RE-THORIZING THE INTEGRAL LINK BETWEEN CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING GHANAIAN PROVERBS AS THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGES FOR DEVELOPMENT

by

JADIE MCDONNELL

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Jadie McDonnell (2012)
RE-THEORIZING THE INTEGRAL LINK BETWEEN CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING GHANAIAN PROVERBS AS THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Master of Arts 2012
Jadie McDonnell
Graduate Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education
University of Toronto

Abstract

The current approach to African development is driven by Euro-Western material/physical approaches that fail to acknowledge the integral link between culture and development. For African development to truly speak to the realities and needs of African peoples, a reconceptualization of development is necessary, one which examines how Indigenous African knowledges can inform development. Using an anti-colonial, critical development and Indigenous discursive frameworks, this thesis examines how Akan, Gonja and Bogon proverbs, as Indigenous African knowledges, provide theoretical and practical knowledges for reconceptualising localized approaches to African development. Through interviews with local development practitioners and local Chiefs and the analysis of collected proverbs, the thesis reveals that proverbs, as linguistic, cultural and spiritual knowledges are deeply embedded in Ghanaian life and may function as excellent culturally relevant tools for a localized approach to African development.
Dedication

The Bogon proverb above can be translated to “Whatever God has given you, receive it with both hands.” Therefore, it is with appreciation for my life, my fate and my opportunities that I dedicate this work first and foremost to our Creator and the web of life.

This work is also for a dear loved one whose presence I have carried in my heart and soul along this journey. Your spirit inspires me each and every day.
Acknowledgements

I would like to first and foremost thank my supervisor, friend and mentor Professor Nana George J. Sefa Dei. First, I thank him for his academic support guidance and support throughout this work. Second, I thank him for making my dreams come true through his generosity- by providing me with the opportunity to explore Ghana in a profound and heartwarming way that has forever changed my life. I would also like to thank his wife Naana for her companionship, support and assistance during my stay in Ghana and Nigeria.

I also wish to thank Karen Mundy, my second reader for her ongoing support and dedication to my work. Karen, I have so grateful for your extensive insight, comments and belief in my project. I also wish to thank you for being an inspiration to us all in the CIDE collaborative program and for putting your heart and soul into CIDEC.

I also wish to extend my extensive gratitude to all those who cared for me during my stay in Ghana. My sincerest gratitude and thanks to Auntie Grace, Belfie, Auntie Adwoa, Auntie Abena, Prince, Gideon, the boys and all my dear friends in Asokore. I also thank my dear friend Cyril Nii Offei France for your support and faith in my project and the France family for your amazing hospitality during my stay in Accra. I am indebted to you all.

I also extend my utmost gratitude to my loving mother and father, Helen Masson McDonnell and Jim McDonnell who have provided me with life, support and love throughout this journey. I could have never done this without you both. I would also like to thank my dear sister and friend Leigh Alix whose presence, support and love has provided with me inspiration in all my endeavours and my brother Lucas who has been a mentor, a friend and the best big brother a girl could ask for.

I also extend my thanks, appreciation and love to my second family the late Paul Heidenheim, Lorna McCue and Leah and Jen Heidenheim. Your guidance, support and love in the integral years of my life are the reasons for which I am able to be here today to write this thesis. You all shaped me in countless ways and I am forever indebted to you.
I would like to thank my dear friend Isaac Darko who has helped me in multiple capacities throughout this project. Thank you Isaac for translating, and retranslating, proverbs and for your cultural, academic, personal advice and guidance. I am forever grateful for your patience in responding to my questions at all hours of the night and for lighting up my life with kenkey, red red and peanut soup. Yet, what I wish to thank you most for is the kindness, support and the extensive faith you have had in my work. Thank you with all my heart my dear friend.

I would also like to thank my loving friend Laura Wright who helped me move through the challenges of this work and celebrated both the exciting and terrifying moments of this research. Thank for always being a shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen and for being the beautiful, amazing and loving friend that you are. I cherish you so much my dear.

I would also like to thank Rosina Agyepong for the transcription of my interviews, Emily Antze, Donna Downey, Arif Anwar, Harriet Akanmori, Francis Akena, Meggan Madden, Grace Karam-Stevenson and Julia Xuan Ouellet for supporting me in multiple capacities.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................... II
DEDICATION ......................................................................................................................... III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ......................................................................................................... IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS ......................................................................................................... V

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION .................................................................................... 1
  1.1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .................................................................................. 2
  1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES ............................................................................................. 2
  1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS .............................................................................................. 2
  1.5 THE USE OF AFRICAN PROVERBS AS INDIGENOUS AFRICAN KNOWLEDGES ......... 3
  1.6 GHANA AS CASE STUDY ............................................................................................ 3
  1.7 ETHNIC GROUPS SELECTED FOR STUDY ................................................................... 4
      1.7.1 The Akan .............................................................................................................. 4
      1.7.2 The Chala (Bogon) ............................................................................................... 4
      1.7.3 The Gonja .......................................................................................................... 5

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................ 11
  2.1 CONCEPTUALIZING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES .................................................... 11
  2.2 THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES .................................... 12
  2.3 INTERCONNECTEDNESS IN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS ....................... 12
  2.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS ......................... 13
  2.5 INDIGENOUS AFRICAN KNOWLEDGES ..................................................................... 13
      2.5.1 Spirit: The foundation of the African Indigenous Knowledge System ............... 14
      2.5.2 Ecocentrism: A Spiritual Relationship to Nature ................................................ 14
      2.5.3 Sociocentrism: A Spiritual Connection to Community ...................................... 15
  2.6 AFRICAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES: A CULTURAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL REPertoire ................................. 16
  2.7 AFRICAN ORAL LITERATURES AS SITES OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ............ 17
  2.8 SITUATING PROVERBS AS SITES OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE ......................... 19
      2.8.1 Proverbs, Ancestors and Elders ................................................................. 20
      2.8.2 Literal and Metaphorical Meanings Embedded in Proverbs ................................. 20
      2.8.3 Dual or Multiple Meanings in Proverbs ........................................................... 21
      2.8.4 Same Proverb, Different Circumstance ............................................................ 22
      2.8.5 Proverbs and Peacebuilding .............................................................................. 23
  2.9 PROVERBS AND DEVELOPMENT ............................................................................... 24
CHAPTER THREE—DISCOURSE FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY ........................................... 26

3.1 DISCOURSE FRAMEWORK ....................................................................................... 26
   3.1.1 Anti-Colonial Theory ...................................................................................... 26
   3.1.2 Critical Development Frameworks ................................................................ 29
   3.1.3 Indigenous Framework .................................................................................. 31

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ......................................................... 34
   3.2.1 Moving beyond dominant knowledge production ........................................ 34

3.3 GATHERING INFORMATION: INTERVIEWS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS ......... 34
   3.3.1 Multi-Method Approach .............................................................................. 35
   3.3.2 Selection of Participants ............................................................................. 35
   3.3.3 Participant Profiles ...................................................................................... 36
   3.3.4 Selection of Proverbs for Content Analysis ................................................. 37

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS ................................................................................................. 38
   3.4.1 Translation of Proverbs and Transcription of Interviews .............................. 39

3.5 LESSONS LEARNED ......................................................................................... 39
   3.5.1 Non-Indigenous Researcher ......................................................................... 40
   3.5.2 Lack of Indigenous Language and Cultural Context .................................... 41
   3.5.3 Loss of Data .................................................................................................. 41
   3.5.4 Time Constraints ......................................................................................... 41
   3.5.5 Small Sample Size ...................................................................................... 41

CHAPTER FOUR – DATA FINDINGS ........................................................................... 43

4.1 UNDERSTANDING PROVERBS ........................................................................... 43
   4.1.1 Words of Wisdom ....................................................................................... 43
   4.1.2 Talking Drum and Proverb Connection ...................................................... 44
   4.1.3 Use of Proverbs ........................................................................................... 46
   4.1.4 Accessible to All ......................................................................................... 47
   4.1.5 Intergenerational Importance of Proverbs .................................................. 47
   4.1.6. Contextual Nature of Proverbs ................................................................. 48
   4.1.7 Proverbs as Dynamic Culture Knowledges .................................................. 50

4.2 THEMES FOUND IN PROVERBS ........................................................................ 51
   4.2.1 Proverbs as Spiritualized Knowledges ....................................................... 51
   4.2.2 Society-Nature-Spirit Interface ................................................................. 53
   4.2.3 Importance of the Collective ..................................................................... 55
   4.2.4 Collective Responsibility ........................................................................... 56
   4.2.5 Respect for Others ..................................................................................... 57
   4.2.6 Mutual Learning .......................................................................................... 57

4.3 DEVELOPMENT ..................................................................................................... 58
   4.3.1 Predetermined Notions of Development ..................................................... 58
   4.3.2 The Need to Recognize African Indigenous Approaches to Development ........ 59
   4.3.3 Redefining Development .......................................................................... 61
   4.3.4 Localized/Endogenous Development ......................................................... 62
   4.3.5 Bridging Euro-Western and African Approaches to Development ................ 63

4.4 UNDERSTANDING ENDogenous DEVELOPMENT ............................................. 65
   4.4.1 Linking Spirituality and Development ....................................................... 65
1.1 INTRODUCTION

Development is a heavy weight encroaching on the African continent. Prah (2001) observes “in Africa, no single obsession has been as overriding in our preoccupations and concerns at the collective level of social life on this continent as the question of development” (p. 156). For over 50 years, African development has been laden with Euro-Western ideologies overemphasising the “failures” and “underdevelopment” of the continent (Nsamenang, 2005; Tedla, 1995). The continuous concentration on failures in Africa has sustained a neo-colonial development ideology whereby the very notion of development has been shaped by the cultural and political ideologies the Euro-West (Sardar, 1999). Shaped by imperialist and science-driven theories, Euro-Western development ideologies have focused on physical and material approaches while falsely positing local and Indigenous African knowledges, systems of governance, worldviews as “primitive” knowledges and beliefs in need of Euro-Western “modern expertise” (Sardar, 1999; Tucker, 1999).

Yet, the illusionary expertise and the dominance of physical and material approaches in development ideology has prompted a “model of development now widely pursued [that] is part of the problem rather than the solution” (Tucker, 1999. p.1) Instead of improving and building on the social realities of African peoples through localized understandings of development, the current development paradigm “distorts our imagination, limits our visions, obscuring us to the alternatives that human ingenuity is capable of imagining and implementing” (Tucker, 1999, p.1). African development has simply followed a destructive uni-cultural path that has negated African cultural and spiritual knowledges. This negation has thus instigated an African development practice whereby “local people are dominated and their destinies shaped by what is essentially a western way of perceiving the world” (Tucker, 1999, p. 17). With material/physical methodologies overriding humanist and spiritual methods, development has been reduced to a science without wisdom (Goulet, 1980) as opposed to truly
improving African peoples’ quality of life, spiritually, socially, economically, culturally and environmentally. This has left African development as a meaningless endeavour, disassociated from the needs of African peoples and caught in an evolutionary noose of “modernity” whereby Euro-Western knowledges have stifled Indigenous beliefs knowledges and values.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In order to contend the hegemonic Euro-Western milieu of knowledge production within African development, Dei and Kempf (2006) argue that we must challenge “practices that negate the power of spirituality and local indigenousness” (p.13). This study uses an integrative anti-colonial, critical development and Indigenous discursive framework to challenge the current Euro-Western hegemony of development by examining the integral link between culture and development and the possibility of re-theorizing development through a localized, Indigenous African worldview. If development, as Prah (2001) argues, is defined as “the improvement and uplifting of the quality of life of people...to attain the potential, build and acquire self-confidence and manage to live lives of reasonable accomplishment and dignity” (p.156), we must begin to examine the ways in which local people conceptualize development by understanding Indigenous knowledges, worldviews and beliefs.

1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The project was guided by the following aims and objectives:

1. To understand and conceptualize the problem of development in African contexts;
2. To explore the nature and extent of the link between local culture, development and Indigenous philosophies such as proverbs;
3. To bring Indigenous, local African voices and sources of knowledges into the discussions on African development; and
4. To offer recommendations on how to re-theorize African development based on the findings.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To meet the study’s aims and objectives this study consists of interviews with Ghanaian development practitioners and Chiefs and analysis of Ghanaian proverbs to ask the following questions:
1) What is the nature and extent of the problem of development in Ghana? What are the specific and cultural teachings of proverbs and how are they relevant to the problem of development?

2) What do proverbs teach about the worldview of Indigenous peoples and how this may be used to reframe development in Ghanaian contexts?

3) What do the lessons from the Ghanaian case study offer larger questions of development in African contexts?

1.5 THE USE OF PROVERBS AS INDIGENOUS AFRICAN KNOWLEDGES

The study focuses on the role of proverbs as local indigenous knowledges because proverbs have been identified as Indigenous African knowledges that speak to all aspects of African life and provide a glimpse into the worldview of African people (Kudadjie, 1996; Okrah, 2003; Yankah, 1989; 2004). As spiritualized and moralized knowledges, proverbs are linked to the wisdom and knowledge of the Elders, ancestral and spirit and as validating and informing the worldview and knowledges of African peoples (Kudadjie, 1996; Okrah, 2003 and Wangoola, 2000). Moreover, proverbs have been said to be the foundation of communication and knowledge transmission of African peoples; proverbs have been described in African communities as “the palm oil with which words are eaten”. Thus, proverbs, as local Indigenous knowledges are an excellent starting point to examine the integral link between Indigenous knowledges and development.

1.6 GHANA AS CASE STUDY

Ghana and Ghanaian proverbs were selected for this study as Ghana is a nation rich in diverse Indigenous knowledges, proverbs and spirituality. Ghana has five major ethnic groups: the Akan, the Ga-Adangme, the Ewe, the Gonja and the Mole-Dagbani. Each group is composed of many distinct ethnic groupings (Kuada & Chachah, 1999). The ethnic groups in Ghana can be divided into two major language groups: The Kwa group, primarily found South of the Volta river which comprises about 75 percent of the country's population and includes the Akan, Ga-Adangbe, and Ewe ethnicities; and North of the Volta River is the Gur language group which consists of the Gurma, Grusi, and Mole-Dagbane (GhanaWeb, 2012). Ethnicity is particularly important to Ghanaian identity as ethnic groups not only share a common language, yet share “a spiritual root and a common way of life, they serve to bring people with distant blood relations into a wider sociological relationship” (Assimeng as cited in Kuada & Chachah, 1999).
Although Ghana continues to be caught in the reverberations of colonialism and is greatly impacted by neo-colonial ideologies in schooling and development (see Adjei, 2005; Dei, 2000), many of the ethnic groups in Ghana have managed to preserve their Indigenous spirituality, governance and beliefs. In visiting Ghana, it does not take long to observe the prevalence of Indigenous knowledges found in the plethora of the Akan adinkra symbols and Indigenous palaces and the common use of local Indigenous languages. Furthermore, scholars have demonstrated that Ghana is a nation teeming with proverbs (Kudadjie, 1996; Okrah, Yankah (1989, 1992). Therefore, as a country rich in cultural and linguistic diversity and with a large presence of Indigenous knowledges and languages, Ghana provides an excellent starting point in examining the relationship between proverbs, Indigenous knowledges and localized and culturally-driven approaches to development.

1.7 ETHNIC GROUPS SELECTED FOR STUDY

To reflect the ethnic reality in Ghana, three ethnicities were selected for the study: the Akan, Gonja and Chala.

1.7.1 The Akan

The Akans are the largest ethnic group in Ghana making up over 44% of the total population. It is sub-divided into smallest groups in which the most distinctive groups include the Fante, in the south-western coastal region, the Asante in the forest region, the Akwapim in the south-east region and the Brong-Ahafo in the north-east region (Kuada and Chachah, 1999). All Akan groups share a calendar; have common spiritual beliefs and a matrilineal system of inheritance (ibid). They speak dialects of the Akan language with the major languages being Twi and Fante.

1.7.2 The Chala (Bogon)

The Chala people are a small ethnic group in the Nkwanta District of the Volta Region and in the East Gonja District in the Northern Region (Kleinwillinghofer, 2007). The Chala speak the Bogon language which is part of the Gur language group. The language is seriously endangered and is spoken by only a few hundred people as the Chala peoples, who live mostly in the Volta region are minority populations (ibid). Due to the presence of other ethnicities, many Chala people are unable to speak the language (Endangered Language Archive). Aside from the research completed by Kleinwillinghofer (2007) and his work with the Endangered Language Archive, no other research or information on the Chala people or the Bogon language could be found.
1.7.3 The Gonja

The Gonjas constitute a smaller ethnic group that is located in Northern Ghana in the Upper West Region, Upper East Region and Northern Region. They make up approximately 4% of Ghana’s population (Kuada & Chachah, 1999). Although continually holding largely Indigenous systems of governance, the Gonja are primarily Muslim. Indigenous spiritual beliefs are largely common among the Gonjas and sacrifices to ancestors and local gods are common and these occur in congruence with Islamic practices such as praying five times a day, recognition of feasts such as Eid Ul Adha and Eid Ul Fitr and mosque attendance on Fridays (Adewoba, 2006). This community is patrilineal, as opposed to the matrilineal systems found in the Akan communities (ibid).

1.8 DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA

As Heron (2007) predicts, the pre-dominance of exogenous development initiatives has resulted in more exogenous bodies on the African continent now than during the colonial era and the presence of such bodies and initiatives in Ghana is no different. Following much of the same pattern as the rest of the continent, exogenous development has grown extensively since Independence. In 1960, there were 10 registered Non-Governmental Organizations in Ghana, this number jumped to 350 by the 1990s and to roughly 3000 by 2004 (Gog as cited in Laird, 2007). These organizations, which may include a small number of Ghanaian organizations, are primarily exogenous and are almost entirely funded by Euro-Western institutions (Laird, 2007). With Euro-Western development ideologies present in development training, they reinforce the illusionary notion of the need for Euro-Western approaches to development (Morolong, 2010). This leaves a limited knowledge base of Euro-Western development practitioners.

1.9 CONCEPTUALIZING KEY TERMS

1.9.1. Endogenous/Localized Development

A re-theorization of development begins by understanding and examining the ways in which local peoples’ values, beliefs and worldviews may initiate new conceptualizations of development that move beyond current Euro-Western approaches. Localized/endogenous African development has been defined as a “homegrown” approach that actively involves local peoples in all aspects of the development process and stems from the spiritual, social and material realities of local peoples (Morolong, 2010). Apusigah (2010) describes endogenous development “as a process and program for drawing from and building on local perspectives and knowledges to support the wellbeing and
livelihoods” of local peoples and “is rooted in the principles of identity, diversity and ownership” (p.V). Therefore, endogenous development, conceptualized locally, is unique to the particular communities in which it occurs (Morolong, 2010).

Endogenous/ localized development has identifiable elements which contribute to challenging the hegemony of Euro-Western development. Haverkort, Van’t Hooft & Hiemstra (2003) have identified eight elements of endogenous/localized development as: 1) building on local needs and capacity; 2) improving local knowledges and practices; 3) initiating local control of development; 4) identifying new approaches to development; 5) selectively utilizing external resources; 6) retaining benefits of development to the local area; 7) exchanging and learn between cultures; and 8) building networks and partnerships. Although these elements may not be present in every localized approach, they provide an excellent guideline and framework for understanding and re-theorizing development.

As Haverkort et al.’s (2003) elements illustrate, endogenous development does not dismiss the impact of external knowledges and external approaches on local communities but is instead concentrated on knowledges exchange between cultures, thus stressing equality between cultural knowledges. Therefore an endogenous/localized framework for development stresses the importance of cultural and spiritual knowledges in development by recognizing and appreciating Indigenous knowledges as integral resources for harnessing local agency.

1.9.2 Worldview: A Key Component of Endogenous Development

The premise of endogenous development is that it is a development ideology that is built on the worldview of local communities. Worldview is conceptualized as “a coherent set of bodies of knowledge, concerning all aspects of the world. This coherent set allows people to construct a global image of the world and to understand as many elements of their experiences as possible. A worldview can in fact be perceived of as a map people use to orient and explain, and from which they evaluate and act, and put forward prognoses and visions of the future” (Apostel as cited in Note, 2006 on p.83). Worldview can thus be understood as that which shapes the way in which we understand and make sense of the world around us. It is not a controllable or conscious action, but built on an emotional and spiritual relationship to the world (Note, 2006). As Note (2006) states, language is strongly connected to our worldview, and thus oral tradition provide us with a glimpse into the ways in which worldviews are structured and conceptualized. Therefore oral knowledges, such as Indigenous proverbs, provide an
excellent site to examine and theorize the ways in which the worldview and knowledges of African cultures, as sites of knowledge, may contribute to localized approaches to development.

1.9.3 Spirituality

In exploring the link between African culture and development through African Indigenous knowledges such as proverbs, the notion of spirituality is paramount. Spirituality is grounded in all aspects of African Indigenous knowledges and is thus a foundational component of this thesis. Yet, spirituality, as an unseen and often unexplainable force, is not easily defined within the constraints of the Euro-Western academy. Therefore, in this study, I will use a working definition of spirituality that is guided by Dei’s definition of African Indigenous spirituality, one that “stresses mind, body, soul interactions. Such spirituality is about values, beliefs and ideas of integrity and dignity that shape individual consciousness into a collective and unified existence. The individual develops spirituality through the engagement of society, culture and nature” (Dei, 2002; p.34). Spirituality is thus conceptualized as integrated in a personal and collective relationship to the natural, social and metaphysical realms.

Furthermore, in this working definition, I also draw on Turaki’s (2006) three interconnected dimensions of spirituality: the personal dimension-personal expectations, feelings and beliefs; the social-cultural dimension-communal understandings of what it means to be a member of the community; and the phenomenal dimension-the all-encompassing meaning of religion in regards to beliefs, behaviour, feelings and practices and the supernatural dimensions (p.18). In the African context, spirituality gives meaning and usefulness, order and cohesion, and a source of power beyond the self to provide answers for daily problems and needs and teaches about the sacredness of life (ibid). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, spirituality encompasses personal and collective relationships and beliefs that are grounded in sacred and intimate interconnections between the self and the collective, the metaphysical and the natural world.

1.10 SUBJECTIVE LOCATION

“The research holds the attitude of learner, of one who is a “not-knower” but through the act of empathetic imagination and by possessing critical self-consciousness, come to gain a sense of what the other knows. The researcher is reflexive in her practice, whereby the knowledge of the subaltern or subjugated is used to reflect dominant practices and assumptions in which the researcher herself is complicit” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005).
The importance self-reflection and self-consciousness as Moosa-Mitha highlights is a vital component to any research, yet particularly important to research that involves dominant bodies researching Indigenous cultural and spiritual philosophies. Kempf (2009) suggests that in working from anti-colonial framework as dominant bodies, dominant bodies must do two things: first, take ownership of the privileges and power they possess; and second, find ways to disrupt the oppression in which they participate. As a white, Canadian ex-development practitioner, I do not disassociate myself from my critique of development, but situate myself as implicated in the oppressive and neo-colonial development industry. I recognize the power and privilege I possess as both a dominant Western body and as a development practitioner. Yet, moving beyond my role as a development practitioner, I recognize that I am not disassociated from the genocide and the suffering at the hands of my forefathers. Thus, to ensure that I do not follow in the racist, violent and oppressive footsteps of my colonial forefathers, I aim throughout this project to maintain continual self-reflection combined with the cognisance of my privilege and power, my contributions to colonization and neo-colonial development ideologies.

At the same time, as Kempf (2009) advises, I also hoped to disrupt and challenge my own epistemological foundations and the oppressive forces of development. As a development practitioner, I have witnessed and contributed to exogenous, materially-driven development practices and witnessed the destruction they have cause to the worldview, morality and culture of communities. At the same time, I have also contributed to localized and endogenous development practices that were spiritually and community driven. My participation in development practices that drew on local, spiritual and embodied knowledges allowed me to have firsthand experience in alternative understandings of development that were grounded in the worldview and cosmology of local peoples. In seeing how these approaches greatly benefitted the communities with whom I was working, I began to question local understandings and relationships to “development” and the ways in which they remained disassociated and incoherent to the values, beliefs and knowledges in the communities with whom I worked. It is thus these experiences that have instigated my exploration of Indigenous, localized and spiritualized knowledges and resources for development.

Although, my experiences in localized and spiritualized development approaches did not occur within African contexts, this thesis is a call to recognize and contribute to counteracting the epistemicide and linguacide that African communities continue to face as an auspice of development. I, in no way, claim expertise on Indigenous African knowledges, nor an African worldview; nor do I claim to have
solutions to the complex and multilayered issues surrounding African development. I do, however, hope to critique and deconstruct the destructive Euro-Western reductionism of conventional development as well as contribute to conversations on alternative understandings and conceptualizations of development by exploring the wisdom, moral grounding and spiritual knowledges in African proverbs. I situate myself as a humble learner with “respect for the sacred and transcendent” nature of Indigenous African knowledges (Dei, 2011a, p.28). With my study focused on the theoretical and practical role of African proverbs in development, I hope to contribute to what Dei (2011a) defines as the “axiological imperative [for us] to evaluate the cultural spiritual and ideational beliefs in values, practices in the history and context of communities as they search for their own moral tone” (Dei, 2011a, p.28).

1.9 OUTLINE OF THESIS

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter which begins with a rationale for re-theorizing development in African contexts through localized/endogenous approaches to development. This is followed by a rationale for studying proverbs as theoretical and practical tools for development and provides the four research questions and the aims and objectives that have motivated this study. The learning objectives and research questions are followed by a backgrounder on Ghana and the Akan, Bogon and Gonja ethnic groups chosen for the study. The chapter is concluded with my subjective location as a white, non-Indigenous academic and its implications on the study of African development.

The second chapter provides a review of literature on Indigenous knowledges. It is concentrated on exploring in detail Indigenous African knowledges and languages, oral literature and the use of proverbs in Africa contexts.

The third chapter begins with a discussion on the anti-colonial theory, critical development and Indigenous discursive framework used for the project. I provide an overview of how each of the frameworks used are relevant to the study. The discursive framework is the followed by the methodology section whereby I discuss the methods of data collection and analysis as well as the lessons learned throughout the project.

The fourth chapter presents the result from the study and is divided into an integrative discussion on the prominent themes that arose from the interviews and the analysis of the proverbs collected. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first section focuses on the definition and use of
proverbs and themes found in the collected proverbs and the second section focuses on the results that reflect understandings of development in African and Ghanaian contexts.

The fifth chapter focuses on two themes that emerged from the results section: the theoretical and practical implications of proverbs on development. The first section examines the theoretical implications of proverbs on development, thus examining the ways in which proverbs may contribute to the re-theorization of development. The second section examines the practical implications of proverbs on development, thus how proverbs may be used as pedagogical and axiology for local development. Although overlap exists between the two themes, they have been deliberately separated to demonstrate the ways in which the teachings in proverbs speak to various levels of development, both in theory and in practice.

The final chapter concludes by offering a synopsis of the research findings as well as recommendations for African development. I argue that proverbs, as theoretical and practical Indigenous African knowledges, are grounded in the linguistic, cultural and spiritual identity of African peoples and have great potential for re-theorizing the link between culture and development in African contexts. Moreover I offer six recommendations for re-theorizing African development: 1) recognizing holism as an integral element to African development; 2) recognizing spiritual knowledges as integral knowledges for African development 3) reframing expertise; 4) the involvement of cultural custodians in African development; 5) the involvement of youth in African development; and 6) the use of proverbs outside of African contexts. I conclude this chapter with a call for further research on the need to reconceptualise the relationship between African culture and development through an exploration of Indigenous knowledges.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

To conceptualize how proverbs, as Indigenous African knowledges, may act as theoretical and practical knowledges for development, this chapter reviews the literature on Indigenous African knowledges. The chapter begins by conceptualizing and examining the dynamic and interconnected nature of Indigenous knowledges and the need for a critical analysis of Indigenous knowledges systems. This section is then preceded by narrowing the focus to examine Indigenous African knowledges and the importance of spirituality in African peoples’ relationship to natural and social environments. In relations to spirituality as foundational to African knowledges, we then examine the ways in which African languages are conceptualized as cultural and epistemological repertoires. This discussion on African language is then narrowed to focus on the literature examining oral literatures and specifically proverbs and their usage in African contexts.

2.1 CONCEPTUALIZING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES

The term “Indigenous” is a complex and contested concept which speaks to diverse definitions and peoples. Thus, in its very essence, it has been argued that the notion of Indigenous cannot be limited to a single group or definition, but speaks to the realities and truths of many peoples; both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. As Dei (2011) highlights, the term “Indigenous”, often used as an externalized definition associated with “Indigenous peoples”, must expand beyond a bodily identity as associated with “peoples” as it is restricted to a physical/spatial understanding of Indigeniety. He argues that it must be more broadly defined to acknowledge, validate and reflect a plurality of experiences, cultures, realities and relationships of local peoples in a multitude of settings. “Indigenous should be perceived as mostly about place-based knowing, an understanding of a traditional sacred relationship between peoples and their cultures and cosmologies” (Dei, 2011, p.35). Reinforcing Dei’s definition of Indigenous, Semali (1999) defines Indigenous knowledge as localized knowledge that arises from local practices that have derived from a longstanding history of trial and error, and is thus tied to local cultural and historical ways of knowing. Therefore, Indigenous knowledges are not always visible and overt, yet incorporated in the cosmology, worldview and way of life of Indigenous peoples (Dei, 2011, Semali, 1999). For the purpose of this thesis, my definition of Indigenous knowledges moves beyond the
bodily or physical Indigenous identity to encompass the Indigeniety of culture, relationships, cosmologies and worldviews.

2.2 THE DYNAMIC NATURE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES

In defining “Indigenous”, scholars caution that we must not fall into temporal constraints by limiting Indigenous Knowledges to ancient knowledges. Instead, we must challenge the destructive dichotomy of “ancient” and “modern” knowledges by recognizing and exploring the ways in which Indigenous knowledges are dynamic forms of knowledge - transforming and adapting to new concepts and philosophies throughout time (Dei, 2011; Haverkort, 2010; Semali, 1999). Thus, as Lebakeng (2010) highlights, Indigenous knowledges can be defined as under “a continuous process of experimentation, innovation and adaptation” (p.25-26). This means that in their very nature, they are creative and experimental; selectively integrating external influences and inside innovations to acclimatise to changing conditions (Lebakeng, 2010). Evidence of the flexibility and fluidity of Indigenous knowledges can be found in the ways in which they have adapted to colonization (ibid). Lebakeng (2010) argues that although some Indigenous knowledges have been lost due to colonial overtaking, more often than not, despite being placed along the margins of more dominant colonial knowledge systems, they have persevered by operating alongside different worldviews.

2.3 INTERCONNECTEDNESS IN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

The dynamism and flexibility of Indigenous knowledges can be said to be a result of their holistic and interconnected nature. An Indigenous knowledge system is not built upon a hierarchal framework, where one knowledge form is seen as superior to another, but is founded on an “inseparability and inter-dependence of ourselves and the collective. It heralds mind, body and spirit connections and connectedness of society, culture and nature in the way we come to know about ourselves and the world” (Dei, 2011, p.16). All knowledges are equally necessary for the survival and well-being of all peoples. Dei (2002) provides an example of the respect for all forms of knowledge in Indigenous systems in his explanation of emotion as a form of knowledge in an African worldview. Dei states that emotion instead of being cognized as separate from one’s rational thought and thus invaluable; is recognized as intuition, a valuable site of knowledge that informs rationality. Emotion is therefore not seen as the anti-thesis of rationality but instead as equally important and as a necessary element of rationality.
Furthermore, in an Indigenous knowledge system, systems information and knowledge are not compartmentalized or disassociated, but instead are conceptualized as co-dependant and interconnected. For example, the fields of science, religion and biology are not understood as separate fields, but instead integrated and codependent, thus understood as being part of a greater whole (Haverkort, 2010). Therefore the dichotomous notions of subject and object, nature and man, or mind and body are not present within an Indigenous knowledge system because all knowledges and experiences are integrated into an interdependent “web of life” (Shiva, 1989).

2.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

As with all knowledge systems, scholars warn that we must critically engage with Indigenous knowledges to ensure that they are not romanticized or glorified (Dei, 2011; Lebakeng, 2010). Indigenous knowledges can be, at times, sites of oppression for certain groups such as women, youth, and certain ethnicities (Dei, 2011). Thus, Dei (2011) stresses that when engaging with Indigenous knowledge systems we must do so in ways that contribute to deconstructing and questioning sites of oppression. On the same note, Dei (2011b) warns that because Indigenous knowledges still remain on the margins of so-called “valid” sites of knowledge and are often dismissed as intellectual resources, it is imperative that scholars emphasize the validity and significance of Indigenous knowledge system. Although critical analysis of Indigenous knowledge systems is essential, we must also concentrate on the ways in which they are esteemed and indispensable knowledges for humankind.

2.5 INDIGENOUS AFRICAN KNOWLEDGES

As we have explored Indigenous knowledges broadly, we now refine our focus to literature examining Indigenous African knowledges, as they have been identified by scholars as central to re-theorizing African development (Dei, 2002, Prah, 2010, Wangoola, 2000). Although this review of literature discusses “Indigenous African knowledges” in a general sense, it does not dismiss the ethnic, cultural, environmental and linguistic diversity of Africa or her knowledge systems. Instead, in using an endogenous development approach this review recognizes that location, culture, ethnicity and language all play a significant role in the diversity of cosmology, worldview, belief systems, values and teachings of African peoples (Dei, 2002; Erny, 1981, Mazrui and Wagaw, 1985; Semali, 1999: Tedla, 1995). It must also be noted that in reviewing the literature, on Indigenous African knowledges, many African scholars spoke of Indigenous African knowledges as a holistic concept to purposefully flesh out key similarities as sites of empowerment (Erny, 1981; Owuor, 2007; Tedla, 1995). Otherwise, they argued, the
concentration on difference in Indigenous African knowledge systems would only reinforce the marginalization of African knowledges, peoples and cultures (Tedla, 1995)

2.5.1 Spirit: the Foundation of the African Indigenous Knowledge System

An Indigenous African knowledge system is shaped by the interconnected relationship between community, nature and spirit (Dei, 2011; Wangoola, 2000). At the centre of this interconnected system rests a harmonious spiritual relationship to the world (Dei, 2000, 2002; Haverkort, 2010; Tedla, 1995; Wangoola, 2000). As Dei states “African spirituality stresses mind, body, soul interactions. Such spirituality is about values, beliefs and ideas of integrity, and dignity that shape individual consciousness into a collective and unified existence. The individual develops spirituality through the engagement of society, culture and nature interrelations” (Dei, 2002, p.341). The “engagement” of the spirit is manifested through a relationship to society, culture and nature and cannot be separated from all aspects of life. It is thus the spiritual relationships to the universe that define an African cosmology or African worldview (Haverkort, 2010; Turaki, 2006 Wangoola, 1999). The following sections will examine the ways in which ecocentrism and sociocentrism are integrated within a spiritual worldview.

2.5.2 Ecocentrism: A Spiritual Relationship to Nature

In an Indigenous African worldview, relationships to nature and environment are initiated by a spiritual understanding of the natural world. This understanding is defined as ecocentrism, a “profound respect and reverence without exploitation” (Bediako, 1995 as quoted in Turaki, 2006, p.95) with a commitment to conserve and enrich nature (Mazrui and Wagaw, 1985; Dei; 2002). An ecocentric relationship to nature manifests when the physical and spiritual worlds are understood as integrated. Nature, therefore, becomes a physical manifestation of the spiritual world. With this integrative relationship, conserving and protecting the natural world translates to conserving and protecting the spiritual world (Bediako, 1995 as quoted in Turaki, 2006). Thus, emanating elements of the spiritual world, natural phenomenon, such as animals, plants, rocks and bodies of water are deeply revered having as spiritual significance and carrying visible and invisible powers (Dei, 2002; Haverkort et al., 2002; Gonese, Tuvafulere & Mudzingwa., 2002; Millar, 2002; Turaki, 2006). Animals, as spiritual beings, are not killed unless in self-defence or to provide immediate sustenance or sacrifice. Moreover, non-living elements such as rain are also deemed as sacred and as powerful spirits, as they are needed to sustain life. For example, rainmakers are individuals who have the ability to solicit the spirit world and can call upon and cease rainfall. Rainmakers are seen as vitally important to the health and well-being of
the community (Mbiti, 1969). Therefore, in examining Indigenous African knowledges as resources for development, one must understand the ways in which ecocentrism is central to the spiritual interconnectedness and holism of an African worldview (Haverkort, Van’t Hooft and Hiemstra, 2002; Millar, 2002; and Gonese, Tuvafurem and Mudzingwa, 2002).

2.5.3 Sociocentrism: A Spiritual Connection to Community

Much like the natural world, the communal and social world is also spiritually driven. African communities are sociocentric, maintaining a close spiritual connection to community. With community consisting of the natural environment, the living, the undead, the unborn and the ancestors (Turaki, 2006; Wangoola, 2000), life and death are not seen as dichotomous but as a continuum of states of being (Dei, 2011). The deceased are considered part of the community and have influence over community relationships and well-being. Therefore, life has no end and is instead understood as a rite of passage into the spiritual realm (Turaki, 2006). As the spiritual realm coexists with the natural world, ancestors and spirits are considered omnipresent thus the connection to community and nature is interdependent to that of the spiritual world (Mazama, 2002).

As African peoples have a sociocentric relationship with the spiritual world, kinship, lineage and ancestors play an important role in this relationship. Ancestors, chosen based on their own exemplary lives, act as moral and spiritual custodians for communities and individuals (Dei, 2002). Mbiti (1969) describes the ancestors as “the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities” (as quoted in Mazama 2002, p.82). They are seen as being closer to God and therefore communicate to God on behalf of the people, coming to people in dreams and divination sessions (Mazama, 2002). With deep faith in the ancestors’ ability to guide positive moral actions and ensure community safety and resilience, African peoples respect the wishes of the ancestors and pay them homage (ibid).

Furthermore, African communities are gerontocratic; Elders are esteemed for their knowledge and deep connection to the ancestors and the spiritual world because of their accumulated wisdom and their closeness to death and thus the spirit world (Dei, 2002; Erny, 1981; Wangoola, 2000). Revered and respected as carriers of valuable cultural wisdom, Elders are responsible for teaching younger generations’ vital cultural, moral and linguistic knowledges (Boateng, 1983; Dei, 2002; Erny, 1982; Tedla, 1995). These knowledges are shared informally through a variety of oral literatures such as proverbs, stories, legends, fables and myths (Asimeng-Boahene, 2009; Wilson, 1963). Elders, in their relationship
to the spirit world, are thus seen as holding valuable traditions and knowledges that would otherwise be lost (Boateng, 1983; Dei, 2002; Tedla, 1995; Verdier, 1966).

As sociocentrism is founded on spiritual understanding of the world and a respect for ancestors and Elders, it is closely linked to morality and duty. With ancestors and elders chosen and revered based on living ethically and morally sound lives, they carry age-old knowledge and wisdom to guide the moral and ethical behaviour of others. Morality in African communities is carried by the Elders and understood as a product of collective action and effort manifested in both the past and present (Erny, 1981). The individual’s role within the community is manifested in their relationships and their integration within the larger community (Dei, 2000; Tedla, 1995). As one grows and ages, the individual moves from a “me” to “we” centered approach. It is not individual themselves that is recognized as moral, but through their relationships and codependency with the community (ibid). It is for this reason that individual liberty is often interpreted as a threat to African communities. Communities often pool resources and efforts together for survival, and individual reformers may be seen as questioning or corrupting systems of mutual aid and interdependence (Dei, 2000). Furthermore, the individual as a reformer or introducer of knowledge is understood as egocentric, whereas communally-formed education and responsibility are highly valued, functioning on the premise of self-help, mutual aid and morality (Dei, 2002; Erny, 1981; Tedla, 1995).

Examining Indigenous African knowledge systems in their entirety is necessary for theorizing the ways in which they may be incorporated into the development paradigm. By exploring the spiritual, ecocentric and sociocentric elements of Indigenous African knowledge systems, it is apparent, as Dei has suggested, that development must “engender a spiritual awakening” that truly speaks to the worldview of African peoples otherwise, as Tucker (1999) suggests, development will be meaningless. As we have conceptualized and explored Indigenous knowledges and African Indigenous knowledge systems, we will now narrow our focus to the literature on African language, oral literatures and specifically proverbs as a starting point for the incorporation of proverbs into African development.

2.6 AFRICAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES: A CULTURAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL REPETOIRE

Indigenous African languages are a predominant aspect of African identity and are deeply embedded cultural and epistemological knowledges framing of an African worldview (Djite 2008; Bodomo, 1996; Ngugi, 1986). As a carrier of culture; the Indigenous language is the venue through which people pass on valuable cultural, historical, spiritual and practical knowledges (Djite, 2008;
Ndlovu, 2008). Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1985) speaks of the relationship between culture and language in Africa:

Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of a peoples’ identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language. (p. 14-15)

Ngugi highlights that the Indigenous African language is inseparable from Indigenous African culture, values and spirituality. He expands on this crucial relationship explaining that the Indigenous language is but a physical manifestation of the spiritual core of the African person. Robinson (1996) reinforces the connection between identity and language in a study of rural peoples in Cameroon. This study reveals that rural Indigenous Cameroonian feel that their ethnic identification and sense of self and community is directly connected to their Indigenous languages. As Robinson explains, the rural Cameroonian see the introduction of an exogenous European language in their community as a threat to their identity and their languages. This notion is directly in line with Ngugi and Prah (2010) who argue that loss of the Indigenous language is detrimental to the cultural, spiritual and identity of African peoples.

As sites of knowledge are not disassociated from issues of power and control, the use of exogenous, colonial languages in schooling and government has created a hierarchy of language in Africa which had led to the denigration of Indigenous African languages (Nsamenang, 2005; Robinson, 1996). The perception of the Indigenous African language as having no meaningful contribution to African societies has been ingrained in the African psyche. With 80% of the African population speaking African Indigenous languages and a mere 20% of the elite managing and directing African nations, the devaluing of Indigenous African languages has led to the disempowerment of the majority of African peoples. Thus in examining the link between Indigenous African languages and cultural knowledges, it is apparent that the use of Indigenous African languages as sites of empowerment is vital for the revitalization of African development (Lebakeng, 2005; Prah, 2010; Robinson, 1996).

2.7 AFRICAN ORAL LITERATURES AS SITES OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

In addressing the intricate relationship between Indigenous African cultures, identities and languages, we arrive at our discussion on oral literatures as sites of Indigenous knowledge. Oral literatures- proverbs, myths and legends- have been said to be the core of Indigenous communication and knowledge transmission in African communities for millennia (Yankah, 1989). Unlike other parts of
the world where oral literatures have been overshadowed by the written word, they remain the primary method of communicating knowledges, values and norms in communities across the continent (Miller, 1980). Grounded in local peoples’ understanding of the world, oral literatures provide a snapshot into the histories and worldviews of African peoples and share valuable Indigenous knowledges that may have otherwise been lost. Yankah (1989) explains “our proverbs, maxims, stories, appellations and the like are partly of artistic essence but they are also very effective modes in which a society’s values, ethics, experiences and history may be recorded” (Yankah, 1992, p.18). Expanding on Yankah’s description, Millar (1980) describes the historical significance of oral literatures as narratives that describe eras of a time prior to that of the person that relates it. Supporting Miller, Erny (1981) speaks of the cultural significance of oral literature, highlighting that oral literatures communicate “literary, juridical or religious heritage, but also the transmission of a particular frame of mind and form of sensibility” (p.111). Sites of Indigenous knowledges, oral literatures not only impart and contemplate on the past they also integrate present knowledges and worldviews.

Yet, as Finnegan (1979) and Miller (1980) both argue, African oral literatures have remained unappreciated or misunderstood due to external ignorance about African societies. This has been exacerbated by evolutionary theories of human progress whereby orality is often equated to “primitiveness” and interpreted as a lower form of communication (Finnegan, 1970). The “tradition/modernity” dichotomy has reinforced the disuse of Indigenous African oral literatures because they are placed as lower forms of knowledge transmission, and thus remain at the margins (Finnegan, 1979). For this reason, oral literatures have failed to be examined in depth for their use in contemporary society.

To counteract the illusion of stagnancy in oral literatures, many argue that because oral knowledges are not confined to writing but passed on orally, the oral transmission ensures fluidity, variability and flexibility (Finnegan, 1970; Miller, 1980). Unlike written accounts, oral literatures are not confined to authentic forms or definite style; instead they are highly contextual in nature (Finnegan, 1970; Miller; 1980; Yankah, 1992). Yankah states “traditional modes of communication [oral literatures] may change themes or style or may adapt themselves to novel situations as the need arises” (p. 23). Although the notion of contextual dependency will be further explored in the section on proverbs, the contextualization of oral literature is particularly important when speaking of Indigenous African knowledges as it debunks the misconception of stagnancy in oral literatures by revealing that they are in

Oral literatures offer multi-faceted knowledges, spanning over past and present to assist African peoples in making sense of the world around them (Miller, 1980, Vansina, 1980) and to offer a plethora of knowledge and wisdom. Dei (2000) states that oral literatures such “the songs, fables, proverbs, legends, myths, mythologies and traditions” are “local indigenous knowledges and the cultural resource base of African peoples have been the least analysed for their contributions to national development processes” (p.105). As most Africans continue to heavily rely on oral literatures for daily communications, it is necessary for them to be explored for the use in contemporary community and social development (Yankah, 1992).

2.8 SITIATING PROVERBS AS SITES OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Proverbs, as sites of Indigenous knowledge have been described as the “core of verbal interaction in Africa” (Oduaran and Oduaran, 2006) and “the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Yankah, 1989). A proverb is defined by Medier (2004) as “a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation” (as cited in Asimeng-Boahene, 2009, p.3). Used daily, proverbs continue to be a chief mode of communication in African communities. The credence of the proverb in African societies can be found in the Akan proverb “se yen dayea, yen so daye, sa ara se akasaka amba a, yenka bebuo” translated to “without sleep there is no dream, without discourse there is no proverb.” As this proverb highlights, the proverb itself is seen as crucial to discourse, expressing universalized truths, cultural and behavioural norms, historical facts and customs (Yankah, 1989).

Moreover, the proverb is used in all societal settings, speaking to a plethora of matters such as daily living, history, morality, spirituality, attitudes and behaviours and teaching of community (Boateng, 1983; Kudadjie, 1996; Okrah, 2003; Wane, 2008; Yankah, 1989). “African proverbs contain observations gathered from common everyday events and experiences concerning the nature, life and behaviour of human beings as well as of animals, birds, plants and other natural objects, and even supernatural objects and beings” (Kudadjie, 1996, p.8). The proverb is, therefore, deeply embedded in cultural communication and discourse speaking to all aspects of the African community.


2.8.1 Proverbs, Ancestors and Elders

African societies are built on gerontocratic and spiritual relationships whereby the proverb is enshrined in the wisdom, moral lessons and values of Elders and ancestors (Kudadjie, 1996; Okrah, 2003; Wangoola, 2000; Yankah, 1992). When shared, the words “so said the elder” precedes the proverb to demonstrate an appreciation of the wisdom and knowledge carried by the proverb (Kudadjie, 1996). Proverbs, because they are the words of the Elders and ancestors, are not considered subjective reflections but are depersonalized and disassociated from the speaker. The wisdom residing within the proverb is not seen as belonging to the speaker, thus not interpreted as a personal viewpoint, yet is considered a reminder of the ancestors’ and Elders’ guidance and wisdom. In this sense the proverb functions as an impersonal moral tool (Finnegan, 1970; Yankah, 1989). With the speaker detached from wisdom of the proverb and not interpreted as a personal reflection, this allows the speaker to respond to personal or sensitive circumstances objectively (Finnegan, 1970; Riley, 1990; Yankah, 1989, 1992). Thus, the proverb is the central focus, not the opinion of the speaker.

With the depersonalization of the wisdom, the issues, beliefs or lessons within the proverb, the knowledge embedded within them is universalized (Yankah, 1989). The message, as opposed to being directly associated with the speaker themselves is depicted as common knowledge. Those who can speak well in proverbs are well respected, seen as closer to the spirit world and are able to maintain persuasive argument. In a Ghanaian context, Yankah (1989) explains that proverbs are understood as cultural truths attributed to ancestral wisdom, thus carrying deeper credence and rhetoric power. Furthermore, Okrah (2003) highlights that one of the fundamental uses of the proverb is to guide behaviour. The proverb is often used to answer philosophical questions such as “What is knowledge?” Such a question may be answered through a proverb “knowledge is like a baobab tree and so no one person can embrace it with both hands” (Dzoba, 1992 as cited in Okrah, 2003). Therefore, as wisdom of the Elders and ancestors, proverbs are greatly valued in African communities for providing moral guidance to all spheres of society.

2.8.2 Literal and Metaphorical Meanings Embedded in Proverbs

Proverbs provide moral guidance and are revered as spiritual wisdom; often carrying both a primary or explicit meaning as well as a secondary or implicit meaning, thus offering a multitude of understandings and interpretations (Kudadjie, 1996; Okrah, 2003; Yankah, 1989). The primary or explicit meaning is defined as the literal meaning of the proverb. The literal meaning is often evident
and easy to understand. For example, the Ga proverb “Blema kpaa nô atsaa” is translated as “You (have to) pattern your rope according to the original (ancient) twist” (Kudadjie, 1996). The literal meaning of this proverb can be interpreted as ensuring that when you are making a rope you follow the old ways of tying. Yet, the implicit or secondary meaning is a metaphorical translation requiring a deeper analysis and may also carry a multitude of understandings and interpretations. In examining the same proverb “Blema kpaa nô atsaa” translated to “You (have to) pattern your rope according to the original (ancient) twist” the metaphorical or deeper meaning could be interpreted as suggesting that one must look back to the knowledge and wisdom of the Elders or what has been done in the past to inform present-day decisions.

Thus, because the proverb holds deep metaphorical meaning and is integrated into the daily activities and challenges of African peoples, Finnegan (1970) argues that proverbs are highly culture and context dependent and thus cannot be understood outside the cultural context in which they are spoken. If removed from the cultural context she argues that they may have an entirely different meaning. The use of the proverb relies on cultural allusions, thus when the cultural element is not understood, the essential meaning of the proverb may be missed or lost. She argues that this can be even further complicated by the fact that the same proverb can be used for multiple purposes. Yet, at the same time Asimeng-Boahene (2006) and Yankah (1989) speak to African proverbs as universalized truths speaking to the human condition. Thus, because the proverb is fluid and flexible it can also be used outside direct cultural context. In the following section we will examine the intricacies and flexibility of the proverb.

2.8.3 Dual or Multiple Meanings in Proverbs

As oral literatures, African proverbs are dynamic, flexible and fluid (Kudadjie, 1996; Okrah, 2003, Yankah, 1989) “the form and meaning of the proverb are not fixed; they move with usage” (Yankah, 1989). The flexibility of the proverb is apparent in the Akan proverb “Ebe de, engyina fakko, etu” translated to “The proverb does not stay at one place, it flies” (Yankah, p.28). Furthermore, to reflect the fluidity of the proverb, Kudadjie (1996) in speaking of Akan, Dangme and Ga expressions, states that the term “bu abe” which can be translated as to “bend” or “twist” words is often used when describing how the proverb is spoken. The speaker may reconstruct or manipulate the proverb to ensure that it is contextually appropriate, which allows a single proverb to be used in multiple contexts.
2.8.4 Same Proverb, Different Circumstance

The same proverb may be used in different circumstances; a proverb “used to warn a listener about the consequences of a future action contemplated by the listener, may also be used in another context to comment on a mishap that has already transpired; and a proverb with a second person correlation in one context may be used in another with a first person correlation” (Yankah, 1989, p.154) This is often done when a speaker wishes to demonstrate his mastery and knowledge of the proverb as well as his creativity (Yankah, 1989). Thus, the proverb is not confined to its traditional meanings but can move fluidly through discourse and context to accurately depict and react to circumstances in which the speaker and the listener(s) may find themselves.

Moreover, the same proverb may be used in contradictory ways, based on the context and meaning in which the speaker has used the proverb (Kudadjie, 1996; Yankah, 1989). Yankah provides an example of how this plays out in the use of the Akan proverb “Funtumfrafu dɔnkyəmfrafu, wɔn myinaa afuru bɔ, I msp wɔdod a wɔdodo a wɔfom which he translates to “The twin mythical crocodiles share a common belly, yet scramble over food”. Yankah (1989) notes that the proverb has two meanings: 1) the same family or lineage should not fight over resources that belong to them as they will become common property; and 2) the struggle over limited resources may be a good thing, even though the property is common, the credit will go the person who acquired the property. The two meanings of this proverb provide an excellent example of how the fluidity and context are crucial to understanding the proverb itself. Yet, what must be made apparent is that although the meaning of the proverb may be interpreted differently based on the situation or context in which the proverb has been spoken, the proverb itself remains intact, thus not losing its original meaning.

Yet, there are also circumstances where the proverb itself can be manipulated to increase or decrease the severity or stress of the proverb message. To stress the communal truth of the proverb the words “have you seen” will be added to the proverb. The addition of these words invites the audience to participate in the proverb, suggesting that they have a previous understanding of the proverb. To demonstrate the significance of “have you seen” Yankah (1989) provides an example of the Akan proverb “Have you seen the eyebrow outgrow the beard.” In Yankah’s example the speaker is referring to how a young teenager has disrespected an Elder. The eyebrow is the young teen and in his disobedience has attempted to outgrow, and therefore disrespect, the Elder. In using the words “have you seen” the speaker draws the audience closer to the topic of the proverb increasing the sense of
familiarity with the problem. Thus the proverb is spoken as a general truth, reinforcing the notion of depersonalization. Therefore, we can see how the slightest manipulation of the proverb may lead to different meaning or emphasis in the same proverb.

The flexibility and multiple uses of proverbs open up the potential for proverbs to be used in a variety of contexts and environments. Yet, at the same time, when sharing proverbs, we must ensure that the original meaning or significance of the proverb is not lost. Therefore in exploring African proverbs for development, we must ensure that the original meaning of the proverb is not lost, otherwise the proverb may be manipulated.

2.8.5 Proverbs and Peacebuilding

As proverbs are revered and depersonalized knowledges, the literature reveals that they are often used in African communities as methods of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Proverbs have been documented as being commonly used to resolve disputes among ethnic groups such as the Fante and Tswana (Okrah, 2003; Yankah, 1989) and have also been used for centuries in Akan court cases (Yankah, 1989). Proverbs have great weight in traditional judicial systems in Ghana (ibid). Finnegan (1970) states that in Ghanaian court cases proverbs are often used when counsellors and judges wish to draw an analogy between the proverb and the circumstance discussed in the case. Yet, in examining the use of proverbs in disputes, they are not only confined to court cases but are also used in non-judicial conflicts as a way in which to smooth over disagreements among community members, neighbours and families (Finnegan, 1970).

At the same time proverbs are not limited to conflict situations, yet are also used to encourage harmony. As proverbs are morally infused, they are often used to reinforce positive behaviours through affirmative messaging (Finnegan, 1970, Kudadjie, 1996, Yankah, 1989). Finnegan (1970) explains that the proverb is not only used in situations of conflict yet functions as reinforcement for harmony, thus spoken as an affirmation good behaviour. Okrah (2003) and Asimeng-Boahene (2009) concur that because the proverb is so deeply embedded in notions of individual and community life it is used to reinforce morality in times of moral lapse, thus becoming a site of empowerment for the individual and the community.

Yet, Finnegan (1970) warns that proverbs may also be used to force compliance. Using proverbs that induce shame or suggest bad behaviour may reinforce certain behaviours that alleviate such distasteful sentiments (ibid). Yet, she suggests that because proverbs are depersonalized, the shaming of
the proverb is often cast out quite innocently, thus not directly associated to the speaker. Therefore, this may not have the same detrimental effect to the listener’s self-esteem as a more direct statement. On the other hand, it may be argued that it may be more damaging to the listener as the proverbs are associated with Elders and the spiritual world. Therefore, the moral weight of the proverb may be said to have a positive reinforcement. Yet, as Finnegan has cautioned we must be aware of the possibility of abuse or misuse of proverbs.

2.9 PROVERBS AND DEVELOPMENT

Although there has been much written on the need to revitalize African development through the use of Indigenous African knowledges, much of the existing literature fails to theorize this link. The Indigenous Knowledges literature, although exhibiting a strong argument for the social, cultural and spiritual value of Indigenous knowledges, has failed to offer any concrete examples of ways in which Indigenous knowledges can inform questions of development. Due to the lack of research surrounding Indigenous knowledges and development, superficial attempts to incorporate Indigenous Knowledges and local voices into the development have manifested (Goulet, 1980). This superficial incorporation has only reinforced the prominence of Euro-Western approaches to development and dismissed any authentic progression in the incorporation of Indigenous African knowledges.

Yet, with proverbs at the root of African society—a looking glass into an African worldview—they carry great knowledge and wisdom. As site of Indigenous knowledge, their flexibility, multiple meanings and spiritual, cultural and metaphorical significance provide an excellent starting point for examining the integral link between Indigenous African knowledges and African development. With spiritual and pedagogical significance, flexibility and fluidity, and extensive and profound moral teaches, proverbs have the potential to speak to a variety of issues and concerns relevant to development (Oduaran and Oduaran, 2006; Yankah, 1992). The context dependency and fluidity of the proverb equates to adaptability, thus not needing to be altered or changed for their role in the development. Instead, their fluidity and flexibility allows them to introduce new ideas and practices while at the same time inculcating morality and reinforcing cultural beliefs (Riley, 1990). Riley (1990) states “it would seem then that proverbs need not to be tampered with to be used effectively to communicate development information. Their meaning and interpretation depend heavily on the context and setting in which they are used. What is needed is a thorough understanding of what proverbs, songs, and stories exist in a particular region” (p.308).
In addition, the knowledges found in proverbs are often conceptualized as universal and unchallengeable which enables proverbs to have the power to initiate behavioural change. Yankah (1992) found that proverbs could be used in health practices to influence and reflect people’s attitudes toward fertility and birth control in a hospital in Korle Bu, Accra, Ghana. He found that proverbs, as daily communication tools were “persuasive devices utilized to effectively reinforce or change attitudes” (p.18). Furthermore, Asimeng-Boahene (2000) has examined how African proverbs could be used in critical pedagogy for African American students. He argues that proverbs offer “nuggets of wisdom” that and summaries of experiences and observations that provide students with a “comprehensive view of culture, politics and histories” (p.62). He argues that “proverbs have been collected, collated and studied for centuries as informative and useful linguistic signs of cultural values and thoughts”(p.61) yet argues that proverbs have not been analyzed for their “potential value for modern thought and life is little recognized and therefore untapped and not well defined” (p.62). Asimeng-Boahene (2000) argues that African proverbs create an empowering space for individuals and communities as well as bridge culture values gap that exist between African and Western cultures.

Although, there has been a prominent body of literature on the pedagogical and moral implications of proverbs, research is lacking on how proverbs may be used as theoretical and practical tools for development. Therefore, with the knowledge that proverbs are “the palm oil with which words are eaten” in African communities, and possess a plethora of valuable moral and pedagogical insights, this thesis aims to examine the theoretical and practical use of proverbs in endogenous development.
CHAPTER THREE
DISCURSIVE FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Nea ɔretwa sa nnim se n’akyi akyea
He who constructs a path, knows not it’s crooked behind him – Akan Proverb

3.1 DISCURSIVE FRAMEWORK

This research opts for the use of a discursive framework as opposed to theoretical framework as a discursive framework is founded on the integration and interplay of multiple perspectives and knowledges. The use of a discursive framework reflects the fluidity and interdependence of knowledges; conceptualizing knowledge as a continual and transformative process. Thus, not limited to the static confinement of metanarratives of theoretical frameworks, a discursive framework seeks to simultaneously incorporate and highlight the intersection and dissection of multiple perspectives and knowledges (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001).

This thesis merges the multiplicities of thought of three critical frameworks: anti-colonial, critical development and Indigenous, as it strives to deconstruct and interrogate the Euro-Western cultural ideologies found in African development. The merging of the three frameworks also reflects a shared resistance to the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledges and ideologies found in African development. To counteract this hegemony, all three frameworks call for the validation of local, Indigenous knowledges. While each framework offers a similar call for the need to offset Euro-Western dominance through the resurfacing of Indigenous knowledges and local understandings, each framework also offers distinctive knowledges that complement discussions on the integral link between culture and development. The following section provides a discussion on anti-colonial, critical development and Indigenous frameworks.

3.1.1 Anti-colonial Theory

Dei and Kempf (2006) define anti-colonial theory as “an approach to theorizing colonial and re-colonial relations and the implications of imperial structure on the processes of knowledge production and validation, the understanding of Indigeneity and the pursuit of agency resistance and subjective
politics” (Dei and Kempf, 2006, p.2). Thus, pushing past a theorization of spatial/territorial colonization, as manifested the notion of “foreign” or “alien”, anti-colonial theory reveals and deconstructs the ways in which colonization is a result of imperial approaches to knowledge production, dissemination and validation. Concentrated on the power dynamics between dominant and subjugated knowledges, an anti-colonial prism “theorizes the nature and extent of social domination and particularly the multiples places that power, and the relations of power work to establish dominant-subordinate connections” (Dei and Kempf, 2006 p.2).

Recognizing knowledge as a social and cultural construct (Dei and Kempf, 2006), anti-colonial theorists assert that our culture is manifested in our shared beliefs, meanings and values. Furthermore, these shared beliefs, meanings and values can be understood as results of our social interactions and the “objects and events” of daily living- our interactions with one another, with nature and with our institutions (Hawkins and Pea, 1987 as cited in Semali, 1999). In other words, our worldview is fashioned by the cultural “objects and events” that manifest in our daily life (Dei, 2000). Therefore, when ones’ “objects and events” and knowledges are deemed inferior, primitive or insignificant in comparison to dominant perspectives, this is understood as a form of colonialism- an epistemological colonialism.

Furthermore, with our “object and events” reflecting deep-rooted cultural knowledge, the overshadowing and denigration of such knowledges is also a denigration of one’s worldview, thus disassociating us form the ways in which we understand and conceptualize the world around us and therefore initiating a colonization of mind and spirit (Dei, 2000; Note, 2006; Tucker, 1995; Wangoola, 2000).

Therefore, the ongoing portrayal of the “primitiveness” in the Euro-Western gaze on Indigenous African knowledges can be understood as a form of neo-colonization. Despite the independence of African nations, the portrayal of Indigenous African knowledge systems as incompetent and archaic has had a detrimental effect on the spirits and identities of African peoples. Fanon (1952) argues that the depreciation of African knowledges, through the spread of Euro-Western ideologies and languages, has dehumanized African peoples, initiating a deep-rooted cultural and linguistic shame. “Cultural estrangement has served to reinforce in the Africans self-devaluation and self-hatred and a profound sense of inferiority that in turn compels them to ‘lighten their darkness’ both physically and metaphorically for Western gratification” (Fanon, 1967, p. 167 as cited in Nyamnjoh, 2004). Fanon’s notion of cultural estrangement and “profound sense of inferiority” remains deep-rooted in the epistemological dominance of the imperial and colonial development ideology. The push toward the
adoption of exogenous, Euro-Western knowledges systems, economies, technologies and languages continues to be equated to “civilizing” or “humanizing” the continent (Leys, 1996; Tedla, 1995, Wangoola, 2000). Fanon describes this continued attempt at “civilization” as leading to an internalization of an illusionary “primitiveness” among African peoples, thus leading to what Lebakeng (2010) defines as an African epistemicide and linguacide through the forced adoption of the “white mask”. The African individual is thus forced to appropriate and internalize Euro-Western knowledges and is perceived as human only once he/she wears the “white mask”. Therefore, an anti-colonial framework permits a deconstruction of the ways in which the dominance of Euro-Western knowledges have resulted in a cultural, spiritual and psychological overtaking of African cultural and spiritual knowledges, values and practices (Dei and Kempf, 2006; Riley, 1990 and Tedla, 1995).

Consequently, in recognizing the domination of certain groups, knowledges and cultures over others, an anti-colonial framework expands beyond the “what is” of colonization to conceive of “what ought to be” of decolonization (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2004). In other words, an anti-colonial prism challenges and resists hegemonic epistemologies and practices by calling for decolonized approaches. Decolonization can thus be conceptualized as an interrogative process to reframe and contest the unequal relationships between the dominant and hegemonic and the marginalized and subverted (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001). Therefore, decolonization is a process that aspires to re-theorize and actively reframe relationships by uprooting the hegemonic and dominant practices through a fortification of local and marginal voices and knowledges and by an “understanding of Indigeneity and the pursuit of agency resistance and subjective politics” (Dei and Kempf, 2006, p.2). To counteract the dominance of Euro-western knowledge, anti-colonial thought invites a restoration and revitalization of marginalized knowledges by “open[ing] the door for hitherto discredited notions of spirituality, emotionality and sentimentality, so that these modes of expression are also validated as legitimate forms of knowledge, emerging from lived experiences of the bodies” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p.318). Indigenous and spiritual knowledges are envisioned as sites of power embodied in the lived experiences, values and beliefs of Indigenous and marginalized individuals and communities. Therefore, to move beyond the current epistemological order means utilizing embodied knowledges as sites of power and resistance to re-theorize our very understanding of development. Through the resurgence of embodied knowledges of Indigenous and marginalized peoples, development may surpass the notion of “what is” to imagining the possibilities of “what could be” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Escobar as cited in Fagan, 1999).
Therefore, as anti-colonial theory stresses the importance of alternatives realities for development, this means moving beyond a Euro-Western development ideology to conceive of an alternative approach to African development that engages with a multiplicity of Indigenous and spiritual ways of knowing (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2004). In other words, this entails moving from a process of colonization to a process of decolonization by challenging and resisting hegemonic Euro-Western knowledge production, validation and dissemination through a resurgence of subordinate local Indigenous knowledges for development. Thus “envisioning knowledge as power and resistance [as] essential for decolonization praxis” (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, p.299).

3.1.2 Critical Development Framework

In congruence with anti-colonial theory, this thesis draws on a critical development framework to theorize the dismissed and covert colonialism that plagues current development theory. In the vein of anti-colonial theory, critical development theory conceptualizes the current approach to development as an epistemological overtaking concentrated on the reconstruction of values and morals of the “underdeveloped” societies to reflect those of the “developed” (Leys, 1996; Tedla, 1995, Wangoola, 2000). Critical development theory critiques the ways in which development has conceptualized “modernity” and “civility” as Euro-Western attributes associating them with Euro-Western “objects and events” while all other knowledges are marginalized as “traditional” “backward” and viewed as obstacles to development (Dei, 2000; Tucker, 1995; Wangoola, 2000).

Furthermore, critical development theory argues that the premise of Euro-Western “objects and events” as being superior to those in other cultures is founded on the scientific, rational and linear thought of the Enlightenment Era and evolutionary theories (Munck, 1999; Sardar, 1999; Tucker, 1999). With the reductionist metanarrative of the Age of Enlightenment pioneering Europe’s claim to universal knowledge, “true knowledge” driven by scientific method, rationality and logic is the basis of the linear path to human progress or development (Fagerlind and Saha, 1989: Haverkort and Reijntjes, 2006). Valid knowledge is thus measured and proven through logic and science. Anything immeasurable is understood as invalid knowledge and thus stifling human progress. Thus, progress and “development” are founded upon a linear path, moving from irrational and emotional to rational and logical. This can also be conceptualized as moving from “primitive” superstition and irrationality to a state of “modern” rationality and scientific knowledge. Therefore, intuition, spirituality and God, immeasurable and invisible, are non-existent and simply a mark of ignorance and superstition. This initiates a dialectic relationship between valid and invalid ways of knowing which separates fact from fiction; mind over
matter; subjective and objective; human and nature; and emotion and logic (Haverkort and Reijntjes, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2004; Tucker, 1999).

The notions of superiority of one culture or worldview over another was supported by Enlightenment theorists such as Rousseau and Condorcet who argued that human beings were moving toward a state of perfection, and therefore could only be recognized as human once one had entered “civil (European) society.” They believed that it was in civil society that one would learn to control emotional and instinctual urges and thus became human (Fagerlind and Saha, 1989). “Progress was recognized as a linear evolution; moving away from “primitive” and “traditional” superstition and ignorance toward “civilized” and “modern” science and rationality. This further reinforced the dominance of one society or culture over another by claiming that all societies and cultures that did not fit into the narrow constraints of European “civil” societies were “irrational” “ uncivilized” and “inhuman”. Thus while Europeans were civil and modern, the rest of the world lagged behind, and as Fanon stated, were viewed as inhuman, irrational and underdeveloped. The perceived superiority of European thought and knowledge legitimized physical, spiritual and epistemological violence hallmarked as “liberation.” “Discourses of progress and civilization were used to legitimize slavery, genocide, colonialism and all forms of human exploitation. These processes are not a mere aberration from the Enlightenment ideal, they are a central part of it- they are in a real sense the extreme formulation of the Enlightenment vision” (Tucker, 1999.p. 3).

Yet, the violence and domination did not end with the Enlightenment era. Critical development theorists illustrate the ways in which the development theories of the 50s, 60s and 70s stem from the Enlightenment and evolutionary dichotomy of “civility and modernity” and “primitiveness and tradition”. The epistemological overtaking of Euro-Western ideologies moved from overt colonialism to a covert mission entitled “development”, toting illusionary promises of economic and technological betterment driven by “modern” Euro-Western ideologies of economy, technology and neo-liberalism (Munck, 1999, Sardar, 1999). According to Sardar (1999) the West became the yardstick of development; all development initiatives were created and compared to those found in the West. Supporting this notion, Tucker (1999) states “westernization gained the status of a universal goal and destiny. When failure and resistance were encountered they were subsumed under the category of ‘tradition,’ an essentially pejorative term which denotes divergence from the generally accepted norms of reason and progress” (p. 7). As Tucker highlights, development was saturated with Enlightenment ideals as modern economies, technologies and approaches were contrasted against “primitive” and
“traditional” cultural knowledges (Tucker, 1999, p.13). Development had no place for anything that fell outside of Euro-Western systems as it was simply deemed as a hindrance to development. Indigenous knowledges and languages were thus conceived as “traditional” knowledges, incompatible with Western development, and to be removed to make ways for “modern” approaches (Tedla, 1995; Tucker, 1999).

Therefore, critical development theorists view African development as infiltrated with Euro-Western epistemology and institutions premised on the goal to transform so-called “primitive” “underdeveloped” African Indigenous knowledges and communities to mirror the “civilized” Euro-Western developed nations (Leys, 1996; Tedla, 1995, Wangoola, 2000). As Indigenous African knowledges and languages are seen as the cause of Africa’s “underdevelopment,” they are assumed to be incompatible with Euro-Western knowledges and thus obstacles to development. Furthermore, because many African worldviews are founded on a spiritualized relationship with the physical and metaphysical, they do not fit within the science and material-based epistemology of Euro-Western development. Therefore, Indigenous knowledges, values and beliefs are seen as impediments to development, and often the goal of Euro-Western development is to obliterate such knowledges and languages to replace them “civilized” and “modern” Euro-Western languages, economies and values.

In line with anti-colonial theory, critical development theory calls for a decolonization of development ideology by harnessing agency through a multi-centric approach to reflect “a plurality of discourses, a plurality of audiences and a plurality of terrains” (Tucker, 1999, p.15). Plurality means examining and incorporating multiple and marginalized knowledges, worldviews and understanding of development to counteract the universal dominance of Euro-Western development ideals. This means exploring the ways in which development can be driven by local epistemologies and worldviews, thus redefined to reflect the cultures, beliefs, values and languages of its beneficiaries (Dei, 1993, 2000; Tucker, 1999, Wangoola, 2000). Therefore, like anti-colonial theorists, critical development theorists recognize the importance of Indigeneity and spirituality as central to the decolonization of development through an exploration of embodied cultural and spiritual knowledges for development.

2.1.3 Indigenous Framework

As we have just explored, anti-colonial and critical development frameworks both call for the epistemological and ontological uprooting of hegemonic Euro-Western knowledges by calling on Indigenous knowledges and languages to decolonize development ideology. Therefore, an Indigenous framework intersects with anti-colonial and critical development theories as it functions outside colonial
or imperial knowledges as “a body of Indigenous thought that has located itself contrapuntal to dominant knowledges, in that, the Indigene reveals itself through resistance, as counter-hegemonic and as tangential to conventional knowledge systems” (Dei, 2011, p. 2). Although its roots are deeply embedded in an anti-colonial framework, the Indigenous framework has been kept separate from the previous two as its theoretical base begins where the anti-colonial and critical development have left off-at the Indigenous core. In other words, both anti-colonial and critical development theory affirm that the process of decolonization must encompass the engagement of Indigenous and local knowledges; yet it is only within an Indigenous framework that this theorization will occur from an Indigenous worldview. With that said, this framework is imperative for this thesis not only because counteracts Euro-Western cultural dominance in development, yet does so by centering Indigenous epistemology, ontology and axiology within its struggle. In working within this framework, I will draw on Dei’s (2011) principles of an Indigenous framework as well as the work of several other Indigenous scholars such as Shiva, Nyamnjoh and Wangoola.

Alongside anti-colonial and critical development frameworks, a critical Indigenous framework recognizes urgency to regain spiritual power and strength through the revitalization and validation of Indigenous knowledges, worldviews and languages. With Indigenous knowledges at the core of an Indigenous framework, spirit and spirituality are theorized as central sites of knowledge. Knowledge is understood as embodied in spirit and therefore inseparable from identity (Dei, 2011). The spirit can therefore be understood as “the axis on which Indigenous rests, that is the substructure or foundation for understanding the social, cultural, economic, material and political” (ibid, p.28). As all knowledges within an Indigenous framework are spirituality driven, land, history, culture and identities are all interpreted as sites of knowledge, hence inform the worldview and epistemology of local peoples (ibid). “Knowledge is indigenous to the extent that it works within the prism of local cosmologies that are localized in specific understandings of the society, culture and nature nexus or interface” (Dei, 2011, p.18) and therefore is informed historically and culturally.

As site of knowledge are imbued in land, history and spirit, knowledge is a continual and accumulative process, gathered throughout experiences and interactions with one’s environment, land community and self. Knowledge is seen as culturally relevant, and connected to the survival of peoples and environments Therefore; knowledge is not an externalized single “Truth” to be attained, nor a scientific Truth to be proven, yet resides and shifts within the dynamism of the spirits of individuals, communities and lands. Knowledges do not remain fixed but are in a continual state of ebb and flow.
Consequently, multiple forms of knowledge coexist and one form of knowledge is not superior to any other form (Nyamnjoh, 2004). As the environment and peoples change throughout time, this also means that the sources of knowledge and knowledges themselves, adapt to change. Thus they remain dynamic in nature (Dei, 2000). With multiple knowledges coexisting and shifting in response to the experiences and existence of peoples and environments, the concept of “traditional” and “primitive” or “modern” and “civilized” knowledges is inconceivable as all knowledges have their particular place, relevance and use.

Furthermore, dualism and compartmentalization have no place in an Indigenous framework as it rests on of the notion of wholeness and completeness. Knowledges are a result of experiences and practices stemming from multiple sites, thus they are not conceived as separate and exclusive, yet are interconnected and co-dependant. “In this epistemological order, emphasis is on the whole, and truth is negotiated, something consensual, not the result of artificial disqualification, dismemberment, atomisation or mutilation by a science of exclusion” (Nyamnjoh, 2004, p.143). The knowledges embodied within the individual, the community, the environment and the spirit fit into a greater web of life, and are inseparable from one another (Shiva, 1999). Therefore, matters in individual and communal life are not only addressed through tangible, physical questions of practice, thus limited to the visible, the objective and the rational, yet must also be examined through invisible, emotional and subjective realities to understand and explore their true nature (Nyamnjoh, 2004). Multiplicity is found as both the rational, objective and the emotional, subjective are interdependent and respected as valid sources of knowledge. Sites of contention within knowledges are thus understood as sites of learning and sites of strength. Pluralities are conceptualized as parts of a greater whole, offering multiple perspectives and understandings of the world around us.

With these fundamental principles in mind, an Indigenous development approach means challenging the hegemony of uni-cultured and fragmented material development. Thus, moving from a Euro-Western linear and scientific agenda to multiple and localized agendas that draw on sites of accumulative cultural and spiritual knowledges found in local communities. As a result, development would not be limited to material, economic and technology-driven policies yet centred on wholeness and harmony utilizing multiple knowledges embedded in the spiritual, social, economic, environmental experiences of local peoples (Dei, 1993; Wangoola, 1999). As Tucker (1999) highlights, this would entail an understanding of development that reflects a plurality of knowledges and worldviews. Embodied knowledge, knowledge resting within the spirit must be recognized for use in development (Wangoola,
This means that if development is to truly speak to the needs of local peoples it must incorporate spiritual knowledges and wisdoms that reside outside of the Euro-Western lens.

In conclusion, Indigenous, anti-colonial and critical development frameworks all seek social transformation by unravelling and resisting Euro-Western dominance. Each framework provides a key to unravel the epistemological dominance of the current development ideology and moves toward reframing development to reflect the needs, beliefs and values of all peoples. Using this discursive framework to examine Ghanaian proverbs for development will provide me with an opportunity to explore the spiritual, cultural, theoretical and practical knowledges embedded in proverbs and examine the ways in which they may be linked to questions of decolonized development in African contexts.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The discursive framework provided us with an understanding of the ways in which knowledge production, dissemination and validation is a form of colonization; a colonization of spirit and of ideas. In this section I will apply the concepts discussed in the anti-colonial, critical development and Indigenous discursive frameworks to the methodology and methods used in this thesis. This section will provide an overview of qualitative research methodology, data collection, a profile of the research participants and the lessons learned throughout the project.

3.2.1 Moving beyond dominant knowledge production

To explore Ghanaian proverbs as tools for development, this thesis employs an anti-oppressive qualitative research methodology that aspires to move beyond dominant knowledge production. An anti-oppressive qualitative research methodology works alongside an anti-colonial framework of resistance by bringing to light dominant and oppressive powers. Working from an anti-colonial framework, the anti-oppressive qualitative research methodology attempts to disrupt hegemonic voices with those of the subaltern by bringing to the foreground knowledges and voices that have otherwise been silenced in the shadows of dominant Euro-Western culture. An anti-oppressive qualitative research methodology works within an Indigenous framework as it “evolves” within the field rather than “moving from one pre-determined step to another” (Dei, 2011, p.9).

3.3 GATHERING INFORMATION: INTERVIEWS AND CONTENT ANALYSIS
3.3.1 Multi-Method Approach

To examine the role of proverbs as cultural and linguistic resources for development, I took a multi-method approach by conducting a review of literature, interviews and content analysis of proverbs from three ethnic groups in Ghana. In using the combination of all three methods, I was able to initiate an integrative approach to the project. The review of literature provided with a background and deeper understanding of the use of proverbs within African contexts and assisted in the development of themes for the study. Through the interviews with development practitioners and Chiefs, I was not only able to further understand the issue of development in the Ghanaian context, yet was also able to prompt the use of proverbs in conversation and get a further understanding of the use of the proverb in natural conversation. Due to the participants all being of Akan descent, I also decided to incorporate proverbs from two other ethnicities in Ghana: Gonja and Bogon using content analysis. The Gonja and Bogon proverbs were selected from two volumes of proverbs while I was collecting proverbs for my supervisor during my position as a research assistant. I decided to use the Gonja and Bogon proverbs, as I was already familiar with many of the proverbs due to my research position and felt that they would contribute to a reflection of the diversity of ethnic groups in Ghana in my study. Also, because they were smaller ethnic groups which I had not come across in my review of literature on proverbs, I felt it was also important to also explore proverbs from other ethnicities in Ghana as much of the work on proverbs has focused primarily on Akan proverbs (see Yankah, 1989; 1992; Okrah, 2003). Choosing content analysis as a method also allowed me to expand the projects beyond the temporal and geographic limitations and provided me with deeper insight into proverbs outside of the Akan context.

Due to unexpected challenges, the information collected was done in several stages: a set of one hour long interviews with three development practitioners in various locations in Ghana, a second set of interviews with development practitioners in multiple locations in Ghana using Skype online telecommunications, an interview conducted for my supervisor’s project with a Chief in Winneba, Ghana, as well as proverbs collected from a volume of Gonja and Bogon proverbs.

3.3.2 Selection of Participants

The interview participants were selected using a snowballing technique based on suggestions of my supervisor as well as a contact that I had made during a conference on Endogenous Development in Tamale, Northern Ghana. I had originally planned on selecting participants from various regions and
ethnicities in Ghana to reflect ethnic and linguistic diversity as well as the diversity in development initiatives. Yet, due to the temporal and locational constraints I was only able to conduct interviews with participants of Akan descent.

The participants interviewed were Ghanaian development practitioners currently working in various development projects or initiatives in Ghana and represented different sectors of development. The participants were selected based on the criteria that they all were familiar with proverbs and were able to speak an Indigenous language. In selecting participants, I had attempted to get a cross-section of different development initiatives as well as a cross-section that reflected diversity in age, gender and development expertise.

Additionally, I used an interview with three Chiefs in the Central Region that had been previously conducted by a research assistant for my supervisor’s larger projects. I had originally hoped to interview Elders myself, yet due to time constraints and the need for a translator, after several failed attempts, I was unsuccessful in interviewing local Chiefs or Elders.

### 3.3.3 Participant Profiles

All of the participants’ names and the organizations with whom they are working have been changed to ensure their personal and professional anonymity.

**Maria**

Maria is a middle-aged female development practitioner of Akan ethnicity who works as the director of a women’s development organization housed in a University in Eastern Ghana and is currently in the process of completing her MBA. The organization with which she works assists local women in personal and academic development offering business, computer, accounting and math courses and has assisted many women in the local community to start their own businesses or to find employment. Thus, Maria was chosen as a participant as I felt she was able to speak to the ways in which proverbs could not only be used in local development initiatives, yet could also speak to some of the challenges or opportunities that the use of proverbs may initiate in women’s programming. Maria also offered a gendered analysis to the use of proverbs.
Prof Dave

Prof Dave is a middle-aged male development practitioner of Akan ethnicity who works with a local organization that specializes in endogenous development projects and Indigenous knowledges. Prof Dave’s primary role in the organization is to work with rural farmers in agriculture initiatives. Prof Dave was selected as a participant as he was referred to me during a conference on endogenous development in Northern Ghana. As he is currently working on endogenous food security development projects, and is considered very well versed in proverbs and oral literatures, and had commenced a project on the use of proverbs for development, I felt that he would be able to provide insight into Ghanaian endogenous development work as well as the use of proverbs in development.

Samuel

Samuel is a middle-aged male development practitioner of Akan descent, who works as a community radio disc jockey. He was suggested to me by a contact that I had made at a conference on community radio and development in Accra because he is knowledgeable in proverbs and often used them in his programming. I felt that Samuel provided insight into the use of proverbs in community radio projects and insight into local language initiatives as all the projects he worked on were done in Twi, the local language.

Chief A, B and C

Chief A, B and C were all male Elders and Chiefs in town in the Central Region. They were selected based on their profound knowledge and understanding of proverbs as well as the insight and knowledge of Indigenous institutions. Yet, unfortunately due to the interview being conducted by someone other than myself, I do not have personal details on the chiefs. The interview with these Chief was conducted in the local language Twi which also provided an opportunity to access proverbs in the local language prior to being translated.

3.3.4 Selection of Proverbs for Content Analysis

The proverbs chosen for analysis were selected from both the interviews and the content analysis of Gonja and Bogon collections of proverbs that I had used during my research position and the Akan proverbs used were those shared in the interviews with the development practitioners and Chiefs. I use the proverb collections (Bogon and Gonja) because I was already familiar with these collections of proverbs and therefore felt I would have a better understanding of the ways in which these proverbs
were aligned with the themes in the literature and those shared by the Akan development practitioners and Chiefs. During my research position and in my own research, I examined over 1000 proverbs, of which most had in some way or another had potential to be analyzed for their use in development. Out of these 1000 proverbs examined a total of 35 proverbs were selected for analysis, while 6 proverbs were also used in the review of literature and two additional proverbs to introduce chapters. The proverbs for analysis were selected based on their similarities to the themes found in the existing literature and the interviews conducted with the development practitioners and Chiefs. I discarded proverbs based on their dissimilarity to the themes in the project, repetition of these already discussed, and my inability to comprehend the cultural and metaphorical significance. To ensure that I did not simply reconfirm my pre-supposed research questions and the themes in the literature, I also attempted to include proverbs that appeared contradictory and offered alternative discourse or knowledges as those found in the themes.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis was completed in the three phases: 1) Reduction and categorization of the data; 2) the display of the data; and 3) conclusions/verifications. In the reduction and categorization of data, I compiled the data from all the interviews and proverbs collected and then coded the data using a combination of pre-existing themes informed by my research questions as well as incorporated new themes that arose. In the display stage of my analysis, I proceeded to compress my data, thus discarding the data that was not relevant to the research questions and the learning objectives of my project. In the final stage of the data analysis, I analyzed the data examining how it helped to answer the research questions I posed as well as the greater learning objectives of my project.

Although my data followed a directive pattern of analysis, working with an Indigenous lens, I also moved through my analysis by drawing on the fluidity and intersectionality of the data to reflect multiple understandings and conceptions of the information at hand. In addition, I attempted to actively involve the voices of my participants as they were viewed as active agents throughout the process (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Furthermore, as knowledge is often understood as “situated in one’s social location as a result of privileges and oppression that one has experienced” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p.66), the data analysis was not disassociated from my subject position. Therefore, my analysis of the proverbs and the data as a white, dominant body may be entirely different than that of an African scholar. It must be noted that the conclusions in which I draw should be framed within the privilege and limitations
that I have brought into the study and a result of my subjective realities.

3.4.1. Translation of Proverbs and Transcription of Interviews

The interview conducted with the Chiefs was conducted in the local language; therefore they were translated and transcribed by a Ghanaian transcriber and scholar. The proverbs that were shared in Twi were also translated by the same Ghanaian transcriber/scholar during the transcription process. To ensure that all proverbs that were spoken were equally available in both the Indigenous and English language, those that were shared in English by the Akan development practitioners and Chiefs were also translated by a fellow PhD candidate into Twi.

3.5 LESSONS LEARNED

3.5.1 Non-Indigenous Researcher

As the Gonja proverb states, “A stranger cannot tell the deepest part of a stream” a non-African and non-Indigenous scholar studying African Indigenous knowledges is expected to encounter many challenges. The first challenge I encountered was the moral and ethical concerns that I had as a white academic. Throughout the research process, particularly during the interviews, I incessantly questioned my role in studying African Indigenous knowledges. I found myself questioning (and rightly so) if I was, in some capacity, reproducing my colonial heritage. Although prior to the data collection process, I was constantly questioning my own role and contributions to colonialism, I realized that I was unaware of the complexities and tensions that I would encounter morally and ethically throughout this project. During my data collection, I found myself constantly reflecting on whether I was disillusioned by my own privilege. I feel that the self-doubt, humility and constant questioning of my role in this project were extremely important in understanding how I related to the work, where I stood in relation to my participants, other researchers as well as my own colonial ancestors. Although I continue to grapple with these moral and ethical questions, the support I received from my supervisor and fellow academics and friends, particularly those from the continent, has been absolutely vital in assisting me in addressing and readdressing these challenges.

Furthermore, due to the colonial legacy, conducting research as a white scholar in Ghana proved to be challenging as it was difficult to gain the trust of my participants. Participants were at first skeptical and reluctant to speak about their critiques of development. They asked me many questions
on why I had chosen to do this research and seemed reluctant to share opinions. Yet, once I explained
the framework from which I was working and demonstrated my passion and belief in an Indigenous
perspective, I feel that the tension lessened and that relationships developed between me and the
participants. With that said, being a white body, the privilege and power that I carry certainly impacted
the interviews and the information or approach taken by the participants. Therefore, I feel that research
of this degree may be more beneficial if the interviews are done by a local person and conducted in the
Indigenous language. This brings us to our next hurdle.

3.5.2 Lack of Indigenous Language and Cultural Context

Lack of ability to understand and speak the local languages also proved to be extremely
challenging as I was not able to understand or read the proverbs provided in the Indigenous language. I
was reliant on others to translate the proverbs from the Indigenous language to English. This led to an
analysis of the proverb already being done to some degree by the translator. Although, having an
Indigenous speaker translate the proverb was necessary and beneficial for the project, as the translators
were also knowledgeable of the contextual use and cultural relevance of the proverb. Yet, at the same
time, the translation of the proverb, particularly when removed from the interview context in which it
was used, was also a hindrance as the proverb was not translated in a natural setting. Thus, the proverb
was artificially deconstructed.

The contextual nature of proverbs was also tied into the difficulties I encountered in asking
participants to share proverbs with me on particular topics. Yankah (1989) highlights that proverbs are
highly contextual, thus difficult to study outside their natural context, this was reinforced in my study as
the participants often found it unnatural to share proverbs without contextual background. Thus, in
directly asking for example of proverbs that spoke to questions of development, this proved to be quite
challenging as there was no occasion or event to spawn the use of the proverb. Furthermore, as this was
also my first visit to Ghana, I was extremely limited to the cultural context in which the proverbs were
used. Therefore, I was also greatly reliant on the translation and interpretations of my participants.
Therefore, in analysing the proverbs, I recognized that I would have greatly benefitted from a longer
timeframe to have the ability to return to my participants to ask for clarification.

In regard to the content analysis of the Gonja and Bogon proverbs, I was entirely limited to the
English translation of the proverb provided in the collections. Thus, the analysis of these proverbs
proved to be a challenge as I did not have development practitioners and Chiefs to explain the nature of
the proverbs. My understanding of word choice and nuanced language was entirely dependent on the English translation due to the lack of local voices limited in the content analysis. In an attempt to overcome this challenge, I chose proverbs that resembled the themes that I had identified in the literature review and the interviews with the development practitioners and Chiefs.

### 3.5.3 Loss of Data

The first set of interviews, which were recorded on a small hand-held tape recorder were erased upon my arrival to Canada. My luggage had been lost for several days and the tapes were erased during that time. I had taken detailed notes during the first set of interviews, yet upon reviewing them, I decided that a second set of interviews was necessary. Therefore, I re-contacted all of my participants and was able to re-interview Maria and Prof Dave from my home in Canada using Skype. Due to the loss of my first interviews, I used a digital recorder and backed up all my interviews digitally. Yet, using Skype for the interviews was limiting as we did not have the benefits of face to face conversation, as well as a poor connection which continually dropped. Yet, at the same time, because of there was trust built between me and the participants and they possessed a more in-depth understanding of my project, I felt that in the second interviews I was able to collect more relevant data.

### 3.5.4 Time Constraints

Another limitation of the study was the time constraint as I was collecting data in an international setting. I had originally planned to spend 3 months in Ghana to identify and recruit participants and conduct interviews. Yet, due to circumstances beyond my control, I was limited to 5 weeks in Ghana. Therefore, my deadlines for identifying and recruiting participants and conducting interviews were cut short; this also meant that my time for analysis and writing was also cut short. Moreover, with the loss of the first set of recorded interviews, my inability to do my own transcription due to a hearing impairment also set me back a great deal. I had ideally planned to have my participants involved in the analysis of the interviews as well as engaged in discussions around the content analysis, yet, due to time constraints this proved not to be possible.

### 3.5.5 Small Sample Size

As aforementioned, time constraints and the loss of the first set of interviews resulted in a smaller sample size than I had originally planned. Although the first interview had been lost, I had fortunately taken detailed notes that I have also used in the analysis. Yet, the primary data analysis was
a result of two interviews that I conducted over Skype with the Akan development practitioners and Chiefs. This meant that the data is very limited both in number and ethnicity, and may only provide us with a glimpse into the relationship between Ghanaian proverbs and development.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA FINDINGS

The following chapter is a summary of the results of the interviews and content analysis of the following research questions.

1) What is the nature and extent of the problem of development in Ghana?
2) What are the specific and cultural teachings of proverbs and how are they relevant to the problem of development?
3) What do proverbs teach about the worldview of Indigenous peoples and how may this be used to reframe development in Ghanaian contexts?
4) What do the lessons from the Ghanaian case study offer larger questions of development in African contexts?

The results section is an integrative discussion on the prominent themes that arose in the interviews and the collection and analysis of the proverbs. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first section focuses on the definition and use of proverbs and themes found in the collected proverbs and the second section focuses on understandings of and reflections on development in African and Ghanaian contexts from the development practitioners and Chiefs. As the research is centred on the use of proverbs, both sections present proverbs that are relevant to development and speak to themes discussed in each section.

4.1 UNDERSTANDING PROVERBS

The following section examines the significance and use of proverbs in Ghanaian communities and provides an overview of the teachings of the proverbs collected.

4.1.1 Words of Wisdom

The development practitioners and the Chiefs described proverbs as “words of wisdom” associated to Elders and ancestors. “Proverbs are words of wisdom. It is a way of using wisdom to say what you have to say. They are used when you want to use wisdom in your speech” (Chief A).
As proverbs were associated with Elders and ancestors and denote wisdom, they carry pedagogical and axiological weight in Ghanaian communities. To articulate the weight and value of the proverb as a pedagogical and axiological tool in Ghanaian communities, Chief A shared the Akan proverb “Ade hye obi anum a, na yehunu nede” he translated to “The juice in somebody’s mouth is tasty”. This proverb is a compliment to an individual who is able to articulate the wisdom of the Elders through the use of proverbs. Similarly, the Akan proverb “Oba nyansa fo wo bu no won ka na asem” translated to “The wise child is spoken to in proverbs not mere words” demonstrated the significance of the proverb and its association to wisdom of the Elders and ancestors. Because the proverb is considered the speech of the Elder and is highly metaphorical and spiritual in nature, a child that is able to understand and digest the depth and metaphoric meanings of the proverb is also considered wise and knowledgeable.

The axiological significance, thus the value driven knowledge in the proverb was shared by Samuel in the Akan proverb “Se wo kokromoti pɔli a, wo pira woa ankasa wo ho, nanso, se wo ketrema pɔli a, esie oman no nyinaa” translated to “If your toe slips, you can hurt yourself but when your tongue slips you can destroy the whole society.” As this proverb demonstrates, the axiological imperative of proverbs was seen as so strong that the misuse of a proverb could be very harmful to individuals and communities. Therefore as a pedagogical and axiological tool, one must be careful when a proverb is spoken. Along the same lines, The Gonja proverb “Me ne n wora fo, ne fee bo ma kingasa aa?” which can be translated to “What have I done to you that you give me a proverb?” demonstrates the pedagogical and axiological significance of the proverb by directly asking why a proverb has been spoken. As these proverbs demonstrate the proverbs is often used to correct and direct behaviour, thus reinforcing values and norms in Ghanaian communities. Therefore, when a speaker questions the use of a proverb, he/she can also be viewed as questioning what s/he may have done wrong or why s/he is spoken to in such a serious manner.

4.1.2 Talking drum and proverb connection

The wisdom manifested in proverbs and the weight of the proverb was also linked to its association with the talking drums, a cultural and spiritual instrument used in Indigenous forms of communication. Chief A explained that proverbs were part of “a drum language.” He stated “We have drums which are very important. The talking drums of proverbs are very, very important. Talking drums
on proverbs is very important. ...All the drum languages, we have are proverbs.” In this quotation, we can see the Chief A does not see the drum language as being separate from the proverb but as being integrated in the proverbs. As the talking drums are a spiritualized form of communication, this quotation also reinforces the proverb as being closely connected to the words of the ancestors and Elders and having spiritual significance.

Furthermore, the talking drum and the proverb were both viewed as necessary communication tools and were used together to announce important and sensitive topics and events to the community, such as a death of the chief, the presence of a stranger in the community or the absence of the chief. Maria provided two examples:

“They will send the gong-gong beater to go to the community and beat the gong-gong; announcing to the community that there are new people in the community. People we do not know; people we have never met...In that case you can’t speak the language so that the people will hear... You have to speak in proverbs to the community as a whole. Then the gong-gong beater will go around beat the gong and tell the community that “Okoto fofofo aba fie no mu” which translates “there is a new crab in the river” or there is a new crab in the stream” which means that there is a new person amongst us. And using the word crab means that we don’t even know the person. The proverb “Okoto fofofo aba fie” —“there is a new crab in the stream.” So that we should be careful. You don’t open your door. You don’t just be going about because we don’t know them. You can’t use the ordinary language...So we use proverbs to talk to the entire community about what has happened”

In this example, Maria demonstrates the communicative link between the gong-gong (talking drum) and the proverb. The gong-gong and the proverb work co-dependently to share important information with the community to ensure their safety. In using the gong-gong and the proverb, the community members are able to understand the information that an outsider would not understand, thus stressing the contextual and localized use of proverbs.

Furthermore, Maria gave an example of the spiritual relationship associated with the gong-gong and the proverb, stressing that use of the gong-gong and the proverb were used to communicate spiritually sensitive information such as the death of a king.

“When we want to announce the death of a chief or a king. You know, you just can’t get up and go and say the king is dead. For we believe that they hold a very special or spiritual part of the community. So even announcing their death, you have to go about it tactically. So, if say we want to talk about or talk to the community that we have lost our chief. You just can’t go stand in the community and say “Our king or chief is dead.” No! You will tell the community that “the chief has turned his head against the wall.” “Nana e twa ne ni a hwe dan.” “Nana e twa ne ni a hwe dan.” “The chief has turned his face against the wall”. That means he is dead. Or “the chief has kicked the salt.” You know “kick the salt” -
“wa ka nkyini nu agu” meaning “he has kicked the salt away”. I mean he has thrown the salt away; meaning “the chief is dead. Nana wa ka nkyini nu agu” He has spilled the salt. The chief has spilled the salt that means he is dead.”

The talking drums were seen as important Indigenous communication tools in African communities and linked to the wisdom and knowledge of the past; the proverbs link to the talking drums reinforces the importance of proverbs not only as communication tools but also as cultural and spiritual relics and knowledges.

4.1.3 The Use of Proverbs

Proverbs were identified as being used in daily conversations in a variety of social settings and circumstances including: in the home, during childrearing, in school and informal educational settings as well as in Indigenous institutions and during community gatherings.

“Africans are noted for proverbs. Africans are noted for using proverbs all over...We use proverbs a lot in the homes, in bringing up children; in classrooms; in educating ourselves, in the king’s palace, in ruling and judging issues”

“Proverbs are used when people are having discussions. It could either be a local platform or either being it a durbar, or either being it a story telling time or either being it around the fire, where parents sit with their children, either being during the training time - proverbs are used every time, everywhere” (Prof Dave)

The proverb did not appear to be limited to any particular setting or circumstance and was identified as speaking to all aspects of Ghanaian society including spiritual, natural, physical, and economic aspects while also speaking to a plethora of ideas and beliefs.

“There are so many proverbs.... We have some proverbs that relate to people. Some of the proverbs relate to animals.” (Chief A)

“If a thing happened in the spiritual realm, a story could be given about that. If it happens in the language realm, a story or folklore could be given about that. If it happens in the physical or material, a proverb could be given around that. If it is about financial resource management, a proverb could be given around it. If it is about the physical development of the individual, a proverb could be given around it. So, proverbs is coupled with all aspects of human life – spiritual, physical, economics” (Prof Dave)

Thus, proverbs were viewed as speaking to all aspects of African life and not limited to particular environments people or circumstances; and spoke to a variety of social, economic, spiritual, natural issues and being used in a variety of community, family and institutional settings.
Furthermore, as proverbs reflected all aspects of African life, Maria highlighted that they were primarily used in rural communities where the Indigenous languages were used:

“When you go to the rural communities where the mother tongue is really spoken, that is where you get people using these forms of languages or expressions, especially the proverbs tell a lot…either being spirituality or socially or economically. They have a way of expressing themselves in proverbs and people understand them.”

The use of the proverb in locations where the Indigenous language was spoken demonstrated the inseparable link between the proverb and the language in which it was shared. As proverbs spoke to all aspects of African life, this reinforced the connection between the Indigenous language, culture and knowledge base.

4.1.4 Accessible to All

Although proverbs were considered “words of wisdom” and seen as associated with the wisdom of the Elders and ancestors, they were not identified as exclusively reserved for certain members of the community or certain groups but as having potential to be engaged by anyone.

“No one cut up my head and put knowledge into it. I came to meet the Elders and learned from them. If someone humbles themselves and wants to learn proverbs and our tradition why shouldn’t the person be able to learn?” (Chief A)

Thus the proverb, although bearing great pedagogical and axiological weight in Ghanaian communities, and associated with Elders, was not reserved for certain groups or seen as in accessible. Instead, Prof Dave described proverbs as being shared openly in communities “an ongoing thing. It is sold freely among the people. So they don’t actually specialize. It is a language that is learned and it is bequeathed to the children after generation after generation”.

4.1.5 Intergenerational Importance of Proverbs

As cultural knowledges infused with pedagogical and axiological guidance, proverbs were also seen as a tool to bridge the ongoing intergenerational gap between Elders and youth created by colonialism and maintained by colonial schooling and globalization. Passing proverbs from the Elders to younger generations was identified as reinforcing moral and value-based knowledges necessary for the cultural continuity in Ghanaian communities.

“The old generations must pass down some values to the new generation... So that if this new generation
will be able to use proverbs just as the old generation used it, of course we can bridge the gap...brings about cohesion between the two cultures because then, we will explain some of the proverbs to the new generation.” (Maria)

The magnitude of passing down knowledge from the Elders was shared in the Akan proverb “Nea opanyin tena ase a oho no, abofra gyina gua so koraa ohu”
\(^1\) translated to “The old man sitting down sees further than the young man standing on a tree.” This proverb articulates the value of the wisdom of the Elders and the need for youth to value this knowledge. As the proverb states, although young people may hold forms of knowledge that may contribute to the betterment of their people; they must not forget the value of the wisdom of the Elders. Thus, this proverb highlights the importance of the Elders and their role in passing on cultural knowledge.

As Euro-Western development and education are prominent in Ghana, Chief A stated that if Indigenous cultural practices and values are not taught to younger generations, they may lose their culture “What you are doing right now this is our culture and our tradition...we should teach it to our children so that by the time they grown up they will have something and not westernization” (Chief). Moreover, Prof Dave stated that passing proverbs on to the younger generations was more important than ever. “There are a lot of these proverbs that are getting extinct; that are getting missing because those who spoke them are no more in existence. And, it is only some few that have remained that have been documented now.” (Prof Dave)

Proverbs were also linked to African identity as using proverbs “is what makes us Africans. The use of language and proverbs makes us who we are”, Chief C supported the connection between African identity and proverbs in stating “our identity rests in the use of proverbs.” Therefore, the extinction of proverbs has a great impact on African identity and cultural continuity. The passing on of proverbs from one generation to the next plays a vital role in reviving the cultural identity of Ghanaian peoples and ensuring cultural continuity in African contexts.

4.1.6 Contextual Nature of Proverbs

Proverbs, speaking to a plethora of topics and being used in all aspects of Ghanaian life, were identified as being highly contextual. Participants stated that the use and interpretation of a proverb was highly dependent on the context and occasion in which the proverb was spoken as well as the interpretation of the speaker. “Most of the time when one wants to make a speech, it is the speech that

\(^1\) Proverbs with similar meaning were also found in the Gonja and BogoN proverbs.
helps to bring the quotation of a proverb. Every occasion has its own proverb” (Chief A). He expands, “we have proverbs that you can use all the time and there are proverbs that are used in certain places. You cannot say some proverbs just anywhere” (Chief A). Therefore, although the proverb was open to anyone and spoke to a plethora of topics, the contextual use of the proverb was specified. To explain the specificity of context and occasion in speaking of proverbs, Chief A shared the story of a local chief, Kwaku Amissah, who was considered a wise Chief and an expert in proverbs:

At one point in time an Asante chief sent some people headed by one Kwaku Abutu Akwah to the Chief Kwaku Amissah who is in Abiadze in our locality. He asked Chief Kwaku Amissah to quote seventy-seven impromptu proverbs- seventy-seven impromptu proverbs. So Chief Kwaku Amissah said that it was a mental impossibility – mental impossibility. Why did he say this? He then explained that, nobody can quote proverbs when it does not suit the occasion or nothing has happened. It is only when something happens that people quote proverbs. And it is usually about what may have happened. So, Ohene Kwaku Amissah said to the Asante delegation who came to him to close their eyes. So they closed their eyes. After a while he asked them to open their eyes. When they opened their eyes he asked them what they saw when they closed their eyes? They responded by saying they did not see anything. So he said to them to go back and tell your loyal master that every occasion has its proverbs. So what this means is that “when you have not slept you cannot dream”. In the same way something has to happen before we quote proverbs. Proverbs are quoted to be explained.

As the story of Chief Kwaku demonstrates, even if a person is greatly skilled in the use of proverbs, the choice of the proverb is so context dependant that it cannot be shared without appropriate contextual impetus. Further confirmations of the contextual nature of the proverb were also found in the proverbs collected. The Akan proverb “Ansa na nsu no be to no na aguare wa fow” he translated to “We know the speech before it is going to be used” was shared by Chief A. This proverb confirms that it is the occasion or circumstance that determines the use of the proverb as opposed to the knowledge of the speaker. Therefore, one can hypothesize which proverb will be used based on the circumstance or situation in which they may find themselves.

Expanding on the contextual use of the proverb, Maria also specified that proverbs were community dependant, therefore, there were particular proverbs used in particular communities. She explained that a proverb that is spoken in one community may not have the same meaning, or may not be commonly used in another community. The notion of proverbs being different from community to community not only demonstrates the diversity of the use of proverbs but also the diversity in Ghanaian communities.
4.1.7 Proverbs as Dynamic Cultural knowledges

Conceptualized as contextually dependant words of wisdom, proverbs were also identified as dynamic cultural knowledges responding to the shifts and fluidity of Ghanaian culture as “our culture is growing. You know culture is dynamic so it is growing and it is changing” (Maria). Maria explained that, due to cultural shifts, some proverbs are no longer applicable to the present cultural climate in Ghanaian life, as they spoke to the “development in their time and the leadership at that time.” She stated that although such proverbs may still be used, they carry little or no significance in the present because “the culture from which the proverb was coined has also changed, therefore the proverb may be obsolete or may have different significance.”

The need for cultural fluidity was reflected in the Akan proverb “Wo tena fakuoa wo te adee so” translated to “If you sit in one place you sit on treasure”. This proverb speaks to the need for cultural transformations, suggesting that cultural richness does not come from staying in one place, but comes from shifts and transition that manifest throughout time. As culture transforms it becomes richer as new knowledges and ways of thinking enter. Therefore, by “sitting in one place” we do not allow the natural adaptations to culture to occur and miss the richness and capabilities that may initiate positive and beneficial change within our societies. This proverb can also be further expanded to express the importance of critically analyzing the ways in which these knowledges may be inhibiting our growth as a community and as a people.

The need to critically analyse all forms of knowledges including Indigenous knowledges was also found in the conversations with development practitioners and the proverbs collected. Maria and Samuel both gave the examples of harmful and oppressive practices (puberty rites in girls) that have been altered due to new knowledge and awareness in the communities. The need for critical analysis of cultural and Indigenous knowledges was also found in the Gonja proverb “Dara b nchu man na wo ebon to” translated to “Old water is not found in the river.” In using old water as a metaphor for knowledge, this proverb speaks to the importance of Elders and cultural custodians as also needing to adapt and respect new forms of knowledge and new approaches to development, thus to also be open-minded and fluid. This does not mean disregarding all forms of Indigenous knowledges or introducing other forms of knowledge blindly, but as being willing and open to learn from others. Otherwise, as the proverb suggests, the water (the community or knowledge base) will become stagnant.
Although the development practitioners and the proverbs collected spoke to the importance of cultural fluidity and critical analysis of Indigenous knowledges, examining cultural knowledges as a framework for localized approaches to development was also found. The Gonja proverb “Mushun dara ne baa ta a wora kuduru” translated to “Old honey produces real medicine” suggests that “old” or Indigenous cultural customs, continue to be beneficial to communities, as they carry age old wisdom and knowledge that has benefitted the communities for millennia. Although this proverb could be translated more literally to reflect Indigenous health practices such as using honey; it can also been understood as speaking more generally to the importance of past cultural knowledges as “medicine” for current challenges. Therefore, as these proverbs demonstrate, cultural fluidity should not be understood as dismissing and rejecting Indigenous cultural knowledge, but instead as critically analyzing such knowledges for the betterment of the community.

4.2 THEMES FOUND IN PROVERBS

4.2.1 Proverbs as Spiritual Knowledges

Many of the proverbs collected were identified as bearing spiritual significance and articulating the spiritual beliefs of the ethnic groups. Because spirituality is fundamental to the society-nature-spirit interface in Ghanaian communities, the proverbs collected manifested spirituality in two ways: 1) proverbs that articulated spirituality through the omnipresence of God; and 2) proverbs that articulated spirituality through natural imagery.

The omnipresence of God was common to the proverbs collected in all three ethnicities. These proverbs all spoke to the importance of respecting and trusting in God. For example of the Akan proverb “Obi nkyere akodaa Nyame” translated to “No one should teach the child how they should know God”. In spirituality, Maria explains the significance of this proverb:

“Because, we believe that from the birth of the child to how the child learns how to suckle the mum; from how the child learns how to grow and all that we see around should teach that little child that there is a force; there is a being; there is a God somewhere who rules in the affairs of men.”

As Maria demonstrates this proverb highlights the omnipresence of God – that God manifests in all aspects of life. Our environment, our actions and our relationships to others, to ourselves and to nature are all manifestations of God and that as much as we try to understand God, s/he is a mystery to us because God is cares for us in ways that we may not be able to comprehend or explain. It is, therefore, our faith and trust in God that will lead us on the right path and we must not attempt to
dissect or pull apart the manifestations of God, but instead to accept and appreciate them for what they are, as they are fundamental to our existence.

Similarly, the omnipresence of God and encouragement to trust in God were also found in the Bogon and Gonja proverbs. The Bogon proverb “God protects the animal that doesn’t know how to run” like the Akan proverb, speaks to the omnipresence of God manifested in the natural world. As this proverb explains, although we may not understand the mysteries of nature, such as why an animal may be unable to run, we must have faith and trust in God to provide and protect us all, even the most vulnerable. Thus, much like the Akan proverb, this proverb speaks to respecting and valuing the mysteries of God. Similarly, the Gonja proverb “Aso mo ne baa fe, Ebore maa fe amo” which can be literally translated to “Things which they think, God does not think them” or metaphorically translated to “Man proposes God disposes” (Rytz, 2966) speaks of the omnipresence of God and encourages trust in God. This proverb suggests that we must look beyond the physical/material explanation of life’s problems and encourages us to look at deeper spiritual meanings.

In addition to proverbs that articulated the omnipresence of God or Creator, there were also proverbs found that expressed the spiritual significance of respecting and valuing our ancestors and Elders. For example, Prof Dave shared the Akan proverb “Obi nfa ninsa benkum kyere nagya fie” translated to “Nobody shows the house of his father with his left hand.” This proverb, he explained, is used to caution against disrespecting one’s ancestors. In Ghanaian society, it is considered disrespectful to use the left hand for certain tasks, and thus using the left hand to point to the house of one’s ancestors would be considered extremely disrespectful. Therefore, in examining the metaphorical significance of this proverb, it can be understood as cautioning against the spiritual and physical/material ramifications of dishonouring our Elders and ancestors. Thus, this proverb can also be interpreted to speak to the link between the physical and spiritual world and highlights how this link may contribute to our spiritual and physical health and wellbeing.

Thus, these proverbs demonstrate the spiritualization of an African worldview and reinforce the notion of spirituality as integrated in an African epistemology, ontology and axiology. God, ancestors and spirit are not conceptualized as disassociated notions, but are integrated into all aspects of life and behaviour which are thus reflective of our relationship to the spiritual world.
Yet, proverbs as spiritual knowledges were not always understood as beneficial to the development of communities. Maria provided an example of the ways in which a proverb could have negative impacts on development. Although the proverb itself was not shared, the proverb Maria is speaking of cautions against walking on a trail on certain days as it would upset the ancestors:

*It [the proverb] is affecting development both profitably and negatively. Assuming you have a farm; a tomato farm and today is Tuesday so, you should go and pluck all the tomatoes so that you can come and sell. But that proverb says you can’t visit that part of the community that trail, that forest on this day. So what happens - the tomato will go rotten. Is that not it?*

What this example demonstrates is that Maria believed that there are times when the spiritual essence of a proverb may also hinder localized development and that spiritual knowledge are not always leading to the health and wellbeing of the community.

### 4.2.2 Society-Nature-Spirit Interface

The spiritualized relationship to nature and society was also manifested in the proverbs collected. Plants, animals and objects were often used to address a variety of social, spiritual, environmental and moral teachings and were anthropomorphized, taking the place of human beings. Many of the proverbs used natural imagery to demonstrate the interconnection between society, nature and spirit, and to initiate protection of natural and spiritual environments.

Maria explains the society-nature-spirit interface:

“In Ghana we believe that most rivers are gods. We believe most forests have evil spirits or good spirits dwelling in them. For instance, one thing that says that even when you are crossing a bridge you do not have to toot your horn. When you have to toot your horn you have to toot your horn. There are times of the day that you should toot your horn and times of the day that you do not have to toot your horn when you are crossing a bridge. Why? They believe the god of that river is resting with the children. So, if you toot your horn you might disturb them. That is during the afternoon. But at night, you do not have to toot your horn. These are things we believe and it is part of us. So that those who believe in them will not do it because they believe when they do it certain things will happen, bad omen will come upon them.” {Maria}

Maria’s explanation of the spiritualization of the natural environment, its effects on the social well-being greatly impacts the ways in which Ghanaians relate and interact with the natural environment. As spirits are understood as being present in the natural world, Ghanaian peoples take certain precautions to ensure that they do not create spiritual imbalances as that will disrupt the lives of
local peoples. This quotation offers an excellent example of one of the ways in which the society-nature-culture interface manifests in Ghanaian communities.

The society-nature-interface was also present in the Akan proverb “Dua koro gye mframa a ebu” translated to “One tree cannot withstand a storm”. This proverb states that only one tree does not make up a forest, thus is used to discourage the unnecessary cutting of trees and to encourage the planting of new trees. Yet, at the same time, this proverb also holds a deeper metaphorical meaning, in which the anthropomorphic description of the tree suggests that a person cannot function alone, thus explicating the importance of interdependence and the need for collective efforts. Yet, in integrating the society-nature-spirit interface into the analysis of this proverb, we also see that it speaks to the interconnections between the natural, social and spiritual world whereby the tree, representing the natural world, is used anthropomorphically to expresses social relations and the interconnection between humans and the natural world. As ancestors, spirits and God are also conceptualized as omnipresent in the natural world, the tree can also be representative of the social/spiritual interconnection. Therefore, the tree, linking the natural, social and spiritual world offers a multi-layered representation in this proverb.

Similar to the previous proverb, the society-nature-spirit interface was also found in the Akan proverb “Ndua atwa yen hu ashyia no ye nkatosoɔ ma nananon nsamanfoɔ” translated to “The tree that you see is shade to our ancestors who are dead and buried.” Like the previous proverb, this proverb calls for the maintenance of the natural world, signified in the tree which is overtly linked to the well-being of the spirits of ancestors. As the natural world is linked with both the spiritual and social realms, protecting the natural environment also means preserving the familial, social and spiritual forces that surround us. Therefore, like the previous proverb, this proverb can also be used to caution against the unnecessary cutting of trees as well to encourage replanting.

The society-nature-spirit interface was also found in the Akan proverb “Se wandi wo ho nia, edи abusua no nyinaa kɔ ayaresabea” translated to “If you don’t keep your environment clean, you won’t take the household to the hospital” which spoke directly to the relationship between environmental maintenance and human health. Although this proverb links environmental and human health, it initiates a metaphorical interpretation whereby the spiritual world and ancestors that constitute the family are also understood as present in the environment. Therefore, keeping the natural environment clean assures that our families in both the physical and spiritual remain healthy and well.
Although most of the proverbs used natural imagery anthropomorphically, conversations with the participants and the proverbs themselves demonstrated that we must move beyond this simple anthropomorphic analysis to a multi-layer, spiritually driven analysis, whereby the natural imagery also speaks to spiritual and social realities. In using the natural world to draw parallels between the spiritual and social worlds, these proverbs, much like those that spoke directly to God, also teach of the omnipresence of God in nature and its impacts on the social and spiritual worlds. Thus, such proverbs remind human beings that they are but an equal member in the greater forces of the natural and spiritual world and have much to learn from them.

4.2.3 Importance of the Collective

Social relations are integral aspects of Ghanaian cultures and the importance of the collective was a common theme found within the Bogon, Gonja and Akan proverbs. The proverbs collected, again demonstrating the society-nature-culture interface, often used analogies and natural imagery to speak to the importance of collective action and togetherness. For example, the Akan proverb “*Wenfa ho ahuodin a nsatia bako wo, eno nkua entumi sua bKiiti*” translated to “*No matter how strong the finger, the finger cannot carry the bucket alone*” used the analogy of the finger anthropomorphically to highlight that no matter how strong an individual, we find strength in numbers. As Samuel explained, this proverb encourages collective action and community involvement as an impetus for social change and could be used to support and initiate localized approaches to development. As this proverb speaks to the importance of collective action for positive change, it could be used to encourage community involvement in development initiatives as well as to counteract forced development.

Along the same lines, Prof Dave shared the Akan proverb “*WOn kwatre kokromoti mbo poE*” which he translated to “*You cannot forgo the thumb to tie a knot.*” Much like the proverb shared by Samuel, this proverb also speaks to the value of community action and involvement. This proverb encourages a concerted effort to initiate positive change. In explaining the use of the proverb, Prof Dave states that although the individual is important, one person does not have the diverse abilities and strengths present in a community. Therefore, encouraging community involvement also initiates diversity in development. Furthermore, the analogy of the thumb may also be used to represent the chief, thus stating that we must not overlook the necessity of the chief or Indigenous government in collective actions. Both these proverbs offer similar lessons, speaking to the importance of social ties and the interconnectedness of the members of the community.
4.2.4. Collective Responsibility

Along with the proverbs speaking to the value of the collective, the proverbs collected also expressed the need for collective responsibility. These proverbs caution that one’s behaviour not only impacts our individual well-being but also impacts the greater community. Speaking to this, Chief A shared the Akan proverb “Asafo wo reko no na ebi reda” translated to “When soldiers are out fighting some other men are sleeping”. This proverb, using the analogy of men sleeping while others are fighting cautions against selfishness and indifference by reminding us that we have duties to our community. Thus, this proverb speaks to the recognition that our collective responsibilities ensure the health, safety and well-being of all.

Collective responsibility was also found in the Akan proverb “Aponkye bako ware tumi sane nfonkyea aka no” translated to “When one goat has a skin infection it affects another hundred.” Like the previous proverb, Chief A stated that this proverb expresses the interconnections between community members and the need to be supportive to one another in good times and in bad. Although we are all individuals, this proverb reminds us that we are all connected spiritually and physically. Thus, teaches that our misfortunes, such as disease, poverty, ill health or pollution not only affect our individual lives, but also have effects on our communities as whole. Thus, the health and well-being of the community and of ourselves is the responsibility of us all, and we must act collectively to ensure that we properly care for one another. As collective responsibility is a necessary ingredient for development, these proverbs encourage the communities to see the responsibility of development initiatives as a collective endeavour and encourage the need to work together to achieve our goals.

Although the collective was highly valued in the proverbs collected, they did not dismiss the notions of individual responsibility or the need for diversity in the collective. The Gonja proverb “Ndo wo mpar, kanan kama ku ku gban” translated to “However big a farm is it must have sections” using the analogy of the farm, speaks to the value of diversity and multi-sectorial involvement in community projects. As each of us has a distinctive role in our community, this proverb reinforces the need for the involvement of different peoples with different expertise as they work cohesively to impact the greater well-being of the community. Therefore, the division of labour and responsibilities among different peoples and structures in the community are needed and necessary in envisioning a holistic approach to development because they allow different expertise and values to enter the community-driven development approaches.
4.2.5 Respect for Others

Respect for others was also a common theme found in the proverbs collected and as a necessary element of community building. For example, The Akan proverb “Ye dzi, ye dzi bio na oma ohohow siriwi yi” translated to “We eat and eat again, that is what made the stranger laugh” as Chief A explained, signifies that one good turn deserves another. This proverb, he explained, is used as guidance on how we should treat one another, thus, that if someone is good to us we must return the favour. Similarly, the Akan proverb “Mea twa dua ma na sene me tintin” translated to “I have cut a branch of a tree that has grown taller than me” is used to warn someone when they have been ungrateful. The notion of cutting the branch of the tree means that the person to whom you have helped has not appreciated what you have done. Therefore, both this proverb teaches the importance of gratefulness and respect to those who have helped us and as pedagogical and axiological tools for development move beyond the physical and material limitations of development by encouraging collective and humanistic approaches to development.

4.2.6 Mutual Learning

Along the lines of respecting others, the proverbs collected also spoke to the value of diversity and humility by encouraging us to learn from one another. As development has been viewed as centred on Euro-Western knowledges and approaches, the notion of humility in knowing and learning from one another is vital to reframe and revitalize African development.

The Akan proverb “Se wonam na wote se obi retu neba fo a, na wafa bi ato wo kotogwei mu” translated to “If you are passing by and you hear that somebody is advising his or her child. Just listen and keep that in your ankle because you might not know when you will need it” advises that the advice spoken to others may also be applicable to our own circumstance. This proverb, therefore, encourages humility in knowing and recognizing the need to listen and respect the others as they may have valuable insights into our own problems. As development has been centred on Euro-Western knowledge and has been conceptualized as a linear process, this proverb encourages us to look beyond one form of development, to instead examine and respect the ways in which development has been conceptualized in different community and cultural contexts. This proverb may also be used within a community development context, encouraging community members to appreciate and acknowledge the thoughts, beliefs and values of others in their community. This proverb encourages us to recognize that some
members carry knowledge and wisdom that is necessary for the betterment of the community, while at the same time teaching the importance of humility.

Similarly, the Akan proverb “Obi asem safoa e tumi bue obi asem pong” which can be translated to “The key to your problem might open the door to my own problem too” also speaks to the importance of humility and learning from others. Much like the previous proverbs, it speaks the importance of interdependence and collective struggles, as well as learning from one another. Thus, this proverb speaks to the importance of open-mindedness and willingness to learn from others, whether it is our fellow community members, another community or another culture, therefore encouraging solidarity. As the development practitioners highlighted this proverb encourages us to be open and receptive to knowledges that fall outside of our own cultural knowledges. Yet, stresses that learning from others does not equate to diminishing or denigrating our own cultural or Indigenous knowledge base.

4.3 DEVELOPMENT

This section summarizes the findings that speak specifically to understandings and opinions centred on the relationship between proverbs and localized development. Due to the relevance of their knowledge, this section is largely reflective of the responses and opinions of the development practitioners, although it also integrates the proverbs collected from the Chiefs and content analysis.

4.3.1 Predetermined Notions of Development

In speaking of the current approaches to development in African contexts, the development practitioners defined it as a Euro-Western colonial ideology that was often “pushed down the throat” of communities. In such approaches they felt that communities often have no say or input into the development projects and were simply used as objects of development.

“But from the external or what I would say the Western development, they just come into your community, comes with his own check list or agenda and tells you that this is what you lack and this is what I am giving to you.” (Prof Dave)

“There are [other] projects that have just been pushed on them (local people)...it has been completed though but they will you this is not where we wanted it and is not what we want. So they will not touch it” (Maria)

Moreover, Euro-Western development is framed on a perceived lack in the community, thus the community itself, having no input in the development. As opposed to the community self-identifying their needs, the needs or “lacks” are often pre-determined by the exogenous development. Therefore,
the community is left to feel that they are not knowledgeable in their own development needs and aspirations and thus simply become objects of development. They disassociate from projects of development because they do not value or respect the voices and perceptions of the local peoples.

Prof Dave expanded on the failure to acknowledge local resources, beliefs and values in Ghanaian development initiatives and expressed the need to acknowledge local and Indigenous knowledges, resources and tools for development.

“Whether it is built on what the people know; whether it is built on their institutional or their traditional system, the external development does not consider that. But, the endogenous development considers what the people know, what they have, their own resources, their own human capacities, what they cannot do, so that they seek the support for them. But not to package the development ... we have brought you this; so, take. No! That is what endogenous development is trying to avoid.” (Prof Dave)

Moreover, Prof Dave stated that as external or “packaged” approaches to development are concentrated on predetermined outcomes and goals, they fail to explore alternative humanist resources that local and Indigenous institutions, beliefs or systems may offer for development.

4.3.2 The Need to Recognize African Indigenous Approaches to Development

Furthermore, the development practitioners, in speaking of Euro-Western development approaches challenged the illusion of development as a Euro-Western concept. They demonstrated a strong need to counteract the imperialist ideology of development as Euro-Western concept by highlighting that development has always been present in African societies and Indigenous knowledges.

“The people already knew how to do something before the white man came. Or else they would not have been existing by now...If they had forgot all that they knew from the past they will not have been living by now. They would have by this time not been in existence.” (Prof Dave).

This quote demonstrates the importance not only of the importance of recognizing the ways in which development has been conceptualized in Africa in the past, but also the impact past cultural knowledges have shaped African’s current conceptions of development as holistic and integrated process. Maria highlights the importance of the relationship between African Indigenous knowledges and development by rejecting the notion that development is solely found in Euro-Western ideology:

“Because, before you [referring to Western/white people] came the people were living. Before you came the people were alright. The things we are seeing now was not there but certainly they had a lot of peace before the West came in.”(Maria)
Reinforcing the perspectives of the development practitioners, Chief A also highlighted the importance of acknowledging and taking pride African culture, identity and knowledge, as something unique upon its own, thus stating that development must cease to associate “modernity” to Euro-Western knowledge.

“We have to be proud of our colour as Africans. We cannot say ... like they used to say in the olden days ... when we rear chickens and the chickens are fat we call them “white man’s chicken.” In the same manner a fat and furry dog is called a “white man’s dog.” And so forth, what it implies is that we only attribute bad things to ourselves - the inferior things; we have allowed the West to overrate us” (Chief A)

In using the example of the chicken and the dog, Chief A highlights the internalization of the colonial mentality in Africa, and thus calls for the need for Africans to disassociate from this way of thinking by acknowledging and recognizing the value and resources within their own knowledge systems. To expand on the need to conform to Euro-Western hegemony, Chief A shared the Akan proverb “Oye akyem os sua na oko mo amoase kesenti wo dzi ni bim” translated to “A small man wears pants that are too big for him.” The Chief used this proverb to highlight the current relationship between Africa and the West, indicating that Euro-Western values and cultural beliefs may not always fit within African contexts. He equates the Euro-Western knowledges pushed upon Africans as a man who is wearing pants that were too big for him, because these knowledges do not fit within an African worldview. Moreover, in using this proverb to discuss development, it suggests that as Africa wears the pants of the Euro-West, they are being forced to reject their own cultural knowledges. To reiterate this, Chief A states “behaving like a White man is killing us. So, we will not ask the Elders to teach us”. Thus in using this proverb, Chief A suggests that we must draw on our own knowledges and cultures for development as opposed to looking externally.

The importance of revitalization of past cultural knowledges was also found in Gonja and Bogon proverbs. For example, the Gonja proverb “Agbangbanturubi ka daa man lar, mbia bee pel” which can be translated to “The agbangbanturubi were not yet out (known), yet the children used to play” speaks of the need to appreciate and listen to knowledges of the past. The past knowledges are seen as valuable and applicable to current circumstances, and also to current issues, thus should not be conceptualized as “ancient” or “traditional” with no relevance or bearing in present day Ghana. As reflected in the sentiments of the development practitioners and the Chiefs, this proverb advises us to look to past African Indigenous knowledges to assist African peoples in developing and changing their own societies as these knowledges were used to successfully develop societies long before the introduction of Western knowledge.
The Bogon proverb translated to “Wherever you go eventually you return to your roots” also spoke to the prominence and necessity of local cultural knowledge. Similar to the previous proverb and opinions expressed by the development practitioners, this proverb highlights the strength and prominence of Ghanaian cultural knowledge, stressing that our worldview provides us with the foundational knowledge that initiates our worldview. Thus, regardless of the external knowledges that may be pushed upon on us or if we are living outside of our culture, we will always return to our own cultural knowledges as this knowledge is internalized. Thus, speaking to development, this proverb reiterates the notion that development will never truly speak to the needs of African peoples if it fails to reflect their worldview. Thus if development is to truly improve the lives of African peoples, it must involve the worldviews, beliefs and values in African Indigenous knowledges, thus returning to the African roots.

4.3.3 Redefining Development

Alongside their critique of current development approaches, the development practitioners stressed a re-conceptualization of development that reflects a holistic and integrated approach stemming from ones understanding of themselves, their communities and their worldview. The development practitioners called for an understanding of development that moved beyond physical/material and/or external approaches to one that stems from local knowledges and beliefs of the community, thus initiating a more localized and community-driven approach. Therefore, redefining development means looking beyond physical and material understandings, to instead envision initiatives that benefit whole persons and communities.

“When our governments are able to provide for our needs in terms of road infrastructure, road networks, education, good jobs and roads and all that; but when it translates into our individual lives; when we look at how far the individual has gone in education or you know, and how far the person understands education; how far the person is able to live within the community and the society in a way that brings you know, progress to other members of the community. So, we see development in its holistic sense - everywhere from government, to roads, to our individual lives, to our family lives; to our community lives and all that.”

“Development is when a human being, the total human being, you know, understands what he or she is about. So, if it is about going to school; if it is about acquiring a job; If it is about learning a trade; when the total being, the human being understands what he or she is about. So, I am going to school because I know, it will put me in a better position one day. So for me, when we talk about development; development goes from education; to getting jobs, to keeping a good family and you know, having a good life” (Maria)
“development.....is something that can improve human life, something that can improve human social capacity, something that can improve relationships between one and the other” (Prof Dave)

As the quotes above demonstrate, development was thus redefined as an initiative that involves improving human capacity individually and collectively, not simply physically, but also emotionally and spiritually. Therefore, at the core of the definition of development, is the improvement of the individual and society and the understanding that they are interconnected and co-dependent.

### 4.3.4 Localized/Endogenous Development

The development practitioners believed that to challenge the current Euro-Western, external and packaged approaches to development we must draw from local culture knowledges, values and beliefs. Unlike Euro-Western development approaches centred on what communities lack and thus filling the gaps with Euro-Western solutions; a localized/endogenous development approach would instead acknowledge and recognize the capacities and needs of local peoples as tool and resources for their own self-defined development.

“Endogenous development; it is a development that comes from the people themselves. It is not something that somebody outside has perceived and is trying to find solutions to the people. But, it is a development that the capacities of the people are built for them to look “intra” to see what they themselves need as a community. But not what the external person wants to do or want to give to them.” (Prof Dave)

“The local knowledge, the unity, the culture in those communities will always have their own way of going about their development. But, if you want to bring any other development, let them know and let them understand. So that you do not bring something that they may not need immediately. They might have their own needs. They might have their own you know, ideas. So, tap into theirs and then learn together, work it out to give them something that they will much appreciate than you just pushing something down their throat. So, the local knowledge really has a bearing on development because it is what they want and what they desire that they want you to bring into that particular community” (Maria)

The development practitioners saw local cultural knowledges and beliefs at the core of a localized approach to development, arguing that only when the ideas, knowledges and beliefs of the community were respected and recognized would there be authentic development.

“When you get their approval, you get their involvement, you get them participating and the fact they feel it is theirs then they will rally behind the project to ensure its success.” (Maria)
“Before they take development to any community, they can’t throw away their culture and their tradition” (Prof Dave)

Yet, a localized approach to development does not entirely dismiss a physical or material approach to development but envisions it as integrated into the spiritual and communal relationships, as manifested in an African worldview. Thus, an endogenous or localized approach stemmed from the epistemology, ontology and axiology of the communities themselves.

When you talk of endogenous development we look at the spirituality of the people. We look at the materiality of the people. Then, we look at the social context also of the people. So these are the three triangles that are intersected to come about with endogenous development. (Prof Dave)

Alongside the statements of the development practitioners, there were also proverbs collected that spoke to the importance of local knowledges in development. The Akan proverb “Baabiara a wowo biara no fa nea wowo no ye nea wobetumi” translated to “Do what you can, with what you have at where you are” stresses the importance of appreciating what we have and working with it. This proverb stresses working with the current knowledges base of the community and encouraging the use of this knowledge for development. To do this means exploring the cultural, social, economic and political realities of the community and exploring the ways in which they can improve the wellbeing of the community in all spheres of life. This proverb thus suggests that as opposed to looking for gaps in the community’s knowledge, we must instead explore the strengths and how such strengths can be used for development.

4.3.5 Bridging Euro-Western and African Approaches to Development

Although the development practitioners stressed that Euro-Western and African endogenous development stem from different ideological frameworks, they did not see them as oppositional. Instead, the development practitioners saw Euro-Western and African endogenous development as having, in certain circumstances, the potential to work simultaneously.

“The Western development - they can’t stay there and say that it is wrong. Neither can they also sit there and say our development is wrong. They must try to combine the two, so that most of the things we do here; what it means, they will not condemn and we will also know that most of the things they are doing we can’t condemn but we can blend the two cultures and traditions and stand in the middle and say a little here and a little there. And that is what makes a good life.” (Maria)

In this quote Maria highlights the importance of recognizing multiple ways of knowing and, thus acknowledging that all forms of knowledge have contributions to development. Therefore, although
Euro-Western ways of knowing may hold certain forms of knowledge that may be useful to questions of African development, they stressed that we cannot disregard the value of Indigenous African knowledges. Maria stressed that we cannot disassociate culture and development, therefore if we are to consider external knowledges, it must be from the standpoint of how they can be integrated into an African cultural knowledge system.

Prof Dave also shared the belief that we must recognize multiple ways of knowing in development; stressing the value of African Indigenous knowledges for development.

“The people have something of quality. And that quality is what they want the Western Development to catch on. So that at least, there is some amount of symmetry between the two. And, we see how we can use development from this. For instance, when you are talking of food sovereignty or food eh ... food sufficiency, we are thinking of world commercial farming. To feed people, but the thing is, how long has the African lived on subsistence farming? So if the African subsistence farming could develop better, I think it will rather build on our own security rather than looking at cultural values. So, in other words, though the Western world has something that is also valuable, we think Africans also have some value that need to be respected” (Prof Dave)

To reinforce the differences between Euro-Western development approaches and African endogenous approaches, Maria shared the Akan proverb “Nea kraman hunua Ṣbepe no, aginamua hunuo obu no anikyie” which she translated to “There are certain things that a dog will see and bark while the cat will just brush an eyebrow.” She used this proverb to articulate that definitions of development are culture and community specific, as they are centred on the needs of the community as opposed to predetermined notions of development (packaged development). Therefore, if we are to attempt to bridge the two approaches, we must first recognize that they do not need to be fused into one approach but each offer simultaneous, yet different, knowledges and approaches. Consequently, we must move away from packaged approaches to development. We cannot assume that notions of development are uniform from culture to culture or community to community. Instead, each community must be recognized as having its own distinct needs and desires, thus may conceptualize development differently from the next. Therefore, in discussing the possibility of the co-existence and co-functioning of Euro-Western and Indigenous African knowledges in development, the development practitioners, like the Chiefs, continually stressed the need for validation and respect of local knowledge systems and their contributions to development.
4.4 UNDERSTANDING ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

4.4.1 Linking Spirituality and Development

The development practitioners and Chiefs, in speaking of localized and endogenous approaches to development, all spoke of spirituality as a fundamental and necessary ingredient for localized approaches. Spirituality was viewed as the essence of one’s worldview, language, ethnicity and institutions in Ghanaian communities. It manifested in relationships to the supernatural and to the ancestors. Spirituality was thus seen as fundamental to Ghanaian communities and intertwined in all aspects of life.

“So if one identifies himself with his or her community, he looks at his spirituality.” (Prof Dave)

“When people identify themselves with their language, with their tribe mates, with the traditional authorities, with their worldview, that is their spirituality” (Prof Dave)

Because spirituality was integrated in personal and collective identities and worldviews, authentic development was understood as respecting the spiritual essence and beliefs of the community.

“The spiritual worldview is also as important as any aspect of a development agenda or intervention. If you really want to work with the people for them to buy your ideas then you have to also recognize and give them the due respect of their own worldview... especially, when you are linked with the endogenous development, the spirituality of the people cannot be played down. You always need to respect their worldview” (Prof Dave)

“If you really want to work with the people...then you have to also recognize and give them due respect for their own worldview...you should not forget about their link to the supernatural; with the choice of their ancestors...the metaphysical base that they are linked with.....what they believe has sustained their life....you cannot just make a sudden change that says that it needs to be abandoned”

Spirituality was also understood as being linked to other aspects of development, such as the material and social realities of communities. Spirituality was viewed as in a category of itself or disassociated with other aspects of life, but was instead seen as integrated into other aspects of the community; therefore, reinforcing the need to integrate spirituality into all aspects of development.

4.4.2 Linking Development and Local Language

The use of the local/Indigenous language was also a necessary aspect of localized African development. With the English language seen as colonial residue, a contentious relationship between it and the Indigenous language was identified as a prominent issue in development. The development
practitioners explained that the local languages continue to be regarded as the language of the uneducated, while the English language is associated to those who are educated.

“The more you are fluent in English, the more people respect you, but when you speak your own mother tongue fluently, you are being looked at as a rural person. Even in our radio programs, quite recently about three days ago, there was this matter among journalist that those who use the local languages are not well educated.” (Prof Dave)

Yet, as the local language was also identified as a central part of African identity, the loss and denigration of the local language was seen as detrimental to one’s identity as an African and a Ghanaian.

“What as Africans, if we, particularly Ghanaians, do disregard our own mother tongue, then what kind of future are we betrothing to our younger generation? Then, we are telling them it is not worth living as a Ghanaian or an African” (Chief A)

In addition to the vital link between local language and identity, like spirituality, the use of local languages was seen as a necessary element of localized development as “people refer to themselves better in their own language” (Maria). Using the local language was seen as necessary for African peoples to contribute to their own development and break free from external development that was often “pushed down their throats”. The development practitioners also argued that the use of the local language would ensure that development initiatives, needs and hopes would be better understood by the communities. That if the local language is used the communities are much more likely to work with the development practitioners and to accept and internalize the projects or initiatives.

“If you want anything to be initiated for them to understand and grasp it better, then it is better to speak it in their own dialect so that they can get a better understanding for their own development…. language is embedded in culture. And both also work to enhance the development and thoughts of an individual.” (Prof Dave)

In the quotation above, Prof Dave speaks the integral link between culture and development in highlighting that the worldview of local peoples is integrated in the language (symbols) that they use to understand and articulate the world around them. If we are to remove the local language, the understanding and conceptualizations of the development will be altered, thus remaining disassociated from the ways in which the community conceptualizes development. Maria also stressed the importance of using local language in development initiatives, and the connection between local language and the internalization of development projects.
“...the local communities, you just can’t go there and use big words and then just think it is over and done with. You have to go down to the local people; the masses in the grassroots. You must speak their language. Get people to interpret to them. For all you know, the chief in that community can’t even speak English. But it must be their native dialect so why don’t you get somebody to explain things to them in their local dialect. So, that they can understand the kind of development you are bringing. But, if you think you will only tell them. This is what we are doing and that is it. Certainly, they won’t allow you. Why, because they want to understand so that they can also talk to the people at the grassroots for them to understand. So that if the chief accepts then the other people might as well accept. So, there is a link; if you put them in their local dialect; if they understand what you mean. Then they will give their full support to whatever you want to do.” (Maria)

Maria highlights the importance of the local community in understanding development initiatives and the role that language plays in Indigenous institutions. As she highlights, the Chief as a local decision-maker and leader greatly impacts whether or not a development initiative is accepted in the community. If the local chief is unable to understand the initiative due to a language barrier, this is insulting to his role as Chief and dissuades him from having the opportunity to provide input into the initiative and critically reflect whether or not the initiative is good for the community. Thus, local language plays a vital role in the community’s ability to understand and initiate their own development.

4.4.3 Linking Development and Indigenous Governance

Indigenous governance systems were seen as important and necessary cultural resources for development. Yet, there was a disassociation found between development that is initiated by the government and development that is initiated by the Indigenous Chiefs:

“I believe that culture in that context, plays a major role before you even go into our government like the established government to deal with that problem. We try to use our cultural perspectives to handle certain issues and if we can’t handle it at that level then we take it to our government. But, we expect our government to play their role while our chiefs and the people in the community based on our cultural perspectives, also play our role.” (Maria)

Furthermore, Maria highlighted that although the government was seen as having capacity in decision-making at the local level, it was the Queen Mothers and the Chiefs that were seen as the drivers of development.

“You know, we have the monarchy system all around; we have chieftaincy; we have chiefs here, kings there and, then we have the rural community taking the first step in the development of a particular community. So, you go to most communities, even before the government comes in to help, the chief will ensured that the people in the community will do self-help projects”
The importance of Indigenous governance in development was explained by Chief A in using the Akan proverb “Oman ne si ho no na kotro ba nu si mu” translated to “Associations existence in the nation from its foundation.” In sharing this proverb Chief A stressed that prior to the entrance of Euro-Western knowledge and politics, thus the “nation” (as a Euro-Western construct and a reference to the current government), Indigenous forms of governance or “associations” existed and were well functioning. Yet, with the entrance of Euro-Western “governance” the benefits of the Indigenous governance systems have often been disregarded and lost. Chief A used this proverb to stress that Indigenous governance systems are integral to African development.

Similarly, Prof Dave, to reiterate the link between Indigenous governance and development, shared the Akan proverb “Se worrefri wo hene totro bento sua, wo yera” which he translated to “If you forget the trumpet sound of your chief or your traditional authority you will get lost”. He explained that this proverb signifies that if you fail to listen to the guidance and advice of your Chief you will get lost by losing sight of the righteous path. The wisdom of the Chief is seen as imperative to the wellbeing of the individuals and the community, so failing to follow the guidance of the Chief will lead to a disassociated existence. This proverb demonstrates the position and power of the Chief in the community while also used to highlight the importance of heeding to the laws and advice of the Indigenous institutions. Furthermore, it demonstrates the inseparability between Indigenous governance systems and local cultural values, beliefs and norms, and thus development.

4.5 TRANSITION INTO DISCUSSION

The comprehensive nature of research questions and extensive data found in the interviews and collected proverbs resulted in a very detailed results chapter. In this chapter, I provided an overview of the results through two distinct topics: 1) the definition, use and themes in Ghanaian proverbs; and 2) the understandings of development in Ghanaian and African contexts. In examining these two topics, overlaps were presented and further analysis was necessary to examine the theoretical and practical implications for proverbs in localized approaches to African development. The following chapter will provide a detailed analysis examining the theoretical and practical implications of proverbs in localized approaches to development.
This chapter will focus on two themes that emerged from the results section: the theoretical and practical implications of proverbs on development. The first section will examine the theoretical implications of proverbs on development, thus examining the ways in which proverbs may contribute to a re-theorization of development. The second section will examine the practical implications of proverbs on development, thus how proverbs may be used as pedagogical and axiology knowledges for localized development. Although overlap exists between the two themes, they have been deliberately separated to demonstrate the ways in which the teachings in proverbs speak to various levels of development, both in theory and in practice.

5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROVERBS AND DEVELOPMENT

The following section will link proverbs, as Indigenous cultural knowledges to questions of development, thus offering opportunities to explore the ways in which development may be re-theorized through the cultural, spiritual and axiological teachings in proverbs. This section will explore the following subthemes: proverbs as spiritual knowledges for development and proverbs and cultural fluidity.

5.1.1 Proverbs as Spiritual Knowledges for Development

African development continues to be driven by Euro-Western instrumental and material approaches and spiritualized African worldviews continue to be disregarded as necessary resources for development. Yet, with spirituality embedded in all aspects of Ghanaian life including language, identity, governance and nature, we cannot speak of African development without speaking to spiritualized knowledges, worldviews and thus development. As spiritualized Indigenous knowledges, proverbs provide a glimpse into the spiritualized worldview of African peoples and encourage us to look beyond physical/material relationships to examine the ways in which such worldviews speaks to relationships with God, nature, the self and the collective.
In the proverbs of all three ethnicities, the relationship to the Divine was manifested through the omnipresence of God; illustrating the similarities in the ways in which God and spirituality manifest among the Akan, Bogon and Gonja communities. The omnipresence of God, conceptualized as the presence of God in all aspects of the physical/material realm, revealed that the physical/material realm is not disassociated from the spiritual real, but integrated into a co-existent relationship. In other words, the happenings in the physical/material realm, understood as acts of God, are conceptualized in the physical realm as manifestation of the spiritual realm. Similarly, the ancestors were conceptualized as omnipresent in the Akan proverbs; reinforcing the link between the physical/material and spiritual world. Like God, the ancestors influence the material/physical realm, thus reinforcing what Dei (2011) describes a continuum of being in the African worldview. Although the ancestors are no longer considered present in the physical realm, as the spiritual and physical realms coexist, as spiritual beings they have the ability to impact both the physical and spiritual realm. The omnipresence of God and the ancestors in the proverbs, thus illustrates a connection between the material and immaterial world.

Teachings that spoke to the interconnection between the physical/material realm and the spiritual realm were also manifested in the proverbs that illustrated the society/nature/ spirit interface. As the previous chapter illustrated, nature is conceptualized beyond her physical/material essence to reflect a deeper spiritualized essence tied to ancestors and God. This spiritualization of nature has greater impacts for re-theorizing development. If the natural world is no longer understood as a resource for consumption, yet as a spiritualized entity to be respected and cherished, this worldview initiates or reinforces local approaches to environmental management and sustainability. The results reveal that the spiritualization of nature in the collected proverbs reinforces an ecocentric relationship to the natural environment that is currently being used for environmental management and sustainability in Ghanaian communities. As the collected proverbs demonstrate, environmental management practices are grounded in the worldview and cosmology of Ghanaian peoples, therefore their incorporation and use in development could be purposefully used to support and encourage new and existing environmental practices while integrating the physical essence of nature its spiritual essence.

Proverbial teachings illustrate the importance of the interconnections between the physical/material and the spiritual in the worldview of the Bogon, Gonja and Akan peoples. This integration thus ascertains a worldview where there is no separation between the material and non-material. Thus, development initiatives that are confined to material approaches fail to acknowledge the
link between the spiritual and physical realms and the worldview of African peoples. What is particularly relevant in this worldview is how the integration between the physical and spiritual realm initiates a notion of holism. This notion of holism has great potential to reframe development whereby the wellbeing of the natural, spiritual and social realms are all necessary for the wellbeing of the community. As the natural and social realms are spiritualized, they are understood as sacred and revered. This sacredness and reverence for the natural and social world have tremendous potential for prompting integrative and multi-disciplinary approaches to development.

Moreover, proverbs are grounded in moral and value based teachings associated with the wisdom of the ancestors and Elders. As revered and respected moral and spiritual teachings, proverbs reinforce and support behaviour, beliefs and values that may contribute to humanistic and holistic understandings of development. As the development practitioners articulated, if development is to truly improve the wellbeing of individuals, communities and protect the natural environment, it must be built on positive interactions with ourselves, our community and our environment. This means looking at development through a spiritualized social and moral lens. As Maria expressed “development is when a human being, the total human being, you know, understands what he or she is about. So, if it is about going to school; if it is about acquiring a job; if it is about learning a trade; when the total being, the human being understands what he or she is about.” Therefore, proverbs as ontological and axiological and spiritualized knowledges illustrate the ways in which African spirituality is grounded in a co-dependent relationship between the self and the collective and the natural world, thus reinforcing a holistic theorization of development. “If one wants to talk about something that can improve human life, something that can improve human social capacity, something that can improve relationships between one and the other, he can just say a proverb and that proverbs helps to build that.”

Furthermore, proverbs, as spiritualized knowledges, illustrate the importance of the relationship between ones social existence and a metaphysical relationship to the world. Moral and value based knowledge, centred on the respect for one another, mutual learning, collective responsibility and collective action, were also conceptualized as spiritual knowledges. One’s integrations with one’s spiritual self was not disassociated with one’s relationship to the community. What these proverbs demonstrate is that axiological and spiritual knowledges are integrated. This integration thus provides a knowledge base that is centered on nurturing our spiritual relationships to God, to nature, to the self and to the collective; all of which are necessary ingredients for re-theorizing African development.
Yet, at the same time the incorporation of spiritualized knowledges in development raises important and necessary questions. Can external development initiatives incorporate spirituality in ways that will be authentic to the spirituality of African communities? How do we ensure that the incorporation of spiritual knowledges in development will benefit from the community holistically, thus not only spiritually but also economically, physically, psychologically? How do we respond to spiritual practices and knowledges that may be detrimental to localized development? Although these questions are vital in theorizing a spiritual approach to development, they must not be used to deter us from examining how spiritual knowledges, such as proverbs, can be integral to localized approaches to African development.

5.1.2 Proverbs and Cultural Fluidity

Culture is not static or confined to the false dichotomy of ancient and modern knowledge, but is dynamic and fluid; shifting and changing as new knowledges and practices emerge. With development founded on Euro-Western evolutionary theories justified by false dichotomies of “ancient/primitive” and “modern/advanced” knowledges; recognizing the fluidity of culture is vital to re-theorizing development in African contexts. This recognition is necessary to shift the theoretical foundation of development from a modernizing endeavour to a pluralistic and fluid approach reflecting multiple knowledges, values and beliefs.

As found in the results, proverbs are excellent examples of dynamic cultural knowledges that have shifted and changed throughout time. As the development practitioners highlighted, using the example of proverbs about girls’ puberty rites, Ghanaian culture has transformed throughout time. These transformations have also been reflected in meaning and use of proverbs. The development practitioners stated that the fluidity of proverbs has contributed to the development of the Ghanaian communities by encouraging the use of new knowledges and new perspectives while discouraging myopic and oppressive behaviours.

Moreover, the teachings found in the proverbs collected also encourage the entry of new knowledges and transformations and contribute to the richness of culture and the wellbeing of community. The cultural shifts encouraged by proverbs promote a critical examination of knowledge and discourage knowledges and practices that no longer serve the needs of the community. The entry of new knowledges also reflects the importance of multiple ways of knowing in development. Therefore, the cultural fluidity and appreciation for multiple ways of knowing manifested in the proverbs collected
has tremendous potential for re-theorizing development. The appreciation of cultural fluidity and multiple ways of knowing distances development from a modernizing endeavour that is centered on a linear and myopic knowledge base to an endeavour that recognizes the value of all sites of knowledge and how they serve the community. This does not mean a complete disregard for Euro-Western approaches, but urges the validation and appreciation of knowledges that fall outside the hegemonic Euro-Western frameworks for development.

5.1.3 Corruption of Proverbs as a Result of Euro-Western Hegemony

Although the teachings of the proverbs encourage cultural shifts and the ability to incorporate external knowledges in development, the transformation in cultural knowledges and in proverbs is a delicate matter. With Euro-Western knowledges and languages superseding Indigenous knowledges in Ghana (Adjei, 2005), changes in the meaning of proverbs and their disuse may also be symptomatic of Euro-Western epistemological dominance. Therefore, examining proverbs for development may also involve reintegrating authentic forms of proverbs that have been lost due to colonial and neo-colonial influences. Therefore, the integration of proverbs must also involve Elders and local cultural custodians who have the ability to critically analyze the reasons for which authentic meanings have been lost or altered. As development is strongly centred on a Euro-Western epistemology, what is considered a “negative” aspect of culture may simply be conflicting with Euro-Western approaches to development. Therefore, as previously suggested, cultural shifts and proverbial changes, to instil ownership and self-determination in development must be determined by the community themselves.

5.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR PROVERBS AND DEVELOPMENT

Stemming from the theoretical implications of proverbs on development, the proverbs collected also possess potential for their impacts on localized approaches to development. As Indigenous African knowledges, proverbs have great potential to localize and indigenize development projects and programs. This section considers the following subthemes relating to proverbs and their practical implications for development: the contextual nature of proverbs; proverbs and behavioural change; proverbs and health practices; proverbs and community building; proverbs and Indigenous language use; proverbs, language and youth development; and proverbs and Indigenous governance.
5.2.1 Contextual Nature of Proverbs

The literature and the results reveal that proverbs are highly contextual oral knowledges, strongly dependant on the occasion and event in which the proverb is shared. This contextual nature of the proverb carries great potential for localized development approaches as the use of a proverb is reflective and reliant on needs, aspirations and worldviews of local communities. As the Chief’s story of Kwaku Amissah demonstrated, proverbs may not be properly used out of context. Therefore, practically speaking, the proper integration of proverbs in development initiatives would mean that proverbs chosen for development purposes would have to be chosen based on the specificities of the local community. Furthermore, as proverbs were identified as highly contextual, the use of proverbs in development initiatives would also mean initiating the involvement of Elders, chiefs and those who are knowledgeable in proverbs. The involvement of Elders and chiefs would thus ensure the appropriate use of the proverbs in regard to the context and subject matter of the development initiatives. Therefore, as previously discussed proverbs that were to be used to initiate health, environmental or social behavioural change would have to be identified locally. Thus, the contextual nature of the proverb may also be an impetus for local involvement, ownership and self-direction in development.

5.2.2 Proverbs and Behaviour Change

Highly contextual, morally and spiritually infused, and carriers of culture and wisdom, proverbs carry great potential to initiate behavioural change. As the results revealed proverbs are currently being used in Ghanaian communities and have been used for generations to initiate behavioural change. Due to the fact that proverbs are already recognized as a moral and behavioural guide in Ghanaian communities, they carry great potential for use in localized development initiatives. As the proverbs collected exhibit moral and spiritual teachings, the ability to initiate behavioural change is likely as their knowledge and wisdom is reflective of the worldviews manifested in local African communities.

Moreover, proverbs hold great spiritual and moral credence as the words of wisdom of the Elders and ancestors and are considered depersonalized knowledges. Not associated with the personal beliefs or opinions of the speaker themselves, proverbs carry great potential for initiating or reinforcing behavioural change. Because the proverb is disconnected from the speaker, the knowledges embedded in the proverb become the primary focus (Finnegan, 1970; Riley, 1990; Yankah, 1989, 1992). And as the messages in the proverbs are generally understood as a cultural truths (see Yankah, 1989) they contain influential and rhetorical power to influence the actions, beliefs and behaviours of Ghanaian peoples.
Therefore, the depersonalization and ancestral wisdom manifested in the teachings of the proverb may contribute to initiating behavioural change in culturally sensitive or challenging topics or circumstances.

5.2.3 Proverbs and Health Practices

The collected proverbs also demonstrated knowledges that centred on health and wellness practices. For example, the Gonja proverb “Mushun dara ne baa ta a wora kuduru” translated to “Old honey produces real medicine” spoke to the importance of using and recognizing Indigenous health practices. Furthermore, the Akan proverb “Se wandi wo ho nia, edi abusua no nyinaa kO ayaresabea” translated to “If you don’t keep your environment clean, you won’t take the household to the hospital” also encouraged cleanliness and environmental management as key to healthy living. These proverbs, as local knowledges have great potential in local health promotion initiatives. Not only do they reinforce the cultural and spiritual beliefs related to health and wellbeing, such as the use of Indigenous medicine, but may also be used to encourage incorporate other healthy behaviours into Indigenous methods and provide an opportunity to bridge external health practices with Indigenous practices. As aforementioned, the use of health-related proverbs in development would be best shared by Elders, cultural custodians or Indigenous health practitioners in the community to increase credibility and internalization.

5.2.4 Proverbs and Community Building

In an African worldview communal relationships are often founded on spiritualized understanding of the world; the individual’s axiological role within the community is manifested in their relationships and their integration within the larger natural, ancestral and spiritual community (Dei, 2000; Tedla, 1995). This communal role was found in the proverbs that spoke to moral, physical and spiritual impacts of community and community building. The development practitioners stressed humanistic and holistic approaches to development which encompassed collective and community action and wellbeing. The proverbs collected revealed that an Indigenous African worldview initiates a strong sense of community, reinforcing interpersonal and multi-sectorial ties, positive relationships, and interdependence. The integrative moral, natural, spiritual and communal teachings in proverbs thus have great potential in development initiatives to establish and reinforce collective responsibility, respect and mutual learning while building social and spiritual capital necessary for agency and well-being.
The proverbs that spoke to community building also provided insight into the importance of the collective within Ghanaian communities; reinforcing the notion of collective action and collective knowledge as necessary tools for development. Respect and diversity were also fused into the proverbs that spoke of the collective, reinforcing communally driven processes, encouraging participatory and self-directed action, and initiating a sense of togetherness, collaboration and mutual respect and care. Moreover, the proverbs focusing on multi-sectorial involvement could also be used to encourage community members to appreciate the diverse knowledges and specializations within the community as resources for development. This appreciation and respect for multiple knowledges in community building could also be used to encourage a strengths-based approach to development which focuses on the strengths of the communities as opposed to the gaps.

Furthermore, the proverbs also taught that we must be willing to learn from others and demonstrate humility and a respect for plurality. Humility was embedded in the teachings of these proverbs; advising that there are times when we must look to others for assistance as we do not always have the ability to find solutions to our own problems. Humility and encouragement to look beyond our own solutions encourages mutual learning and an opportunity to benefit from exogenous knowledges. As previously discussed, the incorporation of exogenous knowledges in localized approaches to development would be framed on a premise of mutual learning whereby exogenous development initiatives would also be willing to learn from Indigenous African knowledges.

5.2.5 Proverbs and Indigenous Language Use

With the Indigenous language closely linked the culture and identity of African peoples, the elevation and use of the colonial language has caused a deep concern for the loss of language and culture in Africa. With the majority of rural peoples unable to speak the colonial language, its use as the primary method of communication in development projects and programs has inhibited local agency in development. This incessant loss of the Indigenous language has been identified as an integral concern for African development.

The results reveal that proverbs play an important role in the use of the Indigenous language as they build agency and self-determination in local communities. As proverbs are revered Indigenous forms of communication and are already used colloquially in multiple locations and circumstances, they are already being used among local peoples. Thus, to incorporate proverbs into development initiatives would not only encourage and reinforce the use of the local language, yet at the same time ensure
community understanding and involvement in development initiatives. Furthermore, as proverbs act as pedagogical and axiological cultural knowledges, they not only facilitate local peoples’ understandings and contributions to the development of their communities, yet also build and reinforce local cultural knowledges, values and beliefs.

5.2.6 Proverbs, Language and Youth Development

In Ghana, like other African countries, the impact of colonial schooling and globalization has produced a significant intergeneration gap that threatens cultural and linguistic continuity. As the results demonstrate, the Chiefs and development practitioners stressed the importance of teaching culture and language to youth “What you are doing right now this is our culture and our tradition...we should teach it to our children so that by the time they grown up they will have something and not westernization” (Chief A). Proverbs, as well-respected and commonly used cultural and linguistic resources, have excellent potential to contribute to bridging the intergeneration gaps between Elders and youth. The use of proverbs in youth development may also encourage cultural and linguistic revival as youth work alongside Elders to create and revive local cultural customs and languages. Because the proverb is metaphoric, its use and understanding also requires a deeper comprehension of the language, thus initiating strong and more intricate associations to Indigenous languages. In addition, proverbs are closely connected to African identity, so the use of proverbs in youth development programing may also encourage pride and dignity in their identity in young African peoples, thus initiating closer connections to their culture and their communities.

5.2.7 Proverbs and Indigenous Governance

Indigenous governance systems were identified as vital and necessary for localized approaches to African development and community building. The development practitioners, Chiefs and the collected proverbs all illustrated the spiritual, moral and pedagogical weight of Indigenous governance systems and the vital role of Chiefs and Queen Mothers in local development. The proverbs illustrated that the success of the Indigenous governance system predated colonial encounters and current exogenous approaches to development. The call to acknowledge and respect pre-existing forms of governance and development is necessary for re-theorizing development. Many of the proverbs demonstrated a deep respect and value for Indigenous governance in Ghanaian communities. Therefore, the knowledge and wisdom in Indigenous governance systems is necessary for a localized approach to African development. As local authorities continue to have great impacts on the well-being
of communities and are often the key decision makers around development initiatives, they play an integral role in local development. Furthermore, Indigenous Chiefs were identified as having the greatest impacts on the ways in which the community responded and interacted to development initiatives. As Indigenous systems are a physical representation of the cultural and spiritual beliefs and knowledges of the community, they function as important and necessary vehicles for community building, health and environmental practices and behavioural change.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 PROVERBS: RETHEORIZING THE INTEGRAL LINK BETWEEN CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

For development to be meaningful in African contexts, it must stem from the knowledges and worldviews of local peoples. Development must be grounded in the cultural, spiritual and social realities of African peoples. This means moving away from material/physical approaches to those that explore and reflect local, Indigenous African knowledges. This study reveals that the teachings and knowledges found in proverbs provide an excellent impetus for re-theorizing the crucial link between African culture and development. Proverbs offer a looking glass into an intricate system of African cultural knowledge; reflecting the social, spiritual, environmental and linguistic realities of African peoples.

Part of an embodied knowledge system rich in cultural and spiritual wisdom, proverbs are rooted in the collective and individual identity of African peoples. They provide essential theoretical and practical knowledges and teachings necessary to theorize development through a local lens. Through spiritual, axiological and ontological teachings, proverbs offer theoretical knowledges that speak to humanism and holism. Such theoretical teachings are driven by a fluid worldview which cohesively respects and honours multiple ways of knowing. Proverbs also offer practical teachings on health, community building, environmental management, language use and youth development. The practical and depersonalized knowledges in proverbs allow them to initiate positive behavioural change among local African peoples. They reflect cultural and moral values such as humility, respect for oneself, for the collective, for the natural world and encourage positive environmental, social and spiritual development in African communities.

Furthermore, used in colloquial conversation and part of everyday interactions, proverbs are excellent conduits for communicating practical teachings, cultural norms, languages, values and philosophies of African peoples. Linked to the linguistic, cultural and spiritual identity of African peoples, proverbs have great potential for revitalizing denigrated and endangered cultural customs, languages and beliefs. The use of proverbs in African development may bring us one step closer to placing the physical, social, spiritual, moral and communal wellbeing of African peoples at the forefront of African development. In conceiving of alternative and localized development methodologies, the teachings in proverbs offer theoretical and practical approaches to development that moves beyond the
physical/material to recognize and value the importance of spirituality, collectivity and holism in African development.

6.1.1 Critical Analysis of Indigenous Knowledges for Development

Yet, as with all forms of knowledges, our engagement with proverbs must also involve a critical interrogation of the ways in which proverbs and Indigenous African knowledges speak to questions of power, gender and culture. This means moving away from a romanticization or glorification of Indigenous knowledges to examine the ways in which they may inculcate the oppression and marginalization of certain groups (Dei, 2011; Lebakeng, 2010). Therefore, examining proverbs as localized knowledges for development must also involve discussions on the ways in which they may negatively reinforce gender, sexual ethnic oppressions and a multi-generational, anti-colonial and gendered analysis. Critically examining proverbs and Indigenous knowledges ensures that their use will contribute the betterment of all peoples in the community.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.2.1 Recognizing Holism as an Integral Element of African Development

The study reveals that we cannot speak of localized approaches to African development without acknowledging the deeply spiritualized and holistic essence of an African worldview. In African epistemology, relationships to self, to each other, to the community, to the metaphysical and to nature must all be understood as valid and necessary knowledges for development. For development to truly benefit African peoples, we must begin to explore how African peoples’ interconnection to, and embodiment of, the spiritual, social and physical world contribute to alternative understandings of development. This means challenging the compartmentalization of reductionist science that separates, secludes and disassociates knowledge to instead explore the ways in which local knowledges, such as proverbs, offer alternative understandings of development grounded in an epistemology of holism.

For Indigenous African knowledges, such as proverbs, to be authentically used for localized development, they must be examined through holistic, spiritualized and humanized frameworks. This means ensuring that proverbs and other forms of Indigenous knowledges are not exploited for the purpose of Euro-Western material/physical development approaches nor used as add-ons to existing Euro-Western frameworks. Battiste (2003) argues that in combining Euro-Western and Indigenous knowledges “the problem with this approach is that Indigenous knowledge does not mirror classic
Eurocentric orders of life. It is a system in its own right with its own internal consistency and ways of knowing, and there are limits to how far it can be comprehended from a Eurocentric point of view” (p.2). Therefore to authentically examine the ways in which Indigenous knowledges may be used for localized African development this must be done through an Indigenous framework that validates holistic and spiritualized knowledges.

**6.2.2 Recognizing Spiritual Knowledge as Integral Knowledges for African Development**

African spirituality is an axiological imperative that is shaped by diverse and interconnected systems of knowledge (Dei, 2011; Haverkort et al., 2002; Mbiti, 1969; Tedla, 1995; Wangoola, 2000). The study reveals that as spiritualized knowledges proverbs may aid to disrupt evolutionary and science-driven epistemology by offering alternatives understanding of the world around us. Proverbs encompass social, environmental, spiritual and communal knowledges that speak to holistic approaches to the wellbeing of African peoples. Yet, proverbs are but one example of how Indigenous knowledges may be used in African development. To fully understand the potential of proverbs and Indigenous spiritual knowledges for development, we must begin by fully exploring the contributions that spirituality and spiritualized knowledges had have to initiating positive and lasting social change in African communities.

**6.2.3 Reframing Expertise**

If African development is to be truly reflective of African cultures and worldviews, the supposed expertise of Euro-Western development practitioners or those trained in Euro-Western methods must be challenged. The teachings found in proverbs demonstrate that local peoples have embodied and culturally-relevant knowledges necessary to improve their social, cultural, spiritual and economic wellbeing. As the Bogon proverb teaches “a stranger does not know where the room leaks”. If development practitioners are to effectively work from an endogenous development approach, they must reframe their perception on African knowledges and peoples. This means recognizing and respecting that local peoples, Indigenous leaders and Elders possess knowledges, experiences and understandings that are relevant to the development of their communities. Furthermore, development practitioners must also be willing to assess and analyze their subjective positions by recognizing and addressing their biases, their belief systems, their presuppositions and their cultural knowledge base and how they impact their relationships to the communities with whom they work (Ver Beek, 2000). Through critical reflection, they must be willing to
not only question and recognize their own biases but also be willing to challenge the neo-colonial nature of the development industry.

6.2.4 Involvement of Cultural Custodians in African Development

Recognizing the expert teachings in local knowledges, such as proverbs, requires the engagement and support of Elders, Chiefs, Queen Mothers and other cultural custodians. The wisdom of cultural custodians is necessary for authentic endogenous development. Such wisdom and knowledge offers critical understanding of the ways in which Indigenous knowledges systems may function as the groundwork for development. The Akan proverb “Se worefiri wo hene totrobento sua, wo yera” teaches that “if you forget the trumpet sound of your chief or your traditional authority you will get lost”. Elders, Chiefs, Queen Mothers and cultural custodians are an embodiment of cultural knowledges, thus their involvement in all aspects of development in their community is necessary; particularly in initiatives that stem from the use of Indigenous knowledges. To involve Elders, Chiefs, Queen Mothers and other cultural custodians in development means recognizing and valuing Indigenous governance systems and exploring ways in which these systems currently reinforce development initiatives. Furthermore, as Elders and Chiefs are linguistic custodians, they play a vital role in the engagement of oral knowledges, such as proverbs. If proverbs and other oral knowledges are to be engaged for the purpose of development, their credibility is reinforced when they are spoken by respected knowledge bearers and decision makers in the community.

6.2.5 Involvement of Youth in African Development

Youth involvement is also crucial for re-theorizing African Development. The Akan proverb “Wo tena fakuoa wo te adee so” teaches that “If you sit in one place, you sit on treasure”. What this proverb teaches is that we must recognize culture as a dynamic and constantly changing force. Therefore, as culture shifts, development must also reflect this shift by incorporating new knowledges. To ensure that development reflects the dynamism of culture, it must not only reflect the voices of Elders, yet must also reflect those of youth. Youth may offer innovative and crucial knowledges for development that the Elders may fail to possess. Therefore, to look holistically at African development also means bridging the intergenerational gap between youth and Elders, Chiefs and cultural custodians. Youth and Elders must work in partnership to exchange knowledges and practices. Furthermore, it is felt that youth are losing sight of their identity as African peoples; therefore it is equally important that African youth, educated in Euro-Western institutions, are engaging with their local culture and language. Thus, the
involvement of youth in localized development not only provides new approaches and technologies for development, it also permits youth to learn and appreciate the already-present knowledges and technologies in their own communities.

**6.2.6 Use of Proverbs Outside of African Contexts**

As a non-African and non-Indigenous scholar, I have had the opportunity to actively engage with, and greatly benefit from, the moral, spiritual, social and communal teachings in African proverbs. What my engagement with African proverbs demonstrates is the need to further understand the ways in which African proverbs may be used as theoretical and practical tools for development outside of African contexts. Recognizing that proverbs are embedded in spiritual, natural and social contexts of African peoples does not dismiss the ways in which African proverbs also speak to elements that are common to all human beings. As Prah (2001) argues, if development is “the improvement and uplifting of the quality of life of people...to attain the potential, build and acquire self-confidence and manage to live lives of reasonable accomplishment and dignity” (p.156), can the moral and spiritual lessons in proverb also reconceptualise localized development outside of the African context? For example, can proverbs that speak to collective action, community building, and morality also be used in local development initiatives outside of Africa? Can these proverbs initiate a holistic approach to development outside of African contexts? To answer these questions, further research must be done to explore the potential for Indigenous African knowledges in development outside of African contexts.

**6.3 THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Although this study is limited to Ghanaian proverbs, it is a reflective and necessary first step in examining the ways in which we may re-conceptualize African development to reflect a spiritual, moral and humanist approach. This study reveals that proverbs are brimming with moral and spiritual knowledges that can revitalize and reframe our very understandings of development. This study has touched on several theoretical and practical implications of proverbs on African development, yet further research must be conducted to explore the relationships between Indigenous worldviews, knowledges and localized approaches to development. This means conducting detailed studies to further examine how African Indigenous knowledges, worldviews and spiritual relationships can begin to re-theorize African development.
REFERENCES

Adjei, P. (2005). Decolonizing knowledge production, validation and dissemination: The relevance of the (selected) works of Memmi, Fanon, and Gandhi to schooling and education in Ghana. (Master’s Thesis) Retrieved from T-space, University of Toronto.


