

## **INSIDER/OUTSIDER STATUS OF “RETURNING” RESEARCHERS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The identity of the researcher during the social research process has been extensively debated and discussed in the academic community, particularly in sociological qualitative research. The reflection of a researcher's identity helps to unveil issues of power and privilege that are inherent with individuals in a social research context and shows rigour in conducting research. In line with the post-modern qualitative research paradigm which views the researcher's presence and influence as unavoidable and a resource which must be properly utilized, this article provides a scholarly discussion on insider/outsider negotiation of researchers who have left their native countries to study abroad and return home to conduct fieldwork. The article discusses researcher positionality and influences of power (whether real or perceived) on data collection and research rapport with native respondents, through three case examples from fieldwork carried out in Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Ghana. The article concludes that “returning” researchers to their native countries of birth take a dual position of both insider and outsider, depending on different contexts.

**Keywords:** Returning, qualitative research, Sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nigeria, insider, outsider, positionality, power.