symbolic consequences to Black communities to the extent of losing their life. Question of research and construction of policies that guide this kind of racial elimination must be put to question. Research is implicated in these forms of genocide since its through research that policy gets the power to operate in such a violent and insidious way to those marked as social deplorables just because of their skin colour. As such, our discussion of anti-Black racism must be oriented in ways that we implicate research as part of the foundation of anti-Black and anti-African racism within the current social spectrum. According to Scharff, et al, (2010), Black communities have a historical mistrust to research, leading to non-participation in major medical research (Wilson, 2022). While this study calls for a way to reimagine research in ways that are Black, I am not ready to justify research or colour it in ways that are acceptable to Black community. Such a change must be looked at as an encounter between Black communities and philosophies that direct how we come to know what we know and how such form of knowing erases Black psychic grounds.

Histories, values and ways of being of African and Black peoples must be central to any accommodating practices. There must be a take and give process between Black people and how we come to think of dominant research as a colonizing technology. To do that, we must first conceptualize what anti-Black racism is and how it is connected to research.

Anti-Black racism is a form of unique racism that is perpetrated among Black communities all because they are Black (Kumsa et al., 2014). This definition is both critically reflexive and cuts across a myriad of ways that anti-Black racism may manifest in social settings; among that being in the research process. I take this seriously since our focus on anti-Black racism must be seen beyond the question of colour-coating and start embracing how even those who Black and researchers are may equally be implicated in anti-Black racism in knowledge making. To be Black does not

give one a direct passport to doing research with Black people. It goes beyond and between the insider and outsider conversation to start asking questions that are based on value gaps in the research process more so when creating knowledge with Black communities. The act of cross boundaries between insider and outsider is not a simple one but calls for intersectional thinking and orientation. It calls for one to be prepared to take the risk and be lost in what gets to be marked as miasma. It is about not looking for how to bring light to darkness but engaging with darkness in ways that are ethical and complex, and beyond the clarity of light. The fundamental philosophical question that must be asked is 'how we could know light if not through darkness'.

> "*White became pure also clean; labor and Blackness became dirt or dirty. The text of one ad quotes Rudyard Kipling's phrase "the white man's burden" as "teaching the virtual of cleanliness," via the soap, "a potent factor in brightening the dark corners of the earth*" (p. 111. Sara Ahmed).

To be Black is assumed to be dark and evil and therefore dangerous and lacking (Mbembe,2016;2001; Potts, 1997). To understand the meaning of darkness, we must recognize the stories told of what dark is and why light is required to make those spaces transparent and accessible by capital and for profit. Research as the light, therefore, comes as a form of illuminating the dark spaces so that they are visible for development and civilization. It is assumed that once the dark alleys are visible and visualized then the space becomes civilized and forward looking. In short, to be dark and Black is to be backward and deplorable. That way, through research, those who are dark or in darkness can become more aware of themselves and as such can join the world of the living. In this theological excerpt, they who are dark or Black are not living and as such research comes as a redemptive measure to give life to the lifeless. Darkness is assumed to be a lawless state whose existence is based on perpetual warfare; in what Thomas Hobbes calls state of nature and war which is nasty, brutish, and short (Warburton, 2017).

In his work on the state of nature, Hobbes underlines that such dark spaces are perpetually in a state of war and that life in such places is brutish and cruel. In Western spaces, to be Black is therefore seen as a state of nature and for which research must be employed to bring some sense of order and law in a nasty and brutish place. According to Walter Benjamin, law (read this as also research since law becomes through research. Think of power and knowledge as tied with and in each other) is a form of authorized or legalized violence that must be considered as an antidote to the state of nature (Walter, 2007). The operation of legal violence must be sanctioned and authorized by knowledge for it to gain the power to organize and systematize spaces (Derrida, 1990). Research therefore provides the rationale for legal violence. This knowledge that authorizes the operation of legal power must be protected through a process assumed to be objective, rational, and reasonable; making it possible for law and knowledge to feed

into each other such that one cannot be without the other (Foucault, 1980; 1994; 1997).

Key to the operation of legal power is truth making and the reasonable process of producing evidence to support a singular process of ordering the state of nature into civilization; or what gets to be understood as space making. Such a form of ordering has had an immense impact on Black communities based on the everyday loss of life of Black men under police chokehold (Aymer,2016; Butler, 2020; Carr, and Smitherman, 2018; Graves,2014). The death of Brianna Taylor, and George Floyd reflects legal violence that continues to be suctioned and authorized by the way truth is processed through research and how law helps in securing knowledge production from monstrosities of dark alleys of life. Such deaths are a manifestation of a wider colonial practice meant to sustain what Eddie Glaude in his book 'begin again' calls the value gap (2020). This is the belief that white life is more valued than Black life. That valuation is given breath by research through the law. He says that such a belief that some life matter more than others is tied to the very existence of the republic and that for us to deal with this historical white, imperial, and colonial lie, we need to be truthful to ourselves about our ugliness. With a similar logic, I argue that research as a white colonial technology is the foundation that sustains the value gap and is grounded on the belief that white lives matter more than others. According to Glaude, 2021, we need to

> *reexamine the fundamental value and commitment that shape our self-understanding and that we look back to those beginnings not to reaffirm our greatness or to double down on myths that secure our innocence, but to see where we went wrong and how we might reimagine or recreate ourselves in light of who we initially set out to be. This requires an unflinching encounter with the lie at the heart of our history" p.194*

Working with Glaude on the value gap, this paper argues that if we are going to go beyond this form of imperial epistemological thinking in research, then we must start changing and challenging the prevailing epistemological value gap that marks Black bodies as lesser than white. We will need to tell ourselves a different story that is otherwise to the everyday story we tell ourselves about our innocence to the prevailing atrocities meted on Black communities.

As researchers working and doing investigation work among and with Black communities, we are at the very heart of this colonial project that continues to stifle the existence of Black communities by taking away their breath. This is an epistemological chokehold that we continue sustaining on communities all because of self elaboration and exultation. I argue that for us to understand and bear witness to what happened to Brianna Taylor, George Floyd and many other Black Lives that have died under the watch of the state laws and policies, we will need to understand and give an account of how such losses were created, established and

authorized by research and made operational and functioning by law. Such kind of racial violence perpetrated by research and using the infrastructure of law must be lamented in ways that help provide an account of such deaths in ways that are ethical. This is an ethical quandary that each researcher worth their place in knowledge making must hesitate to question their place in the death and disappearance of Black peoples. It is easy to imagine Black loss as singular; and yet its ethical to imagine such deaths as compounding, various and complex. We will have committed anti-Black racism when we simplify such a loss as linear and go ahead and serialize or digitize it for the sake of understanding Blackness and Black peoples. It is therefore important and ethical to think of how such a loss is intersectional and systemic. This means that the loss is connected to other losses that sometimes may not be seen in social media and yet they continue to exist at the detriment of Black communities. Such losses are a manifestation of a broader systemic operation of racism that continues to disappear Black bodies from the republic and for which research has continued to support and affirm.

As such, Anti-Black racism in everyday social life, must be seen from the context of knowledge making and how such form of systemic Black hate is made real by everyday practices that are often overlooked, concealed, and seen as innocent acts of helping or saving Black communities (Chelala,1997; Kirp, 1995). Innocence is the focus that this paper tries to engage with to open new ways of doing research on and with Black communities; based on what has been done previously and how that would help reinvent new research orientations that are grounded on Black histories, values and realities. This innocence operates at an insidious and systematic level and is hidden from our physical eyes and as such, any intersectional researcher must open their third eye to start making sense beyond what we see. This is because for us as researchers within and without Black communities, we must be open to the hidden aspect of oppression riding on spaces that goes beyond the reach of what we can see with our physical eyes. This is a question of operating beyond what we can see and that helps research to operate at the psychic level. As such we need to understand and imagine knowledge from the place of a third eye; to start imagining what people must go through and our implication to that horrendous journey people trek all because we want to know them. The third eye helps open the hidden areas of the unconscious mind and bring forth new forms of imagination of what we know as knowledge. Third is a place of imagining our own precariousness to knowing the other and ways in which we need to open new avenues of rethinking knowledge from a context that is familiar to participants who are Black.

To operate at a psychic level is to think of knowledge as intersectional and reflexive. Such intersectional work within and without the complexities of identity politics must fail any politics and positions that are linear and neat in terms of understanding what Black and Blackness entails. Intersectionality as a third wave form process and practice must

imagine how we need to place ethics above knowledge; in that people's lives, histories, values, and realities are more important than knowledge. The assumption is that the two human eyes help maintain and give credence to the value gap and the belief that research is a redeemer profession. Such a colonial belief system that researchers are saviors of the deplorable Black others is fueled by the heteronormative lie that looks at researchers as experts in Black people's lives. Such an epistemological lie is in and of itself a form of anti-Black racism (Nyaga, 2023) that continues to double down any gains made in terms of Black transformative work. To open the third eye is to pay attention to how histories, values and realities of Black people must be made sufficient in the process of knowledge making.

This paper is therefore an indictment of research as colonial violence and that for us to decolonize, we will need to speak of this violence from a historical point of view. This way of understanding research helps think and acknowledge research as a violent encounter between the researcher and the researcher (Chilisa, 2012; Elliott, 2005; Fraser, 2004; Gegeo, and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Smith,2004). That view can only be imagined through reimagining our understanding of research and uncoupling rational thinking as the quintessential human condition (Chilisa, 2012; Gegeo, and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). The act of employing emotional and by extension instinct to come to terms with elsewhere ness where we lose our familiarity. This elsewhere is a point of starting afresh without any formulae. Elsewhere is equally a place of lose and vulnerability where we try new things since what we have taken for granted is not working or helping in resolving prevalent anti-Black racism. This elsewhere is a place that has been left behind or is below the familiar. It is a strange place where we cannot hold onto any form. According to elsewhere is well elaborated by Glaude (2020);

> *"Elsewhere is the physical or metaphysical place that affords the space to breath, to refuse adjustment and accommodation to the demands of society, and to live apart, if just for a time, from the deadly assumption that threaten to smoother. Living elsewhere can offer you a moment of rest, to catch your breath and ready yourself to enter the fray once again, not so much whole and healed but battled-scarred and prepared for yet another round"* p.13.

This calls for a psychic power of knowing that we need others as part of knowledge making (Gegeo, and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). The assumption is that we cannot understand this epistemological direction without them being part of knowledge making. The other becomes an ethical demand to the very process of knowledge making (Harrington, 2005). This means that the other is an opening or a window to imagine our social life in ways that are various, compounded, intersectional and strange. We can imagine ourselves through the eyes of the other as an ethical requirement if we are ready to be vulnerable, non-violent, and imaginative (Butler, 2020; Foucault, 1993; Peters, 2022). This creates a space of vulnerability within the process of knowledge making, translating to

community focused knowledge making informed by the ethics of non-violence (Butler, 2020; Gegeo, and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Harrington, 2005). This vulnerability is weak and fragile when left to the researcher and as such those who have overtime been marked as the unknowing must be active in the moment of knowing to help unwrap the innocent knower who thinks of themselves as an expert. What this means is to save the knower from their heteronormative knowing. Psychic abilities in knowledge making is therefore ethically required to open new and unique ways of knowledge making while simultaneously reconciling colonial atrocities meted on Black communities.

Such an epistemological approach to research within and without Black communities will need to not only seek to know but also bear witness to the history of colonial lies and myths that some lives are more valued than others (Glaude, 2020). Psychic abilities in research employ a spiritual approach as a fundamental ethical requirement in knowledge making, therefore making knowledge process as equally a point of healing colonial atrocities that continue to be manifested on Black bodies. Spirit has overtime been erased in knowledge making (Foucault, 1998 2005); and as such we must imagine how infusion of spiritual knowledge is possible and ethical (Wane et al, 2017). This spirit-based epistemology and methodology is a form of giving account to those who have died in the hands of researchers and how they must be included in the process of knowledge making (Torres and Nyaga, 2021). To do this, I plan to highlight some major psychic abilities of paying attention to values, histories, and realities of Black community as a necessary ethical practice in research (Nyaga, 2024).

I argue to the effect that because research is known to employ a culturally sensitive approach as a way of reconciling such historical hate against Black communities; we must equally pose question into how such forms of methodological performances meant to repair Black trauma equally postponed any substantive change there creating a situation of change while not changing (Glaude, 2020). This form of methodological postering has overtime been implicated in new forms of anti-Black racism based on their calculated forgetting of Black histories, values and realities as a fundamental ethical demand in knowledge making. According Glaude, 2016 discussing about this forgetting says.

> "The primary purpose of disremembering is to hide from view the value gap and to protect our national innocence: to keep the ugliness of our deeds at arm's length or buried deep in our national subconscious" p. 49.

This forms of culturalization of knowledge making employs colour coated methods (Nyaga, 2021) and methodology to continue the lie that researchers are knowers and experts of Black lives, therefore devaluing and discount their lived realities as knowledge. This argument is based on the knowledge value gap where the knower or the producer of knowledge becomes a privileged self while the consumer (mostly seen as Black

communities) is relegated to sites of violence and oppression, justifying the white researcher as the savior of the deplorable consumer. Such savior practices that continue to be everyday practices in western knowledge making are sites of violence to all Black communities. It is the new veneer that has been employed by neoliberal economic research that performs Blackness without necessarily making substantive decisions and changes that help bring transformative outcomes in Black communities. It is this kind of methodological performance that has been naturalized within knowledge making that is the basis of this paper. In the next section, critically engage with the 'how' of valuing Black communities in ways that are culturally and socially informed. To do this, this paper looks at Black values, realities, and histories as a site of uncovering colonial legacies in knowledge making.

1. Values

In many meetings that I have so far attended, the white belief that we must mark outside or below as Black and dark or weedy is a common white statement that continues to maintain the lie that white people are more valued than Black peoples. In those meetings, I constantly hear that we need to come out of the weeds or leave the weeds below so that we can see far. Key is the fact that what that statement fails to tell is how such a statement commits colonial violence to nature (read Black bodies as natured beings). If we are going to think of weed as part of nature, what these people are saying is to create or forget nature for us to be civilized. On many occasions, I have taken up the concept and helped them understand what that really means and that it carries a lot of colonial violence meted on Black peoples. While some do imagine where I am coming from, others have continued to express their thoughts using the same statement which seems to be a common phrase. I stand here to correct this hidden form of anti-Black racism that is pervasive and normalised. I say this based on the everyday white statements about broken Black that we employ when expressing ourselves and our social beliefs; and how we come to embody and perform those statements in our everyday act to a point of manifesting them as if they were our own.

According to Butler (1995;1996;2005), speech acts on us as we act on it. While we become what we state, we can equally resist by going against the foundation of those statements without our knowledge. This slippage of the speech can help reinvent and reorient the direction of original speech in ways that we never intended and therefore opening new vents for change. This is the point of transforming how we may evaluate what we know in new ways we never intended.

Valuing what we know at the detriment of ethics

As discussed earlier, research continues to sustain the value gap and provide a safe space to continue the lie that white lives are more valued than Black lives. When the Black Lives Matter called for recognition that Black communities have never mattered and that it's time we thought of Black

lives as valued lives, what that means is that Black lives have to start to be accounted for. The question of accountability in Black research means not just giving numerical data but making those numbers grief the death of many Black communities who continue to be degraded in disproportionate ways compared to white ones. The metrics of grading has been well tailored to devalue those who are Black and mark them as deplorables. What that means is that they cannot be added into the metric of science and as such they must be discarded and erased from space. A rejoinder to the claim than Black life matter was what came to be called all life matter. The issue is not that other lives do not matter when we say that Black life matters. We would not be that simple to erase other lives. Such a methodology of erasure which is numerical is simple and would deny us meeting substantive change. What we mean when we say Black life matter is that such lifes have previously been numerically erased and devalued in ways that has led to genocide. It is upon us to pay attention to race based data (Qiang, 2024) that has been missing in terms of how we look and implement policies that borrow their power from research.

Part of the role of any researcher doing research with and among Black communities is to undertake a literature review to identify existing research and findings on a particular topic touching on Black peoples. We need to note that such literature exists because others have been denied the right to breath. Such a review process helps us to draw research questions based on the prevailing gaps in research. This scholarly gap is among the ethical spots of understanding how some left out scholarships have been rendered breathless and let to disappear into a gaping hole where they are buried and never mourned. Such forms of epistemological death on subjugated knowledges (Foucault, 1980) is what Foucault has called a biopolitical process of making life and to let die (Foucault 1997). The future of western research is based on the disappearance of Black peoples' knowledges (Nyaga, 2021). Black knowledge is not singular but rather compounded and plural (Nyaga, 2021).

The process of reviewing literature is therefore assumed to be a form of digging deep into the subject and identifying gaps that can inform research. To dig deep is to excavate into the unknown to know. Such an excavation has been noted by Foucault (1975) in his work on 'discipline and punish' and speaks of the pain that subjects have to go through as they continue to be marked as templates of knowledge production; where the knower scrubs into their skin with the purpose of establishing single and rational knowledge about them. I assume this to be more like a process of digging deep into other literature to identify what has been done and therefore prevent reinventing the wheel. This is easy and yet happens to be the reason why we do literature review. Instead, I suggest a reimagination of literature review as a process of mourning or grieving the loss of Black knowledges and the violence thereon. Literature review should be a process of giving accounts of those knowledges that have never seen the light of day because they are marked as below or weeds.

In a sense, much effort is given to going down an epistemological memory lane and forgetting how that lane came into being. Who was left out and forgotten for that lane to become a passable track. Who was distracted for the track to be? Who is currently allowed to pass the lane and who gets to be expunged from the pass out parade. Who gets to be paraded and who parades. These are larger epistemological questions that I think we need to engage with to imagine lives that have been lost in knowledge making; more so when looking at review of literature. To do this, we will need to rethink literature review as a form of mining other research or studies. This is not to say we do away with that taken for granted model of analysis but rather open new avenues of inquiry that not only digs deep to reach the oil fields and sell it, but rather to ask other questions that happen to be made irrelevant in the mining process.

As a Black researcher, we will need to bear witness to the very colonial process that has left Black peoples behind and the ways in which research has overtime been employed to forget, singularize, or preserve Black communities. This is a question of misunderstanding the museumification (Referring to Achille Mbembe) of Black by the current colonial research that assumes that Black is singular and rational; and anything that fails that white conceptualization of what Black is marked as a pathology that needs to be punished to return to Black fold. This folding fails to understand how Black is intersectional and various, and any form of collapsing Blackness is a manifestation of quantitative colonial violence. This will mean that not only do we dig deep but also engage with the ruins and trauma that has been brought to Black communities all because they are not valued as human beings who have lived. This devaluation of Black lives is marked as nonlife and as such cannot count as life worth living.

2. Histories

Histories of marginalized communities continue to be forgotten and expunged within the research process (Gegeo, and Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Nyaga, 2021;23; Smith, 2012). Since research is conceptualized as a process of truth making (Falkner and Falkner, 2014), issues of slavery and anti-Black racism are marked as emotional and irrational and as such compound variables to truth making (Nyaga, 2021;2023). Consequently, research proves its worth or value through a process of eliminating anything that may be spurious to the final truth (Fraser, 2004). In this sense, truth is valued more than Black/African people's traumatic histories. Key to this quantitative metric is to simplify Black traumas into a singular calculable variable that can help the state and care profession reconcile their implication to anti-Black racisms. This form of epistemological and ontological erasure is founded on the belief that researchers can come up with one singular truth about a group of people and that such truth must be true about the groups of people in ways that are resolvable. If by any measure one person among the group so defined as lying within the singular truth fail to fit into that truth, they are marked or labelled as the deviant,

compounding, pathological variable and research initiates a process of fitting them into the original truth to help them forget themselves in ways meant to fit them within a white centric narrative.

The main-centric narrative about a singular Black truth helps rationalize and justify science. This unidimensional truth about being Black formalizes Black bodies in ways meant to box (read this as incarceration or technologies of surveillance) them to punish and discipline them so that they are easily identifiable and hence making state governmentality to work in ways that are insidious and economical and unverifiable. In that regard, a Black person will face death through chokehold, but we cannot verify who did the choking. Yes, we can see the and Individual who strangled the Black person in a chokehold style and yet we cannot see beyond the scene. This helps hide and conceal other forms of Black deaths that have happened and that cannot be seen in our own naked eyes. In fact, the Black person facing the police chokehold has already died previously through other psychic chokeholds that never see the light of the day.

That way, people who are marginalized can perpetually be controlled, governed, disciplined, and punished in ways that are unverifiable (Foucault, 1975). The process of marking bodies and death as unsubstantiated is sanctioned by research that never pays attention to the compounding factors of Black life such that what we witness as physical death is connected to other historical deaths that continue to happen outside what we consider as frames of death. This means that even when Black bodies die, we are denied the means of grieving them since in the first place they never added up to the truth of being what white would refer to as definitional Black. To be defined as Black is to sit within the frame of whiteness. To exist outside such a frame is to be ungrievable. This is not to say that those who are within the frame of Blackness are grievable but rather such grief is numerical, which means they must be simplified for them to be within the scope of numerical grief. Many people speak of grief as the essence of tears flowing and yet those tears cannot be numbered. To be Black within the frame of whiteness is to be invited to enter a state of measured grief. As such, this paper calls for another form of grief that fails numerical measure to the extent where grief becomes inconsolable. One cannot console or fix what Black people have historically faced under the supervision of research.

This way of imagining social life, where there is no record or document to determine what caused death on the people is made possible through research focused on singular truth and elimination of compounding Black factors. The life of a Black body must be seen as a compound that has refused to be an atom and as such must be erased violently to create the space for a singular truth. This form of forgetting or expunging the compound has been an everyday process and practice within contemporary society to conceal and hide the implication of research in the death of Black communities. It is through such epistemological colonial technologies that we come to know what we know based on the lie we keep telling ourselves

of our own redeemer profession that has saved Black people from their deplorable state through introducing them into a world of civilization. When it comes to Black communities and the role of research as a colonial practice, it is clear that racial genocidal atrocities have been a common theme. Every time researchers attempt to reconcile violent colonial atrocities meted on Black communities in the name of being culturally competent or sensitive, they doubled down on reducing or simplifying culture into a commodity that can be sold in the marketplace. The whole process of reconciliation and truth telling becomes another process of selling marginalized communities into the market space as commodities. What seems to be a trend toward reconciliation turns to be performative or theatrical acts that are without any substantive effect on Black communities.

Reconciliation becomes another rational term to measure the worth of our profession in terms of assets versus liabilities. That is making noise or is compounding is marked as a liability that we need to balance with the asset. To do that we pay out to settle the noise so that we can continue building wealth without echoes. This in measure is a self-interested endeavor meant to kill noises coming from Black communities. This is because Black cultures are noisy and as a consequence we must pay for their death and turn them into a commodity for sale in the market. That way we can sustain the capital on the back of Black people. What seem to be trauma-informed research exercises turn out to be fused with neoliberal policies of profit making. According to Qiang, (2024)

> *With health-care systems across the world still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic,29 corporations might use this crucial period in time to privatise and commercialise health care, leading to further misuse of race-based health data for profit.p.31*

To understand this form of exploitation, one must be psychically informed and see ways in which people's trauma is reduced, quantified, and simplified for profit (Nyaga, 2021). This process of simplification is sanctioned by research and researchers who are bent on self exaltation on the back of Black communities who continue to live those traumas. Knowing that there exists Black exploitation within knowledge making, it is prudent of us to decolonize the process of knowledge making by allowing Black histories to be central to how we come to know what we know. This centrality of Black histories must be seen within the context of how Black is compounding and is compounded by other factors, both those employed to create the truth as well as others. Histories of colonization and slavery must be seen as ethical demand and should allow the numbers to cry again. The sense of this argument is because numbers are raised out of the death of others. To have a transformative process of knowledge making, numbers as gendered knowledge must be made to start recounting where they come from. It is by returning and remembering their ethical place of histories that numbers can reconcile with their origin as emotional and living.

To make this argument, I am equally saying that numbers do not cry. As such to cry is to produce tears and yet those tears cannot be quantified but rather ethically qualified. I am conscious of the ways in which qualitative research has been part and parcel of forgetting histories of Black communities all because the approach is geared toward making itself a science. To be ethically qualitative is to deny singular truth any space to represent a whole community of people. It is revealing the numbers into a place of existence and that acknowledges that it's living a lie. The lie that is more valued than histories and that that valuation must be defended for it to continue existing. That lie is the foundation of what we continue witnessing as Black bodies continue to be buried and forgotten. It should be remembered that such history of Black peoples is not singular but rather intersect with others in ways that are unique and relevant to their context. In a nutshell, squeeze numbers until they show their emotions. It's that act of radical kindness to numbers that society can be transformed into ways that are more powerful and ethical to the masses of people who continue to suffer because of the original lie that has been kept by science.

3. Realities

One of the most common elements in research is reduction or simplification of people's realities into singular realities (Elliot, 2005; Fenstermacher,1994; Nyaga, 2021;23;). This form of rationalism has been part and parcel of how we come to know our social world and reality; even though that reality fails others that are not within the metric of science. Simplification in research is an important aspect of science through which we give numerical reasoning into how we know our social life and who we see ourselves to be. Such forms of rationality help forget that people's lives are more complex and cannot be understood or simplified. Instead, people's ways of life and experience can only be imagined and interpreted in ways that are open-ended and compounding. Quantitative and qualitative models of knowledge making have overtime been used to produce knowledge in ways that tend to forget emotions or instincts with the purpose of centering singular reality. Such a form of everyday forgetting of compounded/ing bodies has been marked as the new form of colonial violence that appears to be helpful to marginalized communities and yet works otherwise. Such forgetting has been one of the issues that Black Communities face more so in the age of new world order informed by cultural sensitivity. Cultural competency or sensitivity has been charged as having the ability to forget realities and values of Black communities more so when employed in spaces that promote neoliberal policies (Nyaga, 2023).

Very often, researchers doing research in Black communities have been told to be more inclusive and equitable in doing research within Black community. Part of such research is to seem to be more transparent and open to Black community views on knowledge making and sharing. Such forms of collaboration have become new sites of hidden oppression and for which Pon, (2009) has explicitly stated is the new way through which racism is manifested. Basing it on post welfare policies engineered by conservative

governments led by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan as well as Brian Maroney in Canada, we started seeing and witnessing new ways through which Black communities were left out during the political and economic collapse. In line to this, we continue witnessing such conservative policies mostly authorized by neoliberal governments entrench their authority on Black communities. A case in point is new ways through which contemporary researchers have divided new terms called community-based action research. This means that all researchers shall work in collaboration with the participants (mostly Black individuals or communities). While such a practice is seen as open, it equally leaves spaces where conservative ideals are made possible through subtle denigration of Black lives. Think of ways in which Black communities are invited in a research project and their only participation is during data collection. The rest of research architecture is determined by the expert white researcher. This in essence means that the researcher still controls the politics of representing Black communities.

I say this since policy makers have interest in the analysis section which is predominantly focused on what the expert white researcher says about the community under focus. We also continue to see the levels of tokenism in research where researchers determine who is to participate in their research. Sampling is one among the many ways that researchers have exerted their influence and power in determining the reality of a particular community. This has both material and symbolic implications based on how they come to be reflected and understood under and in policy decisions. A good example to demonstrate this assertion is the assumption that all Black people eat and like oxtail. This analogy when looked critically, helps inform why research as a process of representation is implicated in the social death of community. So, there must be a researcher who decided to study Black communities and conclude that they all like oxtail. This is marked as the truth for all Black people and as such any deviation from this truth would mean that a phenomenon has presented itself to be studied and reduced.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to explore Black based research. The argument made in this paper is that Black based research is beyond the singular and linear nature of both the quantitative and qualitative models of meaning making. Black based research is grounded in Black histories, realities, and values. While we can attempt to be sensitive to Black culture as a way to accommodate Blackness in knowledge making, it is important to recognize how such qualitative singularity have continue to communities cultural and social genocide among Black communities all in the name of being diverse. The paper therefore calls for Black informed research. This kind of research helps change lives beyond colour coated epistemologies that have become a common theme within the progressive qualitative research. In this paper, I call for reorientation of research in ways that make meaning within research a strange exercise. This way, what has formally been marked as strange and alien to science must be considered as a fundamental ethical

requirement in making meaning. Such an orientation will call to question our taken for granted ways of making knowledge.

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