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INTRODUCTION

“As long as we conceptualize the issues of knowledge processes in terms of information transfer without giving sufficient attention to the creation and transformation of meaning at the point of intersection between different actors’ life-worlds, and without analyzing the social interactions involved, we shall have missed the significance of knowledge itself” (Long, 1992, p. 274).

OVERALL BACKGROUND TO BOOK

Program evaluation is a systematic process of data collection and analysis designed to address issues of program improvement, measure program effectiveness and the attainment of outcomes, and serve decision-making and accountability purposes. Many of the programs we evaluate are designed to address multifaceted and often intractable sociopolitical and economic issues, referred to by many as “wicked problems” or even “super-wicked problems.” Our news is dominated by such problems. Every day, we hear stories of racial inequities, perilous migrations, indigenous land protests, health and natural disasters, and ongoing religious strife. These problems are located close to home as well as further abroad and impact children, families, and communities. It is against this sociopolitical backdrop that the discussion of culturally responsive evaluation practice begins.

One of the key assumptions behind culturally responsive evaluation practice is the idea that culture is an integral part of the context of evaluation, not only in terms of the program and community context but also in terms of the methodologies and methods evaluators use in their work (SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004). As Hopson (2003) points out, it is important to recognize that “cultural differences are not merely surface variations in style, preference and behaviour, but fundamental differences in how people experience social life, evaluate information, decide what is true, attribute causes to social phenomena and understand their place in the world” (p. 2). The fundamental point is that contextual factors and cultural considerations include not only demographic descriptions of communities and programs but, more importantly, diversity in values and the less vocalized issues of power, racism, class, and gender that continue to shape our societies (Senese, 2005; SenGupta et al., 2004).

Although evaluators have been working in diverse communities for over 50 years, evaluations that explicitly endeavor to be more responsive to culture and cultural context are a more recent phenomenon. While we have opted to use the moniker of “culturally responsive” practice, responses to culture have also been referred to as culturally competent, culturally consistent, culturally sensitive, tribally driven, transformative, culturally anchored, indigenous, values based, multicultural or cross-cultural—to list just a few of the descriptors used. Each of these approaches has a distinct history and its own political roots, ideological rationales, and geographic foci (Hood, Hopson, & Kirkhart, 2015). The important connector between them is the recognition of, and the commitment to, evaluation that responds to people’s cultural context. The field of evaluation has also grown to include a vast and diverse collection of theoretical and practical approaches designed to address the increasing complexities and challenges of program and community contexts. These approaches are grounded in philosophical and social justice commitments to equity, democracy, and—for indigenous peoples and their supporters—decolonization. They privilege the inclusion and engagement of the program community, and position culture and cultural context as key variables in the process of evaluation.

The most recent shift in terminology has been from *cultural competence* to *culturally responsive evaluation* (CRE), from a focus on the cultural *competency* of evaluators (SenGupta et al., 2004) to culturally responsive *practice*, denoting practical strategies and frameworks for evaluation (e.g., Frierson, Hood, & Hughes, 2002; Hood et al., 2015; Hopson, 2009). Culturally responsive approaches are most often rooted in a political concern for personal empowerment and societal transformation to enhance social inclusion, with attention given to the specific needs and cultural dimensions of a program’s participants and their wider community (Frierson et al., 2002). As Hopson (2009) explains, “CRE is a theoretical, conceptual, and inherently political position that includes the centrality and attunedness to culture in the theory and practice of evaluation” (p. 431). Culture is therefore central to the assessment of a program’s value, worth and merit (Askew, Beverly, & Jay, 2012). Along with this is the explicit recognition that culture is a methodologically and epistemologically relevant and vibrant construct that requires specific and focused attention within evaluation design, process, and implementation (Chouinard & Hopson, 2016). As Hood et al., (2015) state, culturally responsive approaches unequivocally recognize that “culturally defined values and beliefs lie at the heart of any evaluative effort” (p. 284).

In this book, we adopt the term *culturally responsive approaches* as it captures the intent of strategies and frameworks to ensure the centrality and inclusion of culture in evaluation theory and practice. Our research *on* culturally responsive approaches to evaluation, as well as our work as practitioners working in diverse communities with and among, and most importantly *for*, culturally and historically marginalized populations, provides the motivation to explore the myriad ways in which culture informs and influences the evaluation context, both at home and across the globe. Whether the focus is on an after-school program with local teens in Chicago, a smoking cessation

program in a remote First Nations community in Canada, a health initiative in Appalachia, or a needs assessment involving Cambodian women in Southeast Asia, culture is central. We argue that every evaluation context is a cultural context; there is no place where evaluation is culture-free, although there are places where culture goes unnamed (see below, Philosophical Legacy and Roots). While the spotlight on cultural responsiveness has revealed gaps in evaluation practice for poor, minority, and marginalized peoples, we need to consider how cultural responsiveness can be explicitly recognized so that everyone's worldview is treated as a product of their cultural embeddedness. As we cannot explore every cultural context, our goal in this book is to critically explore culturally responsive approaches to evaluation across three culturally distinct program contexts (indigenous, Western, and international development), with a specific focus on areas of commonality, difference, and "dynamic dissonance."

The purpose of this first chapter is to introduce culturally responsive responses to evaluation. We then turn to describe its historical background. Following this, we delve into social inquiry as a social and cultural product, including a description of the philosophical roots of culturally responsive approaches to evaluation. While historical and philosophical backgrounds intersect in intricate and evolving ways, for simplicity and clarity, we discuss them separately. We then examine how critical geography can inform and enrich our understanding of culturally responsive approaches to evaluation. The third and final section presents our fivefold purpose for writing this book, followed by an overview of the remaining chapters contained within this volume.

History of Culturally Responsive Evaluation¹

We can trace the beginning of cultural responsiveness to a small group of African American researchers and evaluators who, from the 1930s to the 1950s, adopted evaluation methods and approaches that were responsive and sensitive to African American experiences during racial segregation (Hood, 2009; Hood & Hopson, 2008). The "Nobody Knows My Name" Project, spearheaded by Stafford Hood and Rodney Hopson, honors the legacy of these African American contributors to culturally and socially responsive educational research and evaluation. These courageous pioneers, working during the pre-*Brown* era, were motivated by an unflinching belief in democracy, equity, equality, and justice and argued for the need to expand evaluative thinking beyond simple technical considerations. Their work foreshadowed the later work of Robert Stake, Barry MacDonald, Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (Hood & Hopson, 2008).

¹ As a side note, we acknowledge the impossibility of doing justice to all of the many influences in our field and acknowledge that history is narrated from one or another perspective. All historical translation is, at best, partial. While we attempt to convey the breadth of our field, we were not yet born when these issues were being discussed, though we do recognize being present is no guarantee of historical accuracy. Our narration is not an indicator of "the way it was" but an invitation to an ongoing conversation that seeks to build linkages and connections, both with our past and with the many voices and perspectives across the globe.

In the mid-1960s, Robert Stake was signaling the need for education evaluators to pay close attention to individual differences among students and background conditions, to search for relationships among variables, and to include perspectives other than their own. In “The Countenance of Education Evaluation,” Stake (1967) writes, “My attempt here is to introduce a conceptualization of evaluation oriented to the complex and dynamic nature of education, one which gives proper attention to the diverse purposes and judgments of the practitioner” (p. 524). As Stake (1975) describes almost a decade later, we need to develop “a reporting procedure for facilitating vicarious experience. We need to portray complexity. We need to convey holistic impression, the mood, even the mystery of the experience” (p. 23). Out of this early work came an emphasis on what Stake came to refer to as “responsive evaluation,” which Hood (1998) identified as one of the few approaches where cultural diversity was considered central to the evaluation. In Stake’s (2004) own words,

Being responsive means orienting to the experience of personally being there, feeling the activity, the tension, knowing the people and their values. It relies heavily on personal interpretation. It gets acquainted with the concerns of stakeholders by giving extra attention to program action, to program uniqueness, and to the cultural plurality of the people. Its design usually develops slowly, with continuing adaptation of evaluation purpose and data gathering in pace with the evaluators’ becoming well acquainted with the program and its contexts. (p. 86)

Within education evaluation, they also pay tribute to the work undertaken by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) on culturally relevant pedagogy. She has challenged the reliance of the educational system on so-called “culturally neutral,” generic pedagogical models that actively fail African American students, arguing instead for a pedagogy responsive to the unique experiences of these students. In doing so, she challenges racist assumptions of African American inferiority. Her advocacy for antiracist teacher education also has significance for evaluators entering a culturally diverse and at times complex context (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

Stake’s earlier reflections on responsiveness, which emphasized a constructivist perspective, building relationships with communities, and understanding the program and community context and cultural context, along with Ladson-Billings’ work on culturally relevant pedagogy, were taken up by a group of primarily African American evaluators (see Frierson et al., 2002; Hood, 1998; Hopson, 2003) (see more below).

On the other side of the Atlantic, a group of educational evaluators, led by Barry MacDonald out of the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE), University of East Anglia, began exploring alternative approaches to evaluation outside of the 1970s mainstream paradigm of outcomes and standards-based practices. Throughout the ‘70s and ‘80s, this group of evaluators held invited seminars at Cambridge University, where they explored “non-traditional modes of evaluation,” (MacDonald & Parlett, 1973, p. 74). These modes were anthropological, naturalistic, contextualized, inclusive

of a diverse range of perspectives, focused on qualitative methods, and they offered a flexible, *responsive* approach to evaluation. For MacDonald (1976) and his group, evaluation was considered a public good that should be taken out of the hands of policy makers and shared with the broader public, thus guaranteeing their “right to know” while ensuring a more democratized citizenry. As MacDonald (1976) states,

In a society such as ours, educational power and accountability are widely dispersed, and situational diversity is a significant factor in educational action. It is also quite clear that our society contains groups and individuals who entertain different, even conflicting, notions of what constitutes educational excellence. The evaluator therefore has many audiences who will bring a variety of perspectives, concerns and values to bear upon his presentations. (p. 39)

This democratic, values-based vision of evaluation led MacDonald and colleagues (see Kushner, 2000; Simons, 2012) to explore the use of case studies as a practical means of apprehending, through observation, listening, and questioning, the project experience of participants across different institutional settings.

In 1985, Michael Quinn Patton edited a volume of *New Directions for Program Evaluation*, in which he explored the cultural dimensions of evaluation practice, as he felt that evaluators often remained unaware of the influences of culture on their practice. Patton was particularly concerned with the influence of evaluation at the global level. For Patton (1982, 1985), effective evaluation practice requires a genuine sensitivity and openness to cultural and contextual complexities to ensure what he refers to as “situational responsiveness.” According to Patton (1985), “evaluators find that the anthropological concept of culture ceases to be a theoretical construct and becomes a matter of practical, first-hand experience” (p. 1). Like Stake and MacDonald before him, Patton encouraged evaluators to gain a genuine understanding of the cultural context in which they were working.

A few years later, Anne Marie Madison edited a volume of *New Directions for Program Evaluation* (1992a) titled “Minority Issues in Evaluation.” She defined this as “a new direction in program evaluation in that it links methodological, moral, and ethical evaluation issues to the minorities who have the highest stake in the attainment of social policy and program goals” (p. 1). For Madison, evaluators have an ethical obligation to examine the approaches and techniques they adopt for use in racial and ethnic minority and poor communities. In other words, evaluators should seek alternative approaches better suited to the inclusion of minority populations, and they should ensure their approaches are commensurate with the principles of social justice. In her own article in that volume, Madison (1992b) identifies the need for evaluation to focus on cultural context, culturally congruent methods, the active inclusion of community members, the perspective of the evaluator, shared construction, cultural bias and the responsibility of evaluators. Madison also identifies Stake’s responsive evaluation model as a culturally appropriate approach for use in minority populations.

Karen Kirkhart's presidential address at the 1994 American Evaluation Association (AEA) conference challenged attendees to explore the multicultural influences on their work as evaluators, highlighting the dynamic nature of culture and the implications of intersectionality (e.g., in terms of race, gender, class, ethnicity). In her address, Kirkhart used the concept of multicultural validity to frame and help make sense of the convergence of culture, theory, method, and practice. As Kirkhart (1995) states, "While we acknowledge the impossibility of getting outside our cultural contexts we have not come to grips with the full implications of that fact for evaluation theory, method and practice" (p. 8).

Donna Mertens used her 1998 AEA presidential address to speak about the role of evaluation in transforming society, and her time as president to lead national and international diversity initiatives. Her focus on societal transformation rather than individual empowerment has been central to her transformative paradigm for research and evaluation (e.g., Mertens, 2009, 2014). Her commitment to this paradigm arose largely out her querying of social justice and human rights when she was growing up and her subsequent culturally responsive evaluation practice with those marginalized by poverty, gender and/or disability, particularly those in the deaf community. Although now retired from Gallaudet University, Mertens continues to be in demand around the world to teach and practice transformative evaluation.

In 1998, Stafford Hood presented a paper at the Robert Stake Retirement Symposium weaving the story of the *Amistad* slave ship revolt, including the slaves' imprisonment upon landing in New York and subsequent exoneration, as a way to portray the key dimensions of responsive evaluation. His talk focused on Robert Stake's responsive evaluation and underscored the importance of "understanding," the interpretation of which is strongly influenced by the culture of stakeholders, a critical point for Hood in the evaluation of programs in culturally diverse community contexts. He also discussed the need for interviewing and observation to achieve understanding from multiple perspectives and subject positions, as well as the need to achieve cultural familiarity and knowledge of the community and of its language.

The 1990s also saw moves by indigenous peoples to mark out a territory for themselves within the field of evaluation. At the far end of the Pacific, there was sea-change in Aotearoa New Zealand. The 1989 Public Sector Finance Act introduced *outputs* and *outcomes* into bureaucratic language, while the governmental purchaser-provider split in the early 1990s opened opportunities for Māori (indigenous) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver services and programs within communities. Linda and Graham Smith were also socializing Kaupapa Māori (by Māori, for Māori) theory and practice within the academy at this time, so a move to develop Kaupapa Māori evaluation enabled Māori NGOs to meet funder accountability requirements from within their cultural context (Cram, 2005). The culmination of the 1990s was Linda Smith's (1999, 2012) foundational book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, in which she presented the potential of research to be culturally responsive and a tool for decolonization.

In the United States, the work of Joan LaFrance and Richard Nichols helped reframe evaluation as a culturally responsive tool for indigenous peoples. They have documented the efforts of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium

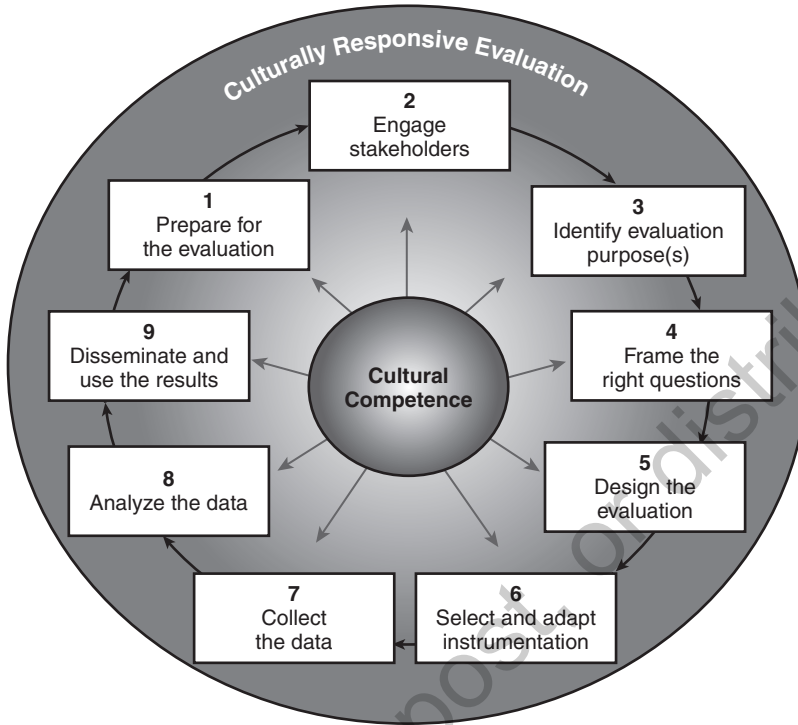
(AIHEC)—a consortium of 34 American Indian colleges and universities—to consult, research and then develop an “Indigenous Evaluation Framework” (LaFrance & Nichols, 2009). The purpose of this work is to support indigenous student achievement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Community and tribal sovereignty are core principles in this framework, touching on indigenous knowledge creation, the importance of place, the centrality of community and family, personal sovereignty, and tribal sovereignty. Their work also documented the researchers and writers who preceded them into Indian Country, and whose work informed the development of the framework (LaFrance, 2004; LaFrance & Nichols, 2010).

Much like the work of Hood and Hopson, LaFrance and Nichols’ work has been pivotal to ensuring that the work of their evaluation elders is not forgotten. The early 2000s also saw *hui* (gatherings) between Māori and Hawaiian evaluators to talk story and build both capacity and courage (Kawakami, Aton, Cram, Lai, & Porima, 2007). Māori evaluators also answered the call to share their skills with Native Alaskans, as indigenous evaluators engaged in what Chino and DeBruyn (2006) in public health have called capacity building of “Indigenous models for Indigenous communities.”

In the early 2000s, the AEA formed a taskforce to review the *Program Evaluation Standards* (of the Joint Committee) from a culturally competent standpoint. After significant input, recommendations were approved for future revisions to the *Program Evaluation Standards* (American Evaluation Association, Diversity Committee, 2004). In 2011, the final draft of the *Statement on Cultural Competency* (AEA, 2011) was approved by the AEA membership, culminating work that had been initiated in 1999 by the American Evaluation Association and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The *Statement* is comprehensive in its treatment of culture and the need for cultural competence in evaluation, referring to it as an “ethical imperative” tied to the validity of our work and findings, and acknowledging the dynamics of power, the complexity of cultural identity, the need for self-knowledge and understanding, and the biases inherent in language. As the *Statement* reads, “Cultural competence in evaluation theory and practice is critical for the profession and for the greater good of society.”

Recent work on culturally responsive evaluation has focused on translating the theoretical principles of cultural responsiveness to practice (see Frierson et al., 2002; Frierson, Hood, Hughes, & Thomas, 2010; Hood et al., 2015), with additional online sources and in-person workshops offering guidance to help evaluators navigate the challenges of addressing culture and cultural context in their evaluation practice (see Appendices). The focus on practice locates cultural responsiveness at nine identified phases of an evaluation, from initial preparation and engagement of stakeholders all the way through to disseminating and using the results (see Figure 1.1 below).

Consideration is given to ensuring that the composition of the evaluation team is representative of the community, that team members have self-awareness and a deep understanding of the program’s context and the cultural context of the community, that there is an acknowledgment of differences in power and status and a stress on collaborative approach to evaluation, and that evaluation instruments are culturally appropriate.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Culturally Responsive Evaluation Framework

Source: Frierson et al. (2002), Hood et al. (2015).

The practice of culturally responsive indigenous evaluation (CRIE) has emerged to align itself with culturally responsive evaluation. The practice components of CRE (Figure 1.1 above) have been aligned with the Mohican/Lunappe medicine wheel, and the practices interrogated for their cultural responsiveness in Indian Country and other indigenous evaluation contexts. This process was informed by other indigenous theories, including Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005; Writer, 2008), Decolonization Theory (Smith, 2012), and Kaupapa Māori Theory (Cram, Kennedy, Paipa, Pipi, & Wehipeihana, 2016). The Eastern Door, where evaluators enter a community, is where trust relationships are built. Evaluators must follow cultural protocols for first encounters and seek to codesign the evaluation from the start. Tribal sovereignty must be recognized and the needs, priorities, and aspirations of local people explored. The Southern Door is where theories of change are built and responsive methods selected to investigate these changes. The Western Door is about potential and perseverance, and is where evaluators gather and analyse credible evidence with a strength-based lens to understand success and the structural barriers to it. The Northern Door is about

understanding lessons and seeking new beginnings. Here evaluators involve the community in reflection, reporting, and dissemination, as well as in strengthening community capacity for advocacy (also see Bowman, 2018; Bowman & Dodge-Francis, 2018). It is important to note that while the transformative goal of indigenous evaluation, namely decolonization, is often aligned with social justice and equity, it can also be in sharp relief as agendas collide (see Cram & Mertens, 2016).

Prior research (e.g., Chouinard & Cousins, 2007, 2009) has also identified central themes that capture strategies, consequences, and organizing conditions and influences across culturally responsive evaluation contexts: the use of collaborative approaches, the development of culturally specific measures to ensure validity of instrumentation, the emergent conceptualizations of culture from emic definitions to broader considerations, the focus on evaluator and stakeholder relationships, consideration given to the evaluator perspective and role, the identification of a “cultural translator” to help facilitate cultural understanding, and the challenges adapting methods and instruments to the cultural context. Overarching these themes and the practices they encompass are the lesson from those African American evaluators in the first half of the 20th century, namely, the necessity of building authentic relationships to gain insight into the lives and cultural contexts of those with whom we are undertaking an evaluation. Frierson, Hood, and Hughes (2010) go a step further to argue that someone on an evaluation team should have a “shared lived experience with the stakeholders” (p. 84), an essential step for those collecting and analyzing evaluative data.

These themes together capture the dynamic range and multifarious manifestations of culture in culturally responsive evaluation practice as featured in these earlier studies. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 together expand our understanding of this earlier work, helping broaden our knowledge of what it means to conduct culturally responsive approaches across three distinct cultural contexts (indigenous, Western, and international development).

SOCIAL INQUIRY AS A CULTURAL PRODUCT

Philosophical Legacy and Roots

Despite the fact that evaluators have been working in culturally diverse communities for many years, the recognition that social inquiry is a historically, culturally, economically, and politically mediated construction is more recent. Taking up Ladson-Billings’ (2000) invitation to acknowledge the epistemological ground upon which we stand and to interrogate the “truths” our epistemology illuminates and the “truths” it occludes, we turn to an exploration of the myriad intersections between culture and applied research in the social sciences.

C. Wright Mills (1959) talks about the “sociological imagination” as a reminder that biography, history, and society are intertwined; not only are our personal biographies and stories shaped by broader historical and cultural forces, but, more importantly,

so too are the social sciences a product of human cultural history. The imagination required is a critical understanding that methodological practices are historical and cultural artifacts. The West's storehouse of organized, classified, and arranged knowledge (Smith, 1999, 2012) is what Foucault (1972) has referred to as a "cultural archive." This cultural archive reflects the recognized and acknowledged past, histories, and biographies and reflects the stories, accepted translations of the past, and normalized "rules of" (Foucault, 1972), and as such, it often remains unexamined, and taken for granted; we use it to reflect and look at ourselves. The philosopher Roland Barthes coined the term *ex-nomination* to refer to the anonymity of economic (and other) determinants of a society. Through ex-nomination, dominant groups remain invisible and benefit undisturbed from the unequal distribution of goods (e.g., wealth) and services (e.g., education) in our societies. To put this more bluntly, "whiteness is constructed as natural, innocent and omnipresent" (Spencer, 2006, p. 16), while other groups fall short by comparison as they are nonnatural, noninnocent and are subsequently forced to the margins of society. To disrupt this traditional understanding, and thereby the status quo, we need to be as W. E. B. Du Bois (1920) when he wrote about the souls of White Folk: "Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them" (p. 184).

Otherwise, the universality of research concepts and methodologies, and the thinking emerging from those in privileged cultural positions will remain unchallenged and unnamed. Lifting this "invisible veil" (Katz, as cited in Sue & Sue, 1999), will shine a light on social science methodologies and processes as socially constructed and, in fact, highly contestable and contested. We need to fine-tune our "sociological imagination," that is, our awareness of how our personal experiences connect and relate to the society we live in and to the stories we create (Mills, 1959). We will then be able to think beyond our personal and cultural history and, in the words of Maxine Greene (1994), to "become awake to the process of our own sense making" (p. 440).

The social sciences, long-considered neutral, objective, and unbiased, are born out of a racialized history that underrepresents, misrepresents, distorts, and ignores the diversity of cultural perspectives, geographies and histories of so many of the world's non-white and non-male gendered population. According to Smith (1999), Westernized research methods "are underpinned by a cultural system of classification and representation, by views about human nature, human morality and virtue, by conceptions of space and time, by conceptions about gender and race" (Smith, 1999, p. 44), all of which serves to potentially misrepresent (and underrepresent) the very communities that we seek to understand and work with. Scheurich and Young (1997) refer to this as "civilizational racism," a level of racism that contains our deepest and most profound assumptions about the nature of the world, about reality, and about what counts as valid knowledge. This form of racism is unconscious and perceived as normative or natural, resulting in the erroneous belief that our more dominant paradigms are somehow outside of history and, therefore, not socially constructed. This form of racism is reflected in the history of the social sciences and in the privileged and dominant

paradigms that continue to dominate our field. Linda Smith (1999) writes about the impact of this on Indigenous peoples:

The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity . . . It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with us. (p. 1)

Culturally responsive approaches to evaluation bring “culture” back into our sociological and methodological theories and practice, back into our constructions of knowledge (epistemologies), our perspectives about reality (ontologies), and our considerations of ethics and values (axiologies). This is the language of paradigms that Mertens (e.g., 2009) has found so useful to describe her transformative research and evaluation inquiry and that has been taken up by indigenous researchers and others to promote discussion and debate (Meyer, 2001; Wilson, 2008). As Patton (2015) explains, a paradigm represents a worldview and a way of thinking about the world, and is therefore “deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners . . . [it] tell[s] us what is important, legitimate, and reasonable . . . [it] is also normative, telling the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological consideration” (p. 89). Scheurich and Young (1997) point out that these assumptions we hold about the world are shaped by Euro-American modernist notions that are themselves based on principles of White racial supremacy. These “racially biased ways of knowing” (Scheurich & Young, 1997, p. 4), what Gordon, Miller, and Rollock (1990) refer to as “communicentric bias” (p. 15) are thus interwoven into the fabric of our social and cultural histories. As Banks (1993) explains,

Although many complex factors influence the knowledge that is created by an individual or group, including the actuality of what occurred, the knowledge that people create is heavily influenced by their interpretations of their experiences and their positions within particular social, economic, and political systems and structures of a society. (p. 6)

The positions, perspectives and worldviews of the many peoples whose cultural and ethnic histories remain outside of the dominant Euro-Western White, male view (what we have come to know as the Western canon) have simply been ignored, distorted, or demeaned. As Stanfield (1999) has concluded, “The social sciences and evaluation research are products of an American society with deeply racialized roots” (p. 420). This has been reinforced by a generalized forgetfulness about the evaluation work of peoples of color, including those African American scholars described above who Hopson and Hood have had to almost exhume to bring their expertise back into our field.

Foucault's (1972, 1980) notion of discourse may help elucidate and extend our discussion of what he terms *legitimized knowledge* (e.g., dominant, globalizing, and privileged) and *subjugated knowledge* (e.g., naïve, regional, and located lower on the hierarchy). For Foucault, discourses can help us make sense of the social world, in terms of how we produce knowledge, how we represent others (and ourselves), and how discourses can influence and inform our practice and our inscriptions of meaning, of what we consider dominant and more subjugated perspectives and voices. As Montgomery (2005) points out, discourses “enable and delimit fields of knowledge and consequently govern not only the truth about a field, but also what can be said, thought, and done within any field” (p. 29). As such, discourses do far more than simply structure “reality” and what is considered valid knowledge, as they actually legitimate and create it (Foucault, 1972). One of the dangers of discourse is that what is circulated as “truth” is a mere representation (Said, 1978), often reflecting the interests of dominant groups in our society.

Foucault (1980) uses the concept of genealogy to describe how dominant discourses structure reality, shape and normalize personal identities, and regulate society. As Best and Kellner (1987) point out, Foucault uses genealogy to “liberate suppressed voices and struggles in history from the dominant narratives that reduce them to silence” (p. 273). By returning more traditionally subjugated knowledge into his concept of genealogy, Foucault means to disturb and disrupt the more accepted and dominant forms of knowledge. As Foucault (1980) clarifies, “There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (p. 27). Foucault's concept of genealogy thus enables a better understanding of how power and knowledge function within discourses to create unequal systems of dominance and subservience. Knowledge and knowledge construction (what we might refer to as history making) thus become, in Lather's (1991) words, “inherently culture-bound and perspectival” (p. 2), making it imperative that evaluators move beyond a mere awareness of plurality to a more enhanced understanding of the historical and systemic processes in our social histories that have brought us to this point. Culture, within this broader understanding, thus becomes thought of less as a local manifestation and more as a concept within a larger system of domination (Hall, 1996a, Hall 1996b).

Evaluation is never a neutral activity, as it is underpinned by basic assumptions about the world, about knowledge and its social construction, and includes fundamental questions about privilege, inclusion, and meaning. While we can recognize the more overt forms of racism, prejudice, and bias in our society, it is much more challenging for us to recognize implicit and covert forms of bias that underlie the theoretical and epistemological foundations of our approaches to social inquiry, what Scheurich and Young (1997) refer to as “epistemological racism.” This type of racism is unconscious and perceived as normative or natural, rather than as a “historically evolved social construction” (Scheurich & Young, 2002, p. 58), resulting in the mistaken belief that our more dominant paradigms are somehow outside of history and, therefore, not socially constructed. As Stanfield (1999) reminds us, “Logics of

inquiry are cultural and political constructs” (p. 33), the exploration of which requires enhanced understanding of what it means to conduct culturally responsive evaluation in diverse cultural settings.

Cultural responsiveness is an interdisciplinary approach to evaluation informed and influenced by multiple critical discourses and liberatory philosophies, defined by a *bricolage* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) of emergent critical representations and constructions played out within dynamic, shifting, and evolving contexts of practice. Grounded in an epistemology of complexity (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005), culturally responsive practice sits at the intersection of critical discourses that challenge the dynamics of class, race, gender, sexuality, and issues of inequity, poverty, and diversity that define our society. Typologies have positioned culturally responsive practice as an ideologically and democratically oriented approach to evaluation (Greene, 2005), aligned with social justice (and transformative) approaches (Mertens & Wilson, 2012) and at the intersection of indigenous, critical theories and epistemologies of race, and social justice and advocacy models (Hopson, 2009). In common across all typologies is an explicitly ideological and political stance; a focus on power, privilege, democracy, and social transformation; and a belief that no knowledge (and its construction) is ever disinterested.

Our understanding of culturally responsive theory and practice is informed by indigenous epistemologies, critical theoretical approaches (e.g., postmodernism, critical geography, critical ethnography, critical race theories), postcolonialism, participatory research, feminist studies, qualitative approaches, cultural sociology, cultural studies, and anthropology, all of which provide a critical orienting lens to better situate our evaluation practice in the cultural context of the program community.

Extensions Into Geographic and Cultural Contexts

The underlying ethos, or spirit, of our work as evaluators, teachers, and researchers is a belief in, and a positioning of, culturally responsive social inquiry as a practice profoundly embedded in relationships and context. This is not news for indigenous peoples, whose world is relationships (Wilson, 2008). This includes kinship relationships with people, as well as relationships with the natural environment and the cosmos (Cram et al., 2015). Cajete (2000) writes, “People understood that all entities in nature—plants, animals, stones, trees, mountains, rivers, lakes, and a host of other living entities—embodied relationships that must be honored” (p. 86). When indigenous peoples meet, they engage in “rituals of encounter” that clear a spiritual or metaphorical space for their gathering (e.g., see Salmond, 1975). These rituals honor history, people, place, and the purpose of the gathering. In this section, we explore a similar concept of relational and contextual space.

Our focus on culture, and on issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality, is informed by a critical research tradition, where the emphasis shifts to a pluralistic and relational conception of knowledge construction, and the privileging of a multiplicity of

voices and perspectives to make visible the social, cultural, and political dynamics of place, space, and history. This critical stance emphasizes the interplay and connection between relationships and context, which we conceive of as dynamically bound by “space,” a concept we borrow from critical geography, as it reimagines and reanimates context in compelling and culturally dynamic ways. From this perspective, there is an almost performative quality to space (Dilley, 2002), as it is depicted as a social process (Harvey, 1973; Massey, 2005)—a “co-production” (Lefebvre, 1991; Thrift, 2003)—very much shaped by the interactions among people and by the historical process of continual construction amidst the shift and flow of meaning (Gregory, 2009). De Certeau (1984) defines space as a “practiced place” constructed by the operations that produce, orient, situate, and temporize it.

We borrow the metaphor of space (or the spatial) from critical geography as it integrates geography and sociology (Harvey, 1973), highlighting relationships between program contexts and people and communities, and helps to capture the relational and potentially “transformational dynamic” (Soja, as cited in Blake, 2002) of the evaluation process. The spatial metaphor constructively and creatively reframes our thinking about the dynamic connection between the relational and contextual, between the material and the social, in spaces and places where we create meaning in relationship with one another. Spaces are not considered neutral, unstructured places, but as sites saturated with multiple, often competing and often contested cultural, political, historical, and social narratives. As Cornwall (2004) states, spaces are “infused with existing relations of power [where] interactions within them may come to produce rather than challenge hierarchies and inequalities” (p. 82). It is precisely the connection between power, knowledge, and geography that ultimately transforms how human geography has conceptualized the idea of space (Gregory, 2009). Space is thus not defined as a static, homogenous, or empty place, but as a socially constructed process that also foregrounds space as a historical process of continual construction, a flow and a performance. As Foucault (1986) describes,

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (p. 23)

In their re-animation of space, critical geographers have opened up our “geographical imagination[s]” (Harvey, 1973, p. 14), shifting our perception of space and place in our own stories and biographies, helping us reimagine our relations to others and to the spaces that surround us, helping us recognize both the transformative and everyday potential and meaning of space as a practiced, historicized place. Critical geographers

have thus moved from asking “what is space?” to “how is it that human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?” (Harvey, 1973).

In culturally responsive practice in evaluation, the concept of space enables a reframing of context as a more expansive, dynamic, political, interconnected, spiritual, fluid, emergent, ethical, and performative place, a “produced” place (Lefebvre, 1991), always in the process of becoming (Crang & Thrift, 2000), of the “near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed” (Foucault, 1986). Within this shifting space, relations are understood as “embedded practices” (Massey, 2005, p. 10), a place where the local and global are “mutually constituted” (p. 184) and etched with traces of production and its “generative past” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 110). As Massey (2005) asks, “Where would you draw the line around the lived reality of your daily life?” (p. 184). Space thus takes on an ontological dimension, as it situates us within a fluid landscape within which we come to understand the shifting spaces that define our lives, or as Massey (2005) might say, our “stories-so-far” (p. 9). The concept of space (or the spatial) thus provides a theoretical framing in which to position our understanding of the relational, ecological, and cultural dimensions of evaluation practice across Western, indigenous, and international geographic and social locations.

THIS BOOK

Purpose of This Book

Our purpose in writing this book is fivefold.

First, we live in a dynamic cultural and political period, as the social, economic, and political effects of neoliberal policies and globalization, ethnic and religious conflict, and environmental devastation continue to mount. Our epoch can be defined by a transmigration of people and ideas and a shifting of borders and walls. It is a time in which maps of our cultural, political, and geographic landscape are being redefined on an almost daily basis. As evaluators who work in communities, schools, and organizations across the globe, we cannot avoid the turbulent and unstable realities of this era. Implicit in our work as evaluators are numerous cultural and methodological assumptions concerning the purpose of evaluation, the role of evaluators, the principles of practice, the nature and limitations of the inquiry process, and ongoing disputes regarding evidentiary standards. Our book aspires to explore what it means to design and conduct culturally responsive evaluations within these shifting cultural and political contexts. We also seek to examine the role of evaluation and evaluators within the broader unstable global context.

Second, while there is now significant interest in culturally responsive approaches to evaluation, and the knowledge base is indeed growing, we still have gaps in our knowledge about how to integrate notions of cultural context into our evaluation theory and practice (SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004), not to mention gaps in our knowledge about how to conduct and implement culturally responsive

approaches to evaluation in communities that have traditionally been underserved, underrepresented, colonized, and/or marginalized (Chouinard & Cousins, 2007; Hood et al., 2016). As the requirement for culturally responsive approaches to evaluation continues to grow across all sectors (e.g., social, health, educational, international), so too do the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to shift the concept of cultural responsiveness from theory to meaningful and engaged practice.

Third, our focus in this book is restricted to a systematic review of empirical studies across three program domains (indigenous, Western, and international development), as we agree with others (e.g., Christie, 2003; Cousins, 2004; Henry & Mark 2003; Smith, 1993) that understanding the empirical research is essential in our field, especially as it can shed light on the often elusive relationship between theory and practice. As Lather (2015) has stated, “The best theory comes out of empirical work.”

Fourth, despite similarities, our prior research suggests that culturally responsive approaches to evaluation are expressed and experienced in three distinct ways in international, indigenous, and Western contexts (Hood et al., 2015). Through an analysis of the empirical literature spanning the past 17 years, we critically explore culturally responsive approaches to evaluation across these three specific domains of practice: (1) international development context²; (2) First Nations and Inuit contexts in Canada, American Indian/Native American contexts across the United States, and Māori contexts in New Zealand; and (3) Western contexts, including STEM, Latin American, immigrant, and other minoritized populations.

Fifth, while approaches to evaluation have evolved over the years to include approaches that are more inclusive and responsive to local contexts, methodological questions and debates about method choice continue to dominate the field, remaining one of the most persistent issues in evaluation (Smith, 2008). Despite the rich selection of methodological choices currently available, evaluators nonetheless work in a public climate where the current gold standard of program evaluation is defined as an impartial, objective, and evidence-based methodology (Chouinard, 2013; Greene, 2005). Thus, while there continues to be significant discussion and debate among evaluation scholars and practitioners about evaluation methodology and method use, evaluations that give preference to experimental and quasi-experimental designs and quantitative methods are still considered more credible and valid, and thus more likely to receive federal or international funding (Chouinard, 2016). One of our goals in this book is to highlight the multiple connections between culture and validity (American Evaluation Association, 2011) and between culture and the inferences we make in evaluation and to integrate Kirkhart’s (1995) notion of “multicultural validity” into our analysis of the empirical literature across the three domains of practice. As Nelson-Barber, LaFrance, Trumbull, and Aburto (2005) have explained, “A lack of awareness for cultural differences can result in erroneous assumptions about program implementation and program outcomes. Understanding ‘place’ in the equation is crucial” (p. 75).

²While we recognize evaluation does take place in international settings (e.g., “made in Africa”), our focus in this book is specifically on evaluation in the international development context.

Overview of the Book

Our analysis will be based on a conceptual framework that locates culture in social inquiry along nine dimensions (epistemological, ecological, methodological, political, personal, relational, institutional, ethical, and ontological), which we use as a lens to analyze empirical studies across the three distinct cultural domains mentioned earlier. Chapter 2 provides a description of this conceptual framework, as well as a comprehensive description of culture and its many intersections with other domains of inquiry. Our goal is to provide a thorough understanding of culture to enable an appreciation of its history and use in the social sciences, and its many concomitant interconnections with our methodological practices. Chapter 3 describes our research methodology, selected sample, and approach to data analysis. We also provide a descriptive picture of the empirical studies included for analysis in our book. The main chapters of the book, Chapters 4, 5, and 6, each provide a comprehensive description and thematic analysis of the studies in each of the three identified domains of practice. A discussion follows, as do questions for further discussion. Chapter 7 is summative in design and provides a comparative analysis of culturally responsive approaches across all of the three culturally responsive domains. To enable our analysis, we use the conceptual framework described in Chapter 2 to highlight the lessons drawn from these chapters and to try to push evaluators to extend their current thinking and culturally responsive practice. Chapter 8, our final chapter, revisits some of the key themes from the earlier chapters, with questions raised for practitioners of culturally responsive practice.

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