Framing Anticolonialism in Evaluation: Bridging Decolonizing Methodologies and Culturally Responsive Evaluation

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Background: Evaluation is grounded in academically imperialistic research methodologies, paradigms, and epistemologies, which have lasting effects on individuals and communities, namely social and economic inequalities. These research methodologies, paradigms, and epistemologies are largely Westernized;[1] that is, influenced by Western (North American and European) cultural, economic, and political systems. To confront the Westernization of evaluation, scholars call for decolonization, to produce locally-determined, strengths-based, culturally-situated, and valid understandings. This endeavor is complicated, requiring a paradigm shift for Westernized evaluators.

Purpose: In this paper, we describe an anticolonial culturally responsive framework (ACRF) occurring in the intersections between two evaluation approaches. The first, approach, culturally responsive evaluation (CRE), demands culturally situated evaluation to determine appropriate goals and outcomes. The second, a decolonizing framework (DF), includes approaches that challenge Westernized methodologies and epistemologies, and simultaneously vitalizes Indigenous knowledge production to advance Indigenous sovereignty. By merging these two approaches, the ACRF honors decolonizing without displacing the authority of Indigeneity, while simultaneously foregrounding the interweaving of evaluator, evaluand, and cultural context. Further, we situate the ACRF as an invitation to interrogate academic imperialism—the processes and ideologies that produce and reproduce social inequality in evaluations.

Setting: We write as methodologists from the United States, having been trained in and currently working in universities built on Indigenous lands through the exploitation of forced labor and enslavement. We have conducted evaluations and research in the United States, Aotearoa / New Zealand, and Cambodia, settler colonial and colonized countries.

Data Collection and Analysis: We draw on scholars who have advanced culturally responsive, decolonizing, and anticolonial evaluation and methodological fields.

Findings: The anticolonial culturally responsive framework is an invitation for evaluators trained in imperialistic Westernized approaches or who embody the colonial world through our race, language, knowledge, and culture. Our goal is not to displace the primacy and urgency of vitalizing Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks. Instead, we offer a tentative approach committed to pluriversality, justice, self-determination, and the possibility of collaboration between knowledge systems and knowers.

Keywords: anticolonial; decolonizing; culturally responsive

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[1] The terms "Western," "Westernized," and "West" denote the political, epistemological, ideological, and financial structures primarily developed in the United States and countries of Western Europe. This article refers to these phenomena as systems of influence rather than people, identity, or geography.

Introduction

Evaluation, as a discipline, is grounded in obtaining insight into the successes and failures of existing initiatives and enabling reflection, decision-making, and development of future initiatives. As Chilisa (2020) notes, these goals are lenses "through which judgments are made and standards set about what should be considered to be real program outcomes, knowledge that measures that reality, and the values that support the practice" (p. 117). Traditionally, these judgments stem from post-positivist frameworks built from and within Westernized-Eurocentric ideological value systems and conducted by evaluators reflective of these ideologies (Chilisa, 2020; Held, 2019). Ultimately, evaluations based on these paradigms assume a monocultural, one-size-fits-all approach, suggesting that evaluations can be ideology-free and value-neutral. However, evaluators who recognize the blurred boundaries between culture, knowledge, and research call on the profession to acknowledge that programs and evaluations occur in complex contexts and confront the possibility that an evaluation can reproduce inequality, especially in marginalized, displaced, Indigenous, and oppressed communities (Waapalaneexkweew & Dodge-Francis, 2018).

Decolonizing frameworks (DFs; Chilisa, 2020) and culturally responsive evaluation (CRE; Hood et al., 2015) are two orientations proposed to resist and remedy the deleterious processes of Westernized evaluation. Promoting DF and CRE in the field of evaluation requires intentional paradigm shifting. Decolonizing approaches *research back* to uncover how colonial frameworks may have driven a program's implementation and priorities (Smith, 2012). The evaluation process is grounded in core issues of Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty and holistic interconnectedness between people, places, time, and the environment. CRE acknowledges the cultural dimensions present in all phases of program evaluation (Hood et al., 2015). At its core, CRE seeks to advance meaningful engagement with these cultural dimensions by employing theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and methods appropriate for the cultural context of the evaluation. The evaluation process requires input from the community to inform the planning and implementation of the evaluation, including its context-specific goals and outcomes.

A Provocation

Our thinking as methodologists continues to evolve through our sustained dialogues on the challenges and possibilities of reimagining evaluation as an equitable and justice-oriented practice. Audre Lorde's (2012) warning, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 112) delivered at the Second Sex Conference in 1979, leads us to question whether it is possible to deconstruct and transform evaluation to be used as a tool for justice and equity. We have questions: (a) Is it possible to decolonize something that was created within a colonial mindset, grounded in the epistemologies and purposes of colonialism? (b) Who has the right and ability to decolonize? (c) What is culture? (d) How is culture operationalized? By attending to the complexity of these questions, we encounter incitements from decolonizing scholars for Westernized scholars to ethically question their role in decolonization, and CRE scholars who challenge us to complicate our notions of culture.

We are Westernized methodologists who recognize that our learning and practices are grounded in Eurocentrism and simultaneously seek to disrupt the perspectives and practices therein. We have spent our careers seeking to make sense of the meaning and power that our social, cultural, and academic identities bring into evaluations, asking if we can be in the master's house (Lorde, 2012), while simultaneously dismantling it. The first author, a white cis woman, operationalizes critical theories to prise apart how mental health practice is rooted in colonialism and how its internationalization in contexts such as Cambodia enacts neocolonialism. Central to this work is an ongoing and critical examination of how the colonial mentality of whiteness influences knowledge creation and dissemination. The second author, a Black cis woman, has extensive experience working with urban school districts to examine how the cultures of educational institutions in the United States interact with the cultures of the communities they serve. Of particular interest to this work is how educational institutions are responsive to students' cultures and issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As U.S.-based evaluators trained in the Western academy, we question whether we can decolonize. Tuck and Yang (2012) warned against academia's co-option of the term, moving it from a political act of repatriation to a depoliticized turn of phrase. They warn that decolonizing cannot be a metaphor for social justice but instead must always be grounded in the Land Back movement and the sovereignty of Indigeneity. Separating decolonization from the violence and theft of colonization risks ongoing colonial processes under the guise of liberation. While Tuck and Yang (2012) are not ambiguous in their warning, there is some

ambiguity across disciplines about the appropriateness of decolonizing frameworks for Western evaluators. Other scholars suggest that decolonization is a responsibility for which we are all accountable due to the intertwined roles that we share within the colonial project (Sanchez, 2019).[2] These scholars also describe how indigenization, the vitalization of Indigenous knowledge and culture, remains the right and responsibility of Indigenous people alone (Sanchez, 2019).

To address the ambiguity and tension surrounding the term "decolonizing," we situate our work as occurring in the intersections between CRE and DF to propose an anticolonial culturally responsive framework (ACRF). The ACRF honors the goals of decolonizing without displacing the authority of Indigeneity, simultaneously foregrounding the evaluator's and evaluand's cultural norms, structures, and contexts. In this paper, we situate the ACRF as an invitation to confront the social processes and cultural ideologies that have produced and reproduced social inequality in evaluations and our role in these processes. We open this invitation by examining academic imperialism and its entangled epistemically (Spivak, 1988) and epistemologically (Teo, 2010) violent outcomes. Next, we discuss academic imperialism to describe the need for an ACRF, briefly discussing decolonizing and culturally responsive frameworks. Then we present the anticolonial culturally responsive framework, exploring its foundational principles as guided by key concerns of DF and CRE. To conclude, we discuss the possibilities and limitations of the ACRF. We write this invitation for evaluators who are trained in imperialistic Westernized approaches or who embody the colonial world through race, language, knowledge, and culture. Our goal is not to displace the primacy and urgency of vitalizing Indigenous and decolonizing frameworks. Instead, we offer a tentative approach committed to pluriversality, justice, self-determination, and the possibility of collaboration between knowledge systems and knowers.

A Note on Terminologies

Language is a core process and tool for de/colonization. As Dei (2006) argues, "the power of anticolonial thinking lies in its ability to name the domination and imposition of colonial relations.

Language can be used to challenge the negations, omissions and devaluations of a peoples' social reality, experience and history" (p. 11). Thus, we define the terms and concepts we use in this paper, addressing the importance of naming in anticolonial research.

When we write about communities, we recognize the risk of bounding people into cultural, racial, or social categories that have stemmed from the colonial world to differentiate between the colonizers and colonized (Smith, 2012). For example, Indigenous is a contested term that is both significant to the advancement of Indigeneity and destructive to the diversity of Indigenous cultures (Corntassel, 2003). However, for brevity and following Indigenous scholars (Smith, 2012), we utilize Indigenous to represent the global plurality of place-based sovereign people subjected to multiple manifestations of colonial exploitation.

We also discuss the possibilities of an anticolonial framework for non-Indigenous communities affected by colonialism, such as people living in non-native lands due to geopolitically enforced non-sovereign displacement (e.g., migration or enslavement; Jordan, 2022a). Typically, in countries dominated by white Europeans and their descendants, these communities are labeled through coded racialized terms, such as "minority." We use the word "minoritized" to denote the "active process of making groups minorities through the establishment of the 'norm' and those who are 'diverse' by comparison" (Jordan, 2022b, p. 173).

Writing as Westernized evaluators, we acknowledge that the "West" is a contested phrase denoting colonial differentiation between "civilized" and "primitive" cultures (Hall, 2007). Today, the West implies a supposed boundary between the developed and developing worlds (Hall, 2007). We use the term "Westernized" to identify our positions as evaluators trained in the approaches that have been developed by and grounded in the epistemologies of white middle-class Europeans and North Americans (Smith, 2012).

There is also complex terminology describing the undoing of colonialism. Concepts such as post-colonialism (Spivak, 1988), anticolonialism (Dei, 2006), decolonization (Smith, 2012), and decoloniality (Mignolo, 2011) exist in close proximity; however, they represent essential

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[2] The current APA style guidelines require that the name of the account that uploaded a video to YouTube be referenced in text and on the reference list as the author. However, we believe that this is an act of academic erasure, by giving citational credit and intellectual

authority to businesses over that of the content creator. We, as authors writing on colonialism, academic imperialism, and epistemicide, do not agree with this practice. Instead we chose to prioritize the name of the content's authors in this paper.

differences (Hiraide, 2021). Critical differences stem from the specific colonial histories of lands and peoples, and differential meanings lie in the prefixes attached: anti- (against), de- (severing ties), and post- (finality and the call for finality) (Hiraide, 2021). We recognize the linguistic and geographic complexity that intertwines these meanings. We also acknowledge that decolonization as a term, concept, and practice is a crucial movement within the methodological and evaluation literature. Therefore, we utilize "decolonizing" when describing the movements and scholars that have influenced our anticolonial framework.

Colonization, Neocolonialism, Academic Imperialism, and Frameworks of Resistance

Decolonization is the undoing of colonialism to establish independence from colonizing forces (Smith, 2012). Colonialism has different faces, purposes, and forms related to the differences between extractive colonialism, settler colonialism, and neocolonialism. Save for a handful of nations, nearly all countries have been either colonized territories or colonial powers (Jordan, 2022a).

Extractive colonization is the exploitation of land and people to enrich colonizers (Tuck & Yang, 2014). In this form, colonizers envision a return home once resources are depleted. In these once-colonized lands, colonialism's legacy and ongoing influences continue as privileged systems continually recreate the colonized Other, erasing Indigeneity and subverting Indigenous ways of knowing. Conversely, with settler colonialism, colonizers envision permanent settlement on claimed lands (Tuck & Yang, 2014). In these lands, settler-created norms dictate the cultural, social, economic, and educational systems that empower the settler-descendants and subjugate all others (Jordan, 2022a). Finally, through neocolonialism, neoliberal countries such as the United States use soft power to create economically and politically dependent countries (Alatas, 2003).

Neocolonialism

Neocolonialism is rooted in the philosophy of neoliberalism, an economic ideology developed in the West that proposes "human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework" (Hahn, 2008, p. 143). Within a neoliberal context, the role of governments, then, is to protect private rights through military force and legal structures, as well as support the marketization of services (i.e., health, education) by private providers (Hahn, 2008; Mathison, 2016). The influence of largely Western institutions such as the World Bank, the U.S. Treasury, and the European Central Bank is central to the neocolonial global promotion of neoliberal values (i.e., competition, accountability, and surveillance) along with state governments' support of marketization of services (Hahn, 2008; Mathison, 2016).

As a global economic force, neoliberalism has a long history of imposing its values on governments and institutions under the guise of promoting economic freedom, processes which extend neocolonial power. Neoliberal countries, including the United States use soft power tactics, such as those seen in humanitarian aid programs, to create neocolonial economically and politically dependent countries, disadvantaging local and Indigenous knowledge systems (Alatas, 2003). In this way, neocolonial neoliberalism exerts power in economic and social aspects of life, including evaluation. Evaluation has sustained and continues to sustain neoliberal values on two levels:

> On the one hand, it is a tool of global governance that acts normatively to homogenize states' action consistently with some neoliberal values, such as competitiveness and economic efficiency. On the other hand, in order to conform to such values, the states constantly monitor and assess public action and policies, as well as the conduct of individuals and organizations, for the purpose of introducing market rationality in non-economic domains, such as education, health systems, justice and public services. (Giannone, 2016, p. 497)

As neoliberal tool, evaluation conforms to the market, with most evaluators responsive to the funders who commission evaluations to determine the evaluation questions, the evidence, and what constitutes success and failure (Mathison, 2016). As Mathison concisely states, "Those with the money dominate the definition of what matters, what counts as success and how that is demonstrated" (p. 22).

Overall, neoliberalism and the resulting neocolonialism revolve around and mirror colonizers' desire for conquest over governments, economies, peoples, lands, and resources (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). By establishing dominance, colonizers have imposed their economic, cultural, and societal practices; knowledge systems; and

languages in all aspects of everyday life, including evaluation, to subvert the sovereignty and self-determination of the Indigenous under colonial rule (Grande, 2015). A notable aspect of the neocolonial machinery includes academic imperialism, which we view as highly problematic because it facilitates the erasure of Indigenous knowledge and science (Grande, 2015), thereby oppressing Indigenous communities.

Academic Imperialism

Academic imperialism is the process and result of the Western world's development of itself as the boundaries of civilization (Alatas, 2003). Academic imperialism is directly associated with the violence of colonization. Western scholars moved across geographies to study and "learn" about "exotic" cultures. Their created knowledge measured cultures against European norms, depicting Othered cultures as savage, uncivilized, and unknowing, thereby justifying their colonization, enslavement, and genocide (Alatas, 2003). Academic imperialism established Westernized education systems to stabilize colonial rule by indoctrinating the colonizers and the colonized into Westernized ideologies that described Indigeneity as inferior (Smith, 2012). Academic imperialism evolved from a local process of suppression (specific to the colony) to a global process, drawing borders around who was civil and who was savage, creating the Othered culture as subaltern (Spivak, 1988).

Academic imperialism's legacy insists that any science, philosophy, art, institution, economy, or discipline (including evaluation) must mirror the West's to be considered valid. As Raju (2011) writes, "Scientific innovation is not treated as credible until it has been endorsed by the West," a practice that "ensures that the non-West can *never* out-innovate or catch up with the West in science, for the West is always the first to know about any major innovations" (p. 1, emphasis in the original). Ensuring the "perpetual inferiority" of non-Western sciences (Raju, 2011, p. 2) reproduces academic imperialism as a neocolonial process guaranteeing non-Western scholars' dependency on Westernized knowledge (see Alatas, 2003 for further discussion). Such intellectual dependence continues the legacy of academic imperialism with lasting effects, most notably epistemological violence and epistemicide. Below, we discuss these topics separately; however, we acknowledge that they are deeply intertwined and reinforced by each other.

Epistemological Violence. An outcome of the injustices enacted by academic imperialism is *epistemic violence*, "the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" (Spivak, 1988, p. 281). *Epistemological violence* (Teo, 2010) furthers academic imperialism, interrogating the moment epistemic violence occurs wherein the social scientific creation of knowledge about an-other "implicitly or explicitly construct(s) the 'Other' as problematic" (p. 57). This concept implicates scholarship as creating potentially relational violence wherein "the subject of the violence is the researcher, the object is the *Other*, and the action is the interpretation of data that is presented as knowledge" (Teo, 2010, p. 295, emphasis in original).

Admittedly, multiple epistemic acts of violence intersect at any time in any research context. However, the agency of the evaluator to maintain the status quo through data development and interpretation is where Teo centers his argument as a process of recreating, extending, and reifying those violences as a normative practice. Epistemological violence locates Othering as an act of interpretation, enacted by the researcher, normalized through accepted measurement standards. Teo (2010) suggests that empirical data can be interpreted from any number of frameworks and that every interpretation is merely a cultural and theoretical proposition, writing:

> The *epistemological* part in this concept suggests that these theoretical interpretations are framed as knowledge about the *Other* when in reality they are interpretations regarding data. The term *violence* denotes that this 'knowledge' has a negative impact on the *Other* or that the theoretical interpretations are produced to the detriment of the *Other*. (p. 298)

In evaluation, epistemological violence occurs when evaluators interpret data through Westernized, colonial, and white frameworks, resulting in problematized reports of the evaluand.

For example, epistemological violence was implicated in Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan's report prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor to advance racial equality for Black families. Moynihan (1965) argued that the Black family consisted of a "disorganized" structure that hindered community progress regardless of civil rights legislation. The report posited that both the problem and the solution regarding the Black family's disorganization was the Black father, simultaneously arguing that American society has a

role in organizing the Black family. Upon its release, the report spurred major criticism. For instance, one criticism was that the focus on the Black family structure and its deficiencies failed to give sufficient attention to systemic racism as a cause of the plight of Black families. Although Moynihan intended to advance racial equality for the Black community, this did not happen. Instead, the report perpetuates racist stereotypes about Black families and the "culture of poverty." It remains consequential in shaping contemporary discourse about deficiencies in Black families and policy responses to racial inequality in the United States.

Epistemicide. Epistemicide is the "murder of knowledge" stemming from the "unequal exchanges among cultures" (de Sousa Santos, 2015, p. 92). As a purposeful act of eradication, epistemicide is the destruction of any knowledge system's modes, meanings, and potentialities that rival those of the oppressors. Collins (2017) described this as calculated acts of suppressing as "the epistemic agency of some members of the group while elevating that of others, thus producing privileged and derogated categories of knowers" (p. 120), which can lead to testimonial and hermeneutic injustices.

Testimonial injustice occurs when "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word"; credibility is devalued compared to the Eurocentric standard (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). The dominated are deemed referentially untrustworthy, positioned as incapable of knowing, creating, or communicating knowledge, and blocked from participating in building episteme. *Hermeneutical injustice* occurs when "a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage in making sense of their social experiences" (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). That is, hermeneutical injustice occurs when a person's (or people's) experiences are not self-evident (to themselves and to others), because the experiences do not correspond with available theories or concepts. Removing Indigenous people's agency for language, theorizing, and scholarship prohibits their knowledge becoming known, denies their humanity, and positions Western thinkers as normative possessors of knowledge, while everyone else is positioned as inferior possessors of culture (Swan, 2018, p. 9).

In the United States, we see ties between testimonial and hermeneutic injustice within the history of the feminist movement. White women denied that the intersectional identities of being Black and female created an inherently different and equally important focus in feminist struggles (Collins, 2017). Although Black women testified to the violent reality of their lived experiences, their testimonies were neglected (testimonial injustice). Thus, their activism, theorizing, and scholarship were relegated to niche, "folk," and "cultural" endeavors (hermeneutic injustice), insignificant to the greater cause of feminism (i.e., white, middle-class feminism; Combahee River Collective, 2014).

Academic imperialism matters for evaluation, as evaluators and Indigenous communities still grapple with its impact. Indigenous, decolonizing, and culturally responsive evaluation scholars surface feelings of betrayal and mistrust that linger among colonized and minoritized communities because of testimonial injustices (Clarke et al., 2021). For example, they note how evaluation agendas have been forced upon Indigenous communities, overlooking their histories, knowledge, interests, issues, experiences, skills, and expertise, and how community involvement in evaluation activities has been severely restricted (Cram, 2018). These evaluation scholars also contend that testimonial injustice has led to conditions incompatible with trust between the evaluand and the evaluator, as well as to limited community control over data interpretation, use, and dissemination (Clarke et al., 2021; LaFrance, 2004). Last, and perhaps of most importance to our discussion, these scholars argue that testimonial injustice occurs *due to* hermeneutical injustice. That is, knowledge from colonized and minoritized communities is viewed as less credible (testimonial injustice) because the dominant communities' knowledge structures fail to encompass the experiences of people in these communities; when people's testimony falls outside available concepts, they may be viewed as untrustworthy or less than fully human (hermeneutical injustice; Cram, 2018; Smith, 2012). Based on this evaluation scholarship and our own evaluation experiences, we consider academic imperialism ethically problematic and especially violent—particularly because it not only seriously violates the values of non-dominant communities (i.e., cultural revitalization, sovereignty, self-determination, and reciprocity), but also grievously denies their humanity. With this in mind, we now discuss the critical need to undo academic imperialism.

Undoing Academic Imperialism: Decolonizing as Resistance and Vitalization

Scholars have described intentional acts of resistance to Westernized research epistemologies, methodologies, and methods as decolonizing agendas (Smith, 2012; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). To

decolonize evaluation means we first recognize the interrelationship between Indigenous and colonizer, and that Indigenous and decolonizing knowledge is always already touched by colonialism, inscribed within colonial systems (Mignolo, 2011). However, decolonizing frameworks center the onto-epistemologies, needs, and resources of Indigenous communities to talk *back* and *up* to power (Smith, 2012) so that the methods and knowledge created are relevant and grounded within the worldviews of that community. A decolonizing approach demands that we recognize our interdependence, acknowledging that we are embedded in and ethically responsible to communities and systems (Smith, 2018, 2021). Conversely, coloniality distances us from this recognition by isolating and individualizing scholars and scholarship.

DFs embrace the vitalization of Indigenous knowledge to think and act within holistic, connected, ancestral, and innovative methodologies to repatriate Indigenous sovereignty (Smith, 2021; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). However, frequently, when people discuss Indigenous knowledge, they envision an essentialized knowing frozen in time (Carlson, 2017). To vitalize means to draw on precolonial knowledge while recognizing contemporary, multifaceted, and innovative ways of knowing that Indigenous people develop by living in two worlds: the colonial and the Indigenous (see, for example, Bartlett et al., 2012; Du Bois, 1903/2018; Keating & Anzaldúa, 2015). Decolonizing, in this perspective, is "a process of centering the concerns and worldviews of the colonized Other so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives" (Chilisa, 2020, p. 11).

As decolonization is tied to colonization and colonization is specific to place, desires, and time, there is, appropriately, a pluriverse of decolonizing frameworks. The diverse processes, meanings, and purposes of decolonizing evaluations make it challenging to describe the methods therein (Smith, 2012). We could argue that it is a colonial mindset that seeks to define the strategies of decolonizing evaluation, as Western methods are tethered to categorization and labeling and the ability to master set approaches (Smith, 2021). However, for this article, we draw attention to the critical aspects of DFs to bridge our discussion of the ACRF.

An overarching goal of DF is to deconstruct colonialism in program implementation and outcomes to reconstruct the meanings of what, how, and why evaluations occur (Chilisa, 2020). This work requires that evaluators maintain a focus on relational accountability, pluralism, and critical reflexivity to learn the colonial history of the

evaluand and evaluator and build a decolonial evaluation community (Smith, 2021). Within this community, we speak back to power and enrich Indigenous knowledge with an eye toward the meaningful benefit of the community. Overall, decolonizing evaluation is methodologically flexible, using modified Westernized practices and innovative and locally significant Indigenous methods (Chilisa, 2020).

Confronting Cultural Decimation: Culturally Responsive Evaluation

A core aspect of the fight to decolonize has been engaging in cultural revitalization (Jacob, 2013), a task that can benefit from culturally responsive approaches that provide a culturally centered perspective to challenge and confront coloniality in evaluation. CRE centers on culture to advance social justice and community empowerment (Hall et al., 2022; McBride, 2015). McBride notes that CRE includes four components: culture, context, responsiveness, and a commitment to social justice. Culture is commonly defined as "the shared experiences of people, including their languages, values, customs, beliefs, and mores. It also includes worldviews, ways of knowing, and ways of communicating" (American Evaluation Association, 2011, p. 1). In addition to traditional demographic markers (i.e., language, disability, and sexual orientation), culture includes cultural groupings formed around shared interests (e.g., hip-hop culture) (AEA, 2011). CRE recognizes that programs and evaluations are embedded in a complex web of contextual dimensions (i.e., social, historical, political, and economic) that evaluators need to respond to in their evaluation practice. To be responsive, evaluators must engage in relationships with communities to participate in the evaluation in meaningful ways. Responsiveness, then, requires (a) reflexivity (e.g., a continuous examination of assumptions held by the evaluation team and stakeholders) (McBride, 2015); (b) receptivity (e.g., deep attention to the cultural and contextual dimensions in the evaluation setting) (Hall, 2020a); and (c) responsibility for ensuring that the evaluation design is appropriate for the community involved in the evaluation and flexible to adapt to emergent issues.

It is essential to understand that cultural responsiveness is not an "add-on." Instead, it is an "essential part of high-quality evaluation" necessary to limit inaccurate, inappropriate, or harmful findings (Thomas & Campbell, 2021, p. 154). Furthermore, cultural responsiveness in

evaluation practice is critical for pursuing social justice and empowerment, especially for vulnerable and minoritized groups (McBride, 2015; Hall et al., 2022). Thus, the social justice and empowerment potential of CRE is predicated on evaluation practices such as (a) learning about the culture and context, including relevant social justice issues of the community; (b) promoting a strengths-based approach (Yarbrough et al., 2011); (c) creating opportunities for power-sharing or allowing community members to take the lead (Frazier-Anderson et al., 2011; McBride, 2011); (d) providing space for collaborative learning (Lahman et al., 2011; Rodriguez et al., 2011), (e) basing interpretations of the data collected on the meanings particular communities assign to them (Denzin et al., 2008), and (f) using the evaluation process and findings to contribute to the communities' social justice and empowerment goals.
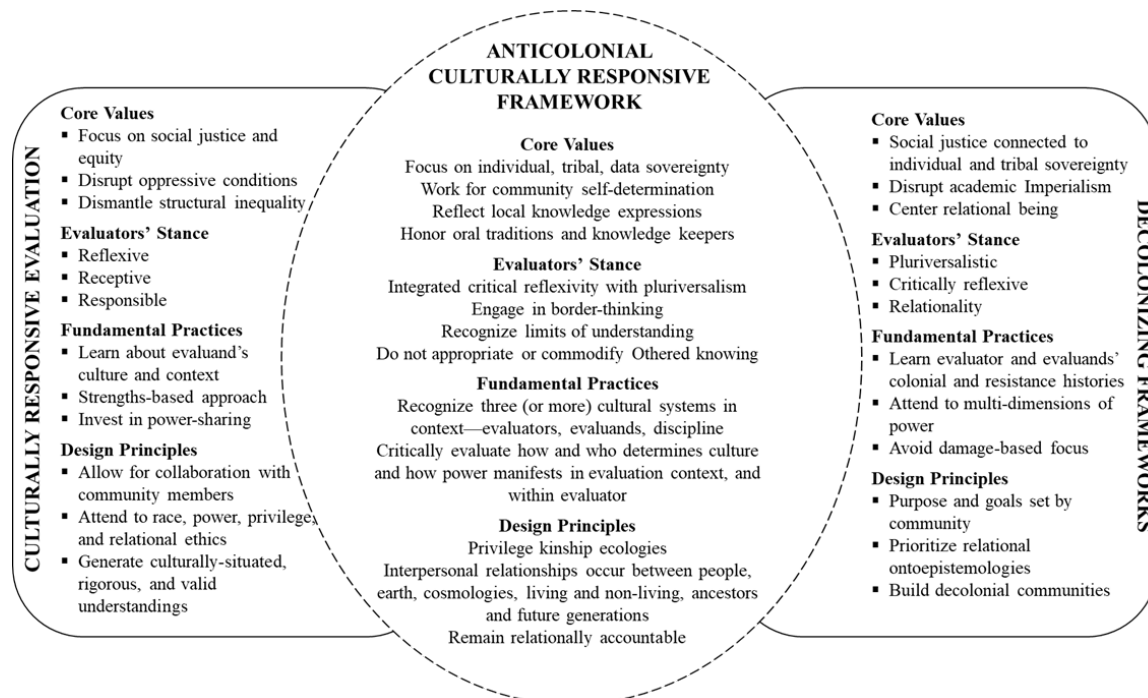
An Anticolonial Culturally Responsive Framework

The anticolonial culturally responsive framework offers a lens through which to focus on cultural responsivity to foreground critical-decolonizing deconstructions of Western-determined "culture" as an artifact of colonization. We approach this framework to decenter Westernized paradigms, recognizing that Western evaluators can never fully divest colonial leanings (Kovach, 2021) and to catalyze the change that occurs when we "challenge Eurocentric culture as the tacit norm everyone references and on which so many of us cast our gaze" (Dei, 2006, p. 4). As an intentionally political, resistance-based stance, we prioritize issues of justice and culture, recognizing that colonialism continues to be foundational to manifestations of violence, injustice, and erasure (Jordan, 2022a). To hold an anticolonial perspective requires that we become aware of how colonial processes create "intersections of class, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, racial, linguistic, and religion-based oppressions" to maintain some positions of power over others (Kempf, 2009, p. 14). ACRF recognizes that culture exists within and between the evaluand and evaluator and the discipline itself. Relationality is also a vital aspect of the ARCF, functioning as a tool of resistance for the oppressed and accountability for the oppressor. The role of the Westernized evaluator in the ACRF is to commit to actions that subvert ongoing colonial domination (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013).

Rather than providing a list of evaluation activities and methods, we focus on the overarching methodological commitments within the ACRF (illustrated in Figure 1), recognizing that specific practices will morph through differing geopolitical contexts. We do this work acknowledging that we do not have the power to "give voice," nor do we have the right to "be allies" without invitation. Instead, we work in solidarity to eradicate colonization's power over all of us.

Figure 1. The Anticolonial Culturally Responsive Framework

Note. This figure demonstrates the anticolonial culturally responsive framework in the borders between principles of culturally responsive evaluation and decolonizing frameworks. The figure and discussion in this article are meant not to represent all aspects of the frameworks presented but to illustrate core aspects of anticolonial evaluation.

Core Values: Linking Social Justice to Sovereignty and Self-Determination

CRE centers on evaluation as a tool to redress societal ills, particularly for minoritized cultural groups. CRE posits that cultural responsivity is intrinsic to social justice (Bledsoe & Donaldson, 2015). Social justice concerns the equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities to ensure that all groups have access to the same privileges, rights, and resources (Thomas & Campbell, 2021). Pursuing equity, then, involves disrupting oppressive conditions and dismantling structural inequalities.

While CRE highlights social justice as a goal, DF prioritizes sovereignty to hold authority over self, collective, culture, and knowledge (Cavino, 2013; Chilisa, 2020; Tuck & McKenzie, 2014). Decolonizing scholars discuss the connection between personal and tribal sovereignty as central to social justice because there can be no justice without self-determination (Cavino, 2013). However, Indigenous self-determination is perpetually infringed on by coloniality, which

attempts to squeeze Indigenous people into tightly circumscribed identities grounded in Western white European ideological frameworks.

In the ACRF, sovereignty foregrounds concerns of social justice when Westernized evaluators work alongside Indigenous and other minoritized communities. Framing self-determination as a core value means evaluators are aware that injustice is culturally bound and that ideas of justice are onto-epistemologically driven. Therefore, to work with a sovereign determining evaluand means the evaluand holds the right for self-determination and to define and negotiate their concerns, goals, and responses for justice through their political, cultural, kinship, and social selves (Cavino, 2013).

In practice, this means that evaluators include tribal governments in reviewing and approving all evaluation protocols (Clarke et al., 2021). The protocols should reflect how local knowledge is expressed, including understanding Indigenous language, idioms, and metaphors; honoring storytelling and other oral traditions; and seeking ancestral and elder knowledge (see MacLeod, 2021, for an APA guide to citing Indigenous knowledge keepers). Sovereignty also includes an intentional

focus on data ownership and dissemination. As Clarke et al. (2021) wrote, data sovereignty is "the right of Indigenous communities to govern the collection, ownership, and use of their data" (p. 4) to honor tribal sovereignty and self-determination.

Evaluators' Stance: Pluriversalitic Reflexivity

CRE prioritizes a stance of cultural relativism, which includes receptivity to other cultures and the willingness to consider, embrace, and advance Othered ways of knowing (Chouinard & Cram, 2020). Frequently, a culturally relativist stance posits that cultures' social and ethical standards reflect their specific contexts (Rachels, 2011). Cultural relativism counters universalism, the idea that there can be one moral, societal, and cultural code fitting all people, places, and phenomena. Therefore, enacting a culturally responsive stance necessitates being reflexive about one's own cultural biases while being receptive to the cultural perspectives of others without judgment on the right or wrongness of these differences (Rachels, 2011). However, just because self-evaluation and openness to other cultures are necessary conditions of cultural responsivity, they do not guarantee its accomplishment (Chouinard & Cram, 2020). First, an inherent risk of CRE is believing that we are competent in our own *and* another culture without reflecting on the appropriateness of being in context or the applicability of the evaluation model (Chouinard & Cram, 2020). Second, positioning culture as an individual and static entity can create conditions that allow evaluators not to feel accountable to other cultures.

Rather than relativism, some decolonizing frameworks (specifically, decolonialism) encourage pluriversality (Bhattacharya, 2021; Reiter, 2018). Pluriversalism counters cultural relativism and the idea that the world is culturally independent. Instead, pluriversalistic cultures consist of entangled cosmologies in the colonial power matrix (Mignolo, 2007; 2011; Reiter, 2008). Pluriversalism is core to a de/colonial perspective which does not seek to nullify or cross knowing's borders but instead to "dwell in the borders" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 165).

The ACRF integrates culturally responsive reflexivity with de/colonial pluriversalism to hold an agentic and deliberative stance, recognizing the intimacy shared between colonial and Indigenous cosmologies (Smith, 2018). Western epistemologies have drawn the boundaries of what is accepted as science and knowledge, positioning knowledge outside privileged discourse as folklore (Keating & Anzaldúa, 2015). These boundaries create borders between Westernized and Indigenous science, and it is within these borders that the ACRF operates. Collaborating within the borders means that the evaluator and evaluand do not entirely forgo their cultural assumptions but commit to shared dialogic engagement (Smith, 2018). A pluriversalistic perspective does not demand Indigenous assimilation through "border crossings," but instead values the onto-epistemology indigenous to the context. At the same time, Westernized evaluators recognize the limits of their borders by not attempting to cross into and claim other expertise as their own (Kovach, 2021). Instead, Westernized evaluators attempt to see themselves through the eyes of the Other, much as the Other has had to learn to see themselves through colonial eyes (Smith, 2018). Ultimately, this border work requires committed pluriversal reflexivity to question (1) one's role and right to work in a community, (2) one's limitations in understanding, (3) how one becomes accountable to other cultures, and (4) the inextricable link between cultures. We work together within the borders of these negotiated spaces to develop robustly informed and committed evaluations (Reiter, 2018).

In Practice: The Fundamental Intersection Between Culture and Power

The fundamental practices within DF include learning the colonial history of the evaluand and evaluator, attending to power, avoiding deficit thinking, and vitalizing Indigenous knowledge (Smith, 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2014). CRE emphasizes that the evaluator learns the evaluand's culture and context, shares power with the community, and utilizes a strengths-based and collaborative approach in producing community-oriented evaluations (Chouinard & Cram, 2020). In evaluation, we see these practices as intricately entwined and foundationally rooted in the overlapping axiological, ontological, ecological, methodological, epistemological, personal, political, institutional, and relational dimensions of culture (Chouinard & Cram, 2020).

CRE suggests that a cultural lens is essential because, like all professional practices, evaluation is historically situated and embedded in a cultural network that includes the evolving actions and interactions that shape evaluation practice (Hall, 2020b). CRE contends that culture, primarily in the form of Eurocentric perspectives, influences the evaluation discipline, advancing a particular view on the role of evaluation, the nature of knowledge, and the primacy of objectivity and value-neutrality

(Chilisa, 2020). These perspectives position the evaluator as a professional expert, leaving little room for community involvement. As a result, community members' cultures, voices, and issues are stifled or ignored. CRE scholars understand that evaluation has a history and is bound to broader cultural contexts (Hall, 2020b). CRE demands that evaluators examine the cultural legacy of evaluation, interrogating taken-for-granted assumptions. A key mechanism to do so is centering the culture of communities in the evaluation and acknowledging them as experts in their culture and experiences. Cultural attunement is essential to avoid oppressive evaluation practices, biased findings, and misguided social justice efforts.

In Indigenous and minoritized contexts culture is complicated, as a core sustainer of colonial rule is extinguishing non-colonial cultures (de Sousa Santos, 2015). Through forced assimilation, criminalization, and decimation, Indigenous culture is threatened by the loss of land, ancestral cosmologies, language, spirituality, knowledge, and food systems (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014) through the imposition of colonizers' worldviews. The revitalization of Indigenous culture is connected to identity and well-being (Durie, 1998). However, when evaluators only focus on Indigenous culture as something that occurred before colonization, they freeze and essentialize those cultures (Carlson, 2017). Culture, within a DF, must balance revitalizing traditional culture while respecting that Indigenous culture is fluid and innovative. Culture is bound by and transcendent of colonial culture (Smith, 2018).

The ACRF requires that evaluators "attend substantively and politically to issues of culture and race in evaluation practice" (Hood, 2001, p. 32) to move beyond simplistic or essentialist concepts of culture. Traditionally, the oppressor demarcates cultural boundaries to create distance between the privileged and the subjugated (Fine, 1994). These boundaries determine who is *civil* versus *savage*, *first world* versus *third world*, *developed* and *developing*, suggesting who belongs within a society, and, in evaluation, who is the helper and the helped (de Sousa Santos, 2007). Therefore, the view of culture from ACRF perspective bridges DF and CRE perspectives by foregrounding the evaluation of who has power within three interwoven systems: Indigenous, evaluator, and evaluation discipline. Engaging in evaluation as a culture means disrupting its academically vaunted position as a value-free, objective science. Instead, it recognizes that evaluation's knowledge, meanings, and priorities stem from the Westernized world. As evaluator–evaluand cultural

lenses come into focus, the evaluator is prompted to eschew previous deficit orientations and embrace a strengths-based and resource-based approach that enriches local knowledge and practices.

Design Principles: Relational Accountability

Evaluation design principles encompass multiple dimensions of the evaluation blueprint to ensure outcomes devised are grounded in a rigorous and valid strategy. Across CRE and DF, there are many components to consider; however, we suggest relationship building to be the most crucial in anticolonial evaluation. CRE designs are relational to ensure that evaluations are collaborative and participatory, fully inclusive of community members to support and guide the evaluation (Chouinard & Cram, 2020). Entering communities respectfully to build relationships of trust requires attending to issues of power and diversity and learning which relationships are discouraged and supported (Hood et al., 2015). Culturally responsive evaluators are attentive to how they may be community insiders and outsiders and work with community members to build trust and understanding across membership levels (Chouinard & Cram, 2020). Evaluation practices attend to race, power, privilege, and relational ethics to generate culturally situated, rigorous, and valid understandings.

Like CRE, a DF stance on relational ethics ensures that evaluators work with a community, utilizing participatory methods to develop transparent and locally meaningful evaluations. A decolonizing approach prioritizes relational onto-epistemologies to value a reality known through the interdependence of people with the cosmos, each other, the living and non-living, the land, and past and future ancestors to understand that all knowledge is built through these relationships (Chilisa, 2020; Wilson, 2008). Smith (2021) described that to decolonize, evaluators must focus on intentionally building decolonial communities wherein the evaluand has the power to define themselves, the problematic situation, the process of conducting the evaluation, the meaning of success, and the process of sharing outcomes. This community "honors indigenous knowledge and values and enables them to recover, to flourish, and to assert an authority of self-determination" (Smith, 2018, p. 53).

While Indigenous knowing is predicated on the "spiritual kinship we have with one another, with the environment, and with the cosmos" (Chouinard & Cram, 2020, p. 51), Westernized knowing is almost entirely void of relationality. Therefore, the

ACRF prioritizes relationality broadly and relational accountability (Wilson, 2008) specifically. Relational accountability is the privileging of kincentric ecologies, which recognize people's interdependence and relationship to everything and every person around them (Salmón, 2000). Evaluators entering a community become part of the community's ecology, and each person and thing within the context is now in a relationship with the evaluator. Therefore, the evaluator is responsible for nurturing these relationships, which extend long after the evaluation closes. Forging these relationships is not easy, linear, or quick. It requires spending time in the community, learning from the community, and participating fully in relationship processes that may seem inconsequential to the evaluation. Relational accountability also requires evaluators to recognize that their intentions are insufficient to guarantee a successful evaluation. To be relational means that evaluators seek out the entire story of the evaluand, not just "damage-centered" data (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 231). Similarly, the evaluator keeps the question of their right to be in the community at the forefront in order to be mindful that being invited into these relationships makes evaluators ethically accountable to evaluands. Evaluators' goals take a back seat to those driven by the community (see Reo, 2019 for further discussion on the process and practice of relational accountability). At the same time, Westernized researchers recognize and support the right of communities to refuse participation implicitly and explicitly and the evaluators' responsibility to refuse appropriating and commodifying knowledge (Tuck & Tang, 2014).

Discussion

We began this article acknowledging that we grapple with how or if we and other Western-oriented evaluators can decolonize evaluation practice. Our experiences as evaluators, concerns about intersecting oppressive structures, and cultural backgrounds led us to the ACRF. This stance recognizes the shared goals of DE and CRE, but also draws attention to the distinct aims of self-determination, the sovereignty of Indigeneity, and social, relational, and ecological justice (Salmón, 2000). Our stance emphasizes that decolonization is context-dependent and shifts in meaning and scope based on colonial-specific issues, geographies, and peoples. Our stance also underscores the ongoing legacy of colonization, most notably the violent consequences of academic imperialism. We consider our stance an ethical

imperative with major implications for evaluation practice.

First, the ACRF recognizes the dynamic nature of culture with futures yet unknown and understands that evaluation practice does not neatly occur in one culture but rather already always functions where cultural borders overlap—in the "in-between." The implication here is that a different type of researcher reflexivity is required—pluriversal reflexivity, a variety of reflexive practices that demands not only continuous questioning of one's cultural responsiveness to the evaluand but also critical interrogation of one's intentions for decolonizing work and the right to work with the Other.

Second, an ACRF stance acknowledges that power manifests through at least three cultural systems: that of the profession, the evaluator, and the evaluand. These three cultures simultaneously reinforce traditional Westernized-Eurocentric evaluation processes and create new possibilities for how evaluation can be done. A major implication here is the need for evaluators to navigate the unavoidable political aspects that occur due to these systems being in constant interaction. From an ACRF perspective, we consider the politics of the larger cultural system in two fundamental ways. First, ACRF recognizes that the politics associated with the commissioning and governance of the evaluation influences the evaluation, including but not limited to the decisions about what questions get asked, when, by whom, and of whom. Therefore, in order for ACRF to be actualized, the commissioning and governance of the evaluation must align—to the extent possible—with anticolonial goals. Second, ACRF acknowledges the evaluator cannot rely solely on evaluation expertise. Rather, she must relinquish some of her power and seek community members' input on navigating the political aspects of evaluation practice.

Third, whereas traditional evaluation practice centers on the evaluator, ACRF centers on cross-cultural relationships established through the conduct of the evaluation. Here, relationships include not only the evaluator's relationship with Indigenous community members but also the relationship one has with oneself, others, and place; "place" here referring to the interconnectedness of humans with the earth, sky, flora, and fauna, the physical and metaphysical (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014), in kincentric ecology (Salmón, 2000). This orientation implies that being in a relationship is itself a call to action. Being in relation means that the evaluator is held accountable to practices that safeguard the self-determination of communities, including (but not limited to) the processes that

support control over the data and the application of the evaluation results.

We conclude by noting that we think the ACRF can lead to more critical, ethical, and relational evaluation practices by producing more sensitivity to and responsibility for Others. However, we admit that our thinking is still evolving. We view our stance as an invitation to Westernized scholars, particularly for more dialogue, clarification, and critique of the cultural implications of decolonizing evaluation.

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