

# DESIGNING INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

*Transformative Narratives; Stories of  
Changed Lives and Hope*

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- MOTIVATE:
  - The importance of Indigenous researchers who have social design skills and deep relational connections to Indigenous peoples, communities and lifeworlds

# INTRODUCTION

- Without the appropriate human factor and social design skills/knowledge, researchers designing and implementing Indigenous research methodologies will make the same classic mistake that colonial researchers made and conventional researchers continue to make. That is, putting property, power, prestige, and privilege before the well-being of Indigenous people, communities, their ecologies and cosmos.

## Central Question

- What major factors could transform postcolonial Indigenous Research Methodologies into a resource for creating and reproducing sustainable transformative narratives, changed lives, and regenerated hope in Indigenous peoples, communities, and lifeworld?

# MAIN THESIS

- Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRM) succeed in creating and reproducing sustainable transformative narratives, changed lives, and regenerated hope in Indigenous peoples, communities, and lifeworlds when the IRM research proposals and the research processes, unlike colonial/conventional research, are designed and implemented by researchers who have social design skills/knowledge and the human factor competency to develop relational connections with Indigenous peoples, communities and lifeworlds.

# MAIN ARGUMENT (AMPLIFIED THESIS)

- Colonization distorted and/or broke relationships in Indigenous communities in Canada. This is reflected in inequity, inequality, injustice, oppression, exploitation, and violence experienced by Indigenous peoples, communities and lifeworlds.
  - Therefore, research should be a true pathway for creating a valid and reliable knowledge-base or data to inform policies, programs and projects that would heal and enhance relationships to produce transformative narratives, changed lives, and sustainable hope for Indigenous peoples, communities, and lifeworlds
- This is why postcolonial Indigenous research methodologies advocate creating Indigenous research proposals that provide a clear image or blueprint for the research that applies the six central Indigenous research principles.
- However, as necessary as these strategies are, they are insufficient for IRM to accomplish its laudable goals. Without researchers who have relational connections to Indigenous peoples, communities, and lifeworld, no sustainable social design could be built into and applied effectively IRM research proposal, the research processes and action techniques. Without this, IRM may provide benefits to some individual Indigenous people, but may not sustainably transform communities and change Indigenous lifeworlds.

- **EXPLORE:**
  - **To understand the major concepts of transformative Indigenous Research Methodologies**

# MAJOR CONCEPT:

## SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNING

- It is fundamentally about setting goals and priorities, defining strategies and assigning tasks/actions, accessing resources, and coordinating processes and people in an inclusive way to construct/create processes, facilities, products, services and projects/programs that nurture engaging humane social interaction and healing relationships for all stakeholders (Adu-Febiri and Quinless. 2016).

» **“Social Design, Social Practice & Social Change: Re-Visioning Applied Sociology”**. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Organizational Studies*, Volume 11, Issue 2, June 2016, pp.15-26.



# MAJOR CONCEPT: BLUEPRINT

- **STRATEGY#1. Provide CLEAR IMAGE OR BLUEPRINT of the Research:**
- Research proposal is a process of formulating a creative idea and bringing the idea to life in real lifeworlds. It starts
  - first as an IMAGE in the mind of the researcher and partners/participants
  - Then they move the image from the mind to a physical or digital platform in a form of a BLUEPRINT—detailed visual, verbal and/or print descriptions of processes and procedures that bring the idea to life. That is, they
    - Build Social Design into the blueprint so that when implemented would sustainably transform people, communities and change lives.

## MAJOR CONCEPT: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

- STRATEGY #2. Apply CENTRAL INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES
  - a) Research WITH, rather than ON
  - b) Validate both verifiable strategies and non-verifiable strategies
  - c) Don't separate your head from your heart
  - d) Pass the originality, relevance, creativity, honesty, and empathy or compassion tests
  - e) Pass the Solution Design test
  - f) Make deliverable actions front and center
- Build Social Design into these principles so that when implemented it would sustainably transform communities and change lives.

## MAJOR CONCEPT: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

- a) Research WITH, rather than ON:
- “...doing research with Indigenous people and communities, rather than on them or even just based on them” (Wilson 2008, p. 108).

## MAJOR CONCEPT: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

- b) Research is not restricted to only verifiable strategies. Non-verifiable strategies are also valid.
- Use both intellectual (empirical) and extra-intellectual (non-empirical) strategies in acquiring, analyzing, and interpreting information (Wilson 2008, p. 110).

## MAJOR CONCEPT: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

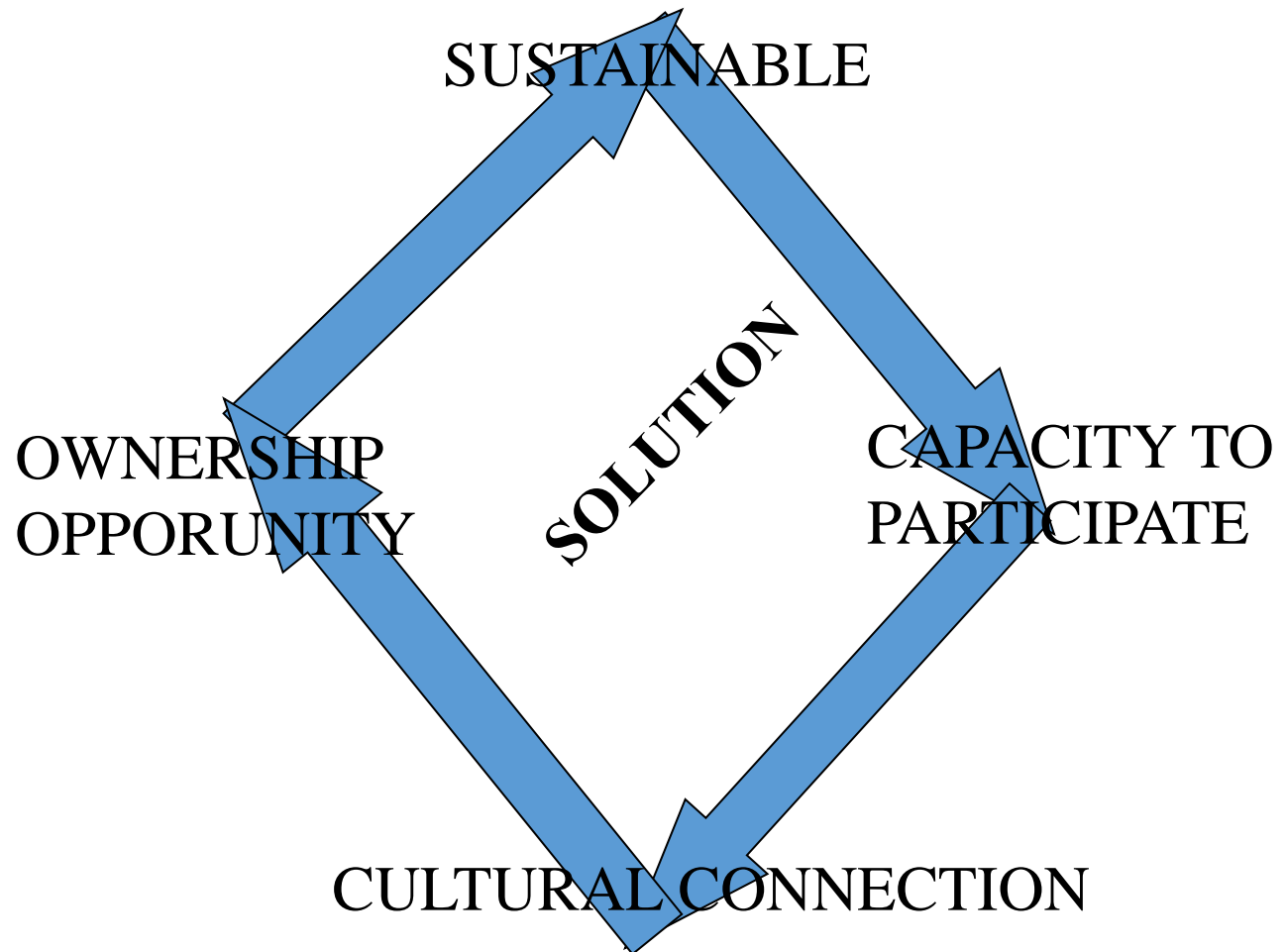
- c) Don't separate your head from your heart:
- Apply intuitive or non-linear logic rather than linear logic [Deductive reasoning and/or Inductive reasoning that separates the mind from the heart]. This is because linear logic by separating the mind from the heart and rejecting the heart, deconstructs (breaks things down into small parts) and then reconstructs them. The process destroys relationships.
- To build and strengthen relationships, use both the mind and the heart to look at the whole data at once and synthesize the relationships (Wilson 2008, p. 119).

## MAJOR CONCEPT: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

- d) Pass the originality, relevance, creativity, and empathy or compassion tests
- **ORIGINALITY:**
  - Focus on something that nobody has researched in the same way before in the community.
- **CREATIVITY:**
  - Use innovative approaches, designs/methods, and/or techniques to accomplish the research objectives in the community
- **RELEVANCE:**
  - Focus on things that matter; make a sustainable difference; meet a significant goal/desire/need of community
- **EMPATHY or COMPASSION:**
  - Be honest in connecting emotionally, morally and spiritually to the research problem/opportunity and the community

## MAJOR CONCEPT: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

### e) Pass the Solution Design test



## MAJOR CONCEPT: INDIGENOUS RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

- f) Make deliverable actions front and center:

- **RESEARCH AND ACTION  
INTERCONNECTIONS**



# RESEARCH AND ACTION

- Research proposals/reports do not necessarily lead to action, so it is imperative that research proposals in Indigenous communities include clearly articulated processes that enable Indigenous people to utilize research to take individual and collective actions to create and reproduce engaging and inspiring relationships in their lives and their communities.
  - Conventional Research Methodology is less relevant in this area, and Participatory Action Research Methodology is relevant but not sufficient.

# RESEARCH AND ACTION

## ACTION

|                               | YES | NO |
|-------------------------------|-----|----|
| Conventional Research         |     | *  |
| Participatory Action Research | *   |    |
| Indigenous Research           | *   |    |

# WHAT ARE THE MISSING VARIABLES IN EXISTING RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES?

## Conventional Research

### Methodologies: The Scientific Method

Research on the  
Marginalized

Object  
Elitist-Outsider  
TRANSACTIONAL  
Mystifies research  
Value-Neutral  
Non-critical  
Oppressive

## PAR

### Methodologies

Research from the center  
and with the Marginalized

TRANSACTIONAL  
Non-elitist-Outsider

Resistance  
Non-elitist-Insider  
Decolonizing and  
Indigenizing

THE MARGINALIZED  
Subject  
ANTI-OPPRESSIVE  
VALUES-BASED  
GRASSROOTS  
CULTURALLY SENSITIVE  
CRITICAL  
DE-MYSTIFICATION

RELATIONAL  
HONOR RELATIONSHIPS

Research from the Margins; by, with  
and for the Marginalized

## Indigenous Research Methodologies

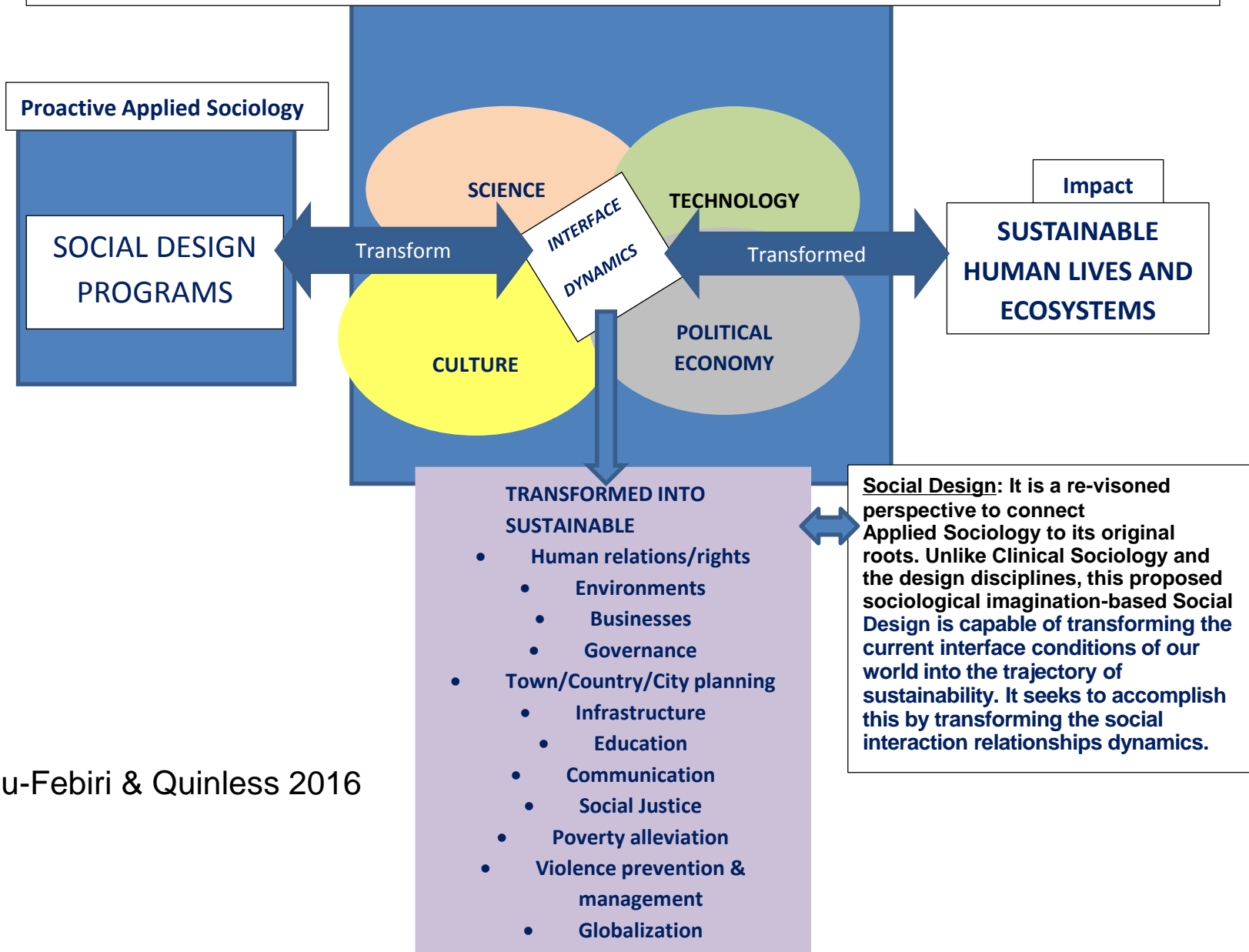
# THE COMMON MISSING VARIABLE IN EXISTING RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

- Sustainable Social Designing

# SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNING

- Sustainable Social Design put the well-being of people, communities, their lifeworlds, ecologies and cosmos before property, power, prestige and privilege.

**SOCIAL DESIGNING INTERFACE DYNAMICS: Social Interaction/Relationships at the Interface of Science, Technology, Political Economy and Culture**



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# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNS

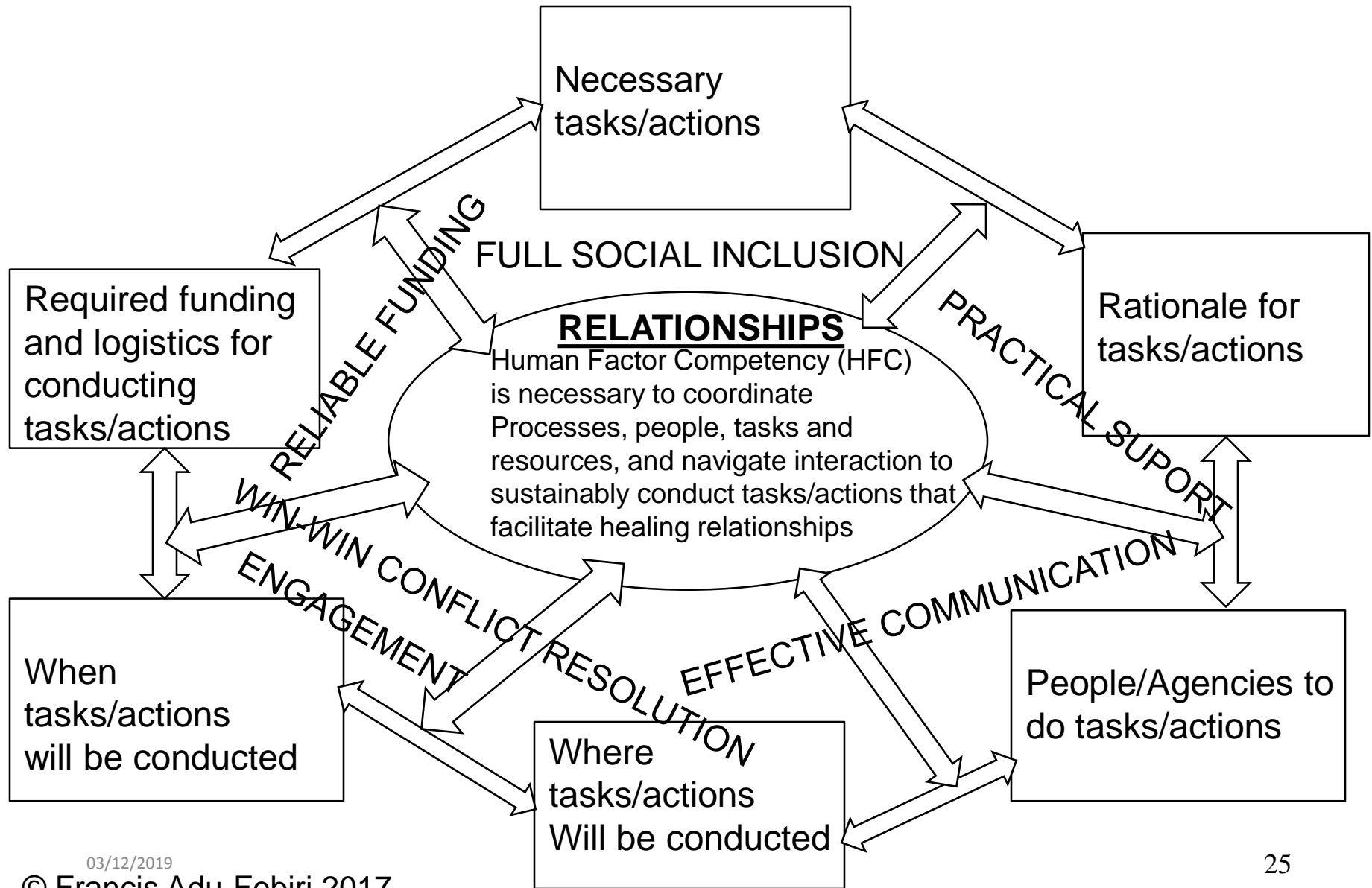
- Sustainable Social designs seeks to create
- 1. Healing Relationships
- 2. Full social inclusion
- 3. Practical support systems
- 4. Effective communication processes
- 5. Win-win conflict resolution
- 6. Engaging conditions to facilitate active participation of stakeholders
- 7. Reliable and strings-free funding
  - » Human Factor Competency (HFC), particularly the emotional intelligence, moral intelligence and spiritual intelligence of the designers, determines the actualization of these characteristics.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNS

- The seven characteristics of sustainable social design makes it user-friendly.



# SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNING MODEL



# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNS

- 1. Healing Relationships:
- The tasks/actions are conducted in such ways as to enhance stakeholders' relationships—their individual and collective vision, pride, dignity, identity, control, responsibility, and accountability.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNS

## •**2. Full Social Inclusion**

- Involve all relevant individuals and groups; all relevant issues for all stakeholders.
  - **The research facilitator consults all stakeholders for developing the goals, priorities, strategies and tasks/actions.**
  - **Reach consensus on these rather than voting on them.**
    - This is because voting creates win - lose situations that weaken social interaction and the synergy needed for productive action and healing relationships.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNS

## ■ **3. Practical Support:**

- Ensure regular visits, phone calls, emails, texting, meeting for lunch, social activities after work, forming support networks, affirming comments, celebrating accomplishments of all participants and stakeholders
  - (Don't highlight the accomplishments of individuals, and don't give awards to some participants only: celebrating Indigenous research is about collective achievement).

## ■ **4. Effective Communication:**

- **Connect with participants and stakeholders at the SOCIAL, CULTURAL, EMOTIONAL, MORAL AND SPIRITUAL levels—openness, respect, and authenticity.**

# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNS

## ■ 5. Win-Win Conflict Resolution:

- Maintain a relatively neutral stance and play a mediating role to facilitate a resolution that is satisfactory to all participants and stakeholders involved.

## ■ 6. Engagement:

- Facilitate engaging conditions that empowers researchers to work *with* not *for* the participants and stakeholders to boost their competence to successfully implement proposals and research results without you—sustainability is attained this way.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNS

- **7. RESOURCES: Funding and Budgeting:**
- Assist participants and stakeholders to formulate clear and realistic budgets that connect monetary and time requirements to each of the strategies and tasks/actions, and generate adequate, reliable and strings-free funds to support them.
  - A good friend of mine used to view government funding with suspicion. “Stay away from government funding.” He would say. “You’ll kill yourself. Do what you can with your own resources” (Stringer, 1999, p. 149).

# MAJOR CONCEPT: THE HUMAN FACTOR

- User-friendly social designs are necessary but insufficient:
  - User-friendly social designs work optimally when the designers and implementers have relational connections with our deep equal common humanity. That is, people who possess and apply high human factor competency (HFC) index:
    - **The HUMAN FACTOR (HF)**
      - **HFD and HFC**

# HFC AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DESIGNING

- Social designing, implementing social designs, and evaluating resultant changes for further changes to restore, repair, enhance, build, and/or regenerate healing relationships that would improve lives of individual Indigenous people, communities, and life worlds require researchers with high human factor competency (HFC) index.
- HFC is the capacity, that is, the emotional intelligence, moral intelligence and spiritual intelligence to acquire and use knowledge, skills, abilities and principles to identify and solve problems that work against productivity, profitability, equity/equality, environmental enhancement as well as cultural, emotional, moral and spiritual development of people (Adu-Febiri 2004).



# Human Factor Competency Theory

- **Distilling from earlier definitions of the HFC (Adjibolosoo, 1995; Adu-Febiri, 2000, 2001, 2003/2004 and 2011), HFC constitutes peoples' thinking and humanitarian abilities that inspire and facilitate their acquisition and application of appropriate resources to connect with our [deep, equal] common humanity and the environment emotionally, morally and spiritually to make a sustainable difference in society (Adu-Febiri 2014). In essence, HFC is an essential dimension of what Adjibolosoo (1995, p. 33) conceptualizes as “the appropriate human qualities and/or characteristics (i.e., the HF). Human Factor Decay (HFD) is the decline or loss or lack of those human qualities and/or characteristics (Adjibolosoo 1995). Senyo Adjibolosoo (1995, pp. 33 and 36), defines the HF as**
  - **a spectrum of personality characteristics that enable social, economic, and political institutions to function and remain functional over time. These [personality characteristics] include human capital, spiritual capital, moral capital, aesthetic capital, human abilities, and human potential.**

# CORE HFC QUALITIES

- **Emotional intelligence, moral intelligence and spiritual intelligence to acquire and apply**
  - Cutting-edge knowledges
  - Relevant and practical skills
  - Creativity and Innovation
  - Initiative
  - Respectful Attitude
  - Cultural sensitivity
  - Humility
  - Hopefulness
  - Responsibility
  - Relational accountability
  - Awareness of the common humanity of self and others
  - Caring and sharing practices
  - Trustworthiness/Integrity
- **to develop deep relational connections [as against transactional connections] with people, community, the environment and the cosmos.**

# APPLY

- Reflecting on the processes of indigenous research methodologies Sociology 230 has introduced to you, WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR PEOPLE, COMMUNITY, AND LIFEWORLDS?

- CREATE:
  - Be a Changemaker; be a Gamechanger

# CREATE

- Design research by centering indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, axiologies, and methodologies:
- 1. Involve Indigenous peoples and communities as active participants in all stages of the research.
- 2. Formulate and stating the research opportunity, questions and thesis/hypothesis that would generate action for change in positive ways.
- 3. Frame the searching and reviewing of relevant knowledge in the context of the goals/desires of Indigenous communities.
- 4. Gather relevant information/material in the ethical context of Indigenous communities and their protocols.
- 5. Analyze gathered information/material and displaying the pattern or narrative in ethical context of Indigenous communities and their protocols.
- 6. Interpret the research results—assigning meaning to patterns or narratives revealed by data analysis in the ethical context of Indigenous communities and their protocols.
- 7. Coordinate processes, people, tasks, and resources to use research results to positively change lives in Indigenous communities
- 8. Create a viable budget and source sustainable funding to implement research proposal and research results.

# CREATE

- **Indigenous research methodologies that integrate the principles of community participatory action research and Indigenous philosophy of societal development is necessary but insufficient to resolve all the research challenges of Indigenous communities. Therefore, create**
  - **User-friendly implementation designs and recruit researchers with high human factor competency index who make research work sustainably for Indigenous peoples, communities, and lifeworlds.**
- **In effect, the impact or effectiveness of indigenous research methodologies depends on**
  - 1. Implementation Designs and
  - 2. the people who implement the designs

# CREATE

- A sign in bold capital letters on the wall of an alternative school program proclaimed that
- **“IF YOU KEEP DOING WHAT YOU ALWAYS DO, YOU’LL KEEP GETTING WHAT YOU ALWAYS GET”**

The fact is, **“IF NOTHING CHANGES  
NOTHING CHANGES”**

- What strategies or designs would you change about postcolonial Indigenous Research Methodologies to change lives sustainably in Indigenous communities and lifeworlds? Would your designs include building social design into the processes and require the people doing research in Indigenous communities to acquire and apply core human factor competencies that make these researchers relational units without sacrificing the transactional value of research? If yes, why and if no why not?.

# CONCLUSION

- For postcolonial Indigenous Research methodologies to make a sustainable difference, it is imperative that like in the precolonial, Indigenous researchers acquire and apply social designing skills and human factor competency. Without these, they would fail to effectively and efficiently integrate the gifts of Indigenous cultural traditions with Indigenous creative ideas and innovative designs to produce peoples, communities, and lifeworlds that nurture engaging, healing and humane relationships in a postcolonial society.