

ANALYZING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH ON INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES IN  
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES:  
AN ANTI-COLONIAL INQUIRY

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education  
with collaborative program in Comparative, International and Development Education  
University of Toronto

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**Abstract**

This thesis provides an anti-colonial analysis of how Indigenous knowledges have been studied and conceptualized through ethnographic research in the field of development studies. In this analysis I apply meta-ethnography within an anti-colonial discursive framework, a combination that I argue has great potential in the study of power relations in qualitative knowledge production. Firstly, this approach allows me to provide a synthesis of purposively selected ethnographies from the development studies literature; secondly, it requires that I refer to Indigenous scholars' critical writings in the education literature to analyze development studies ethnographers' approaches to Indigenous knowledges. The results of this analysis provide a starting point for questioning epistemological racism and colonial power relations at play in knowledge production on Indigenous knowledges in the field of development studies, with important implications for how we teach, study, and conduct research in development.

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## **I. Introduction and Positionality**

*“It is not just indigenous knowledge that matters, but how that indigenous knowledge is theorized and constructed, and how it is applied.”*

- Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002, p. 403

The epigraph above, drawn from a case study of conflicts between Indigenous knowledge and community development approaches in the Solomons, provides a succinct preface to the questions that I will address in this thesis. The study that provides the basis for the above observation examines the clashes between the “Oka Village Youth Project”, an initiative undertaken by members of a small rural community in the Solomons in the 1990s to keep unemployed youth engaged in the community, and the goals and approaches of the “community development” discourse (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002). As the study describes, while the project was initially based almost exclusively on Indigenous knowledge and epistemology, including the process of creating knowledge in the community, after a number of years the Youth Project faced interventions by a former national government official who retired to the village who insisted on implementing more financially and economically focused initiatives in line with “community development” approaches.

Despite rhetoric that had begun to emphasize “local” and “community” development, and practices that purported to take Indigenous knowledges into consideration, Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo’s study shows that those pushing community and local development approaches—namely the former government official and the Japanese aid officials that he got involved in the project—often neglected to consider Indigenous knowledges in a way that

acknowledged the agency of the community and the importance of the process of producing Indigenous knowledges. This process of producing Indigenous knowledges is inherently linked with the villagers' agency. When the project was rearranged according to the standards of local development initiatives focusing on economic aspects of development, this agency was undermined and the project was stalled in its attempts to keep youth engaged in the community. When local credit unions and financially motivated initiatives were implemented according to advice provided as technical assistance, youth had more reason to leave the village for urban centres.

Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo's case study raises many of the issues I wish to address in the development studies approach to Indigenous knowledges. Clearly, this study indicates a disjuncture in the development discourse between notions of local development and the relevance of Indigenous knowledges to members of the community. As I will demonstrate through my analysis of ethnographies on Indigenous knowledges in development studies, this disconnect is not limited to the particular case in Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo's study, but is prevalent in many cases in the development studies approach to Indigenous knowledges.

In this thesis I present an argument highlighting how approaches to Indigenous knowledges and their relevance in development studies conflicts with ideas of what constitutes Indigenous knowledges according to critical Indigenous scholars writing in the education literature. To refer back to the epigraph above, bringing Indigenous knowledges into development is not a simple task; in such an endeavour the ways in which Indigenous knowledges are theorized have important implications for how we approach the study and practice of development. Thus, I aim to problematize the development studies approach to Indigenous knowledges by applying an anti-colonial lens, referring to the works of critical

Indigenous scholars writing about Indigenous knowledges.

### *Positionality*

To begin, I will explain how I came to this topic, and the implications of my social location as a member of the dominant group—a white woman with a working class family background and an undergraduate degree in International Development and Globalization—in undertaking this research. Over the course of my studies I became increasingly critical of the dominant development discourses and practices; as repeatedly recounted in the realm of international development, the types of development programs being pursued by development agencies, NGOs, and international organizations have largely failed to bring about change in the situations of most of the developing world.

Critical of the impositions of these types of programs, which I explain in further detail in the overview of development practice in the following chapter, I turned to a focus on research with local communities in developing regions. Of course, this had already been taken up within development discourse, especially in the literature on “participatory development” and its attempts to privilege “local” knowledge, as I discuss in the literature review below. However, the gaps around issues of power, knowledge, and discursive authority in this approach became very clear to me in my early participation as a dominant researcher abroad in the developing context of French Polynesia. Following one month of researching education in this context through interviews and direct observation, I wrote up a 20-page report on my “findings” and, as required by our code of ethics, sent a copy of my final report to my interviewee, a Ma’ohi high school Tahitian language teacher.



A single line from my interviewee's response to my report highlights the problematic power relations inherent in this type of development research: "Nous sommes à vous pour d'autres recherches,"<sup>1</sup> he wrote. Within the span of one month, I had somehow come to be perceived as having some authority on this topic, despite the second-hand nature of my information, which was primarily derived from my interviewee's experiences. With only three years of undergraduate university education and a one-month stay in this context, my social background situated me in a position of power and privilege in relation to the collection and representation of this information. Although this example is anecdotal, my experience with this early project demonstrates how I came to question the power relations inherent in development research concerning Indigenous knowledges.

Recently, a number of scholars have called attention to the need for those involved in development to question their complicity in perpetuating colonial relations, asking us to account for the privilege associated with being in positions of power in relation to the subjects of development research (Dei, 2008; Heron, 2007; Moffatt, 2006). As Dei (2008, p. 144), writes, "the dynamics of social difference (race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality) significantly implicate how development experts and practitioners come to produce, validate, and use knowledge about marginalized communities." Having completed a degree in development studies and reflected on my experience of that process, these are questions that were rarely acknowledged or addressed by myself or by my colleagues. Therefore, I hope that through a combination of referring to the work of critical Indigenous scholars and reflecting critically on how knowledge has typically been produced in the discipline I have been trained in, I will be able to problematize conventional practices and consider how the

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<sup>1</sup> Author's translation: "We look to you for further research."

study of development might be approached differently. Such an analysis will hopefully point towards more inclusive, multi-centric ways of producing knowledge, and help to address my own complicity in perpetuating these discourses as a subject studying and working in development.

As is evident in the literature on “participatory development” and its attempts to privilege “local” knowledge through research (discussed in further detail below), this approach has not seemed to rupture the dominant development discourse. Since coming to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE) and studying the works of critical Indigenous scholars on Indigenous knowledges, I have become interested in examining why these critical approaches have not been acknowledged or embraced in development scholarship or practice. The following examination questions dominant practices of academic knowledge production in development and explores my complicity as a participant in the study and practice of development, in hopes of addressing aforementioned power relations.

### *Objectives*

In light of the failure of development academics and policymakers to adequately account for the work of critical Indigenous scholars, and in line with the goals of the anti-colonial discursive framework explained below, I undertake the analysis in this thesis with inherently political objectives. By drawing on the writings of critical Indigenous scholars on Indigenous knowledges, I aim to destabilize dominant approaches to Indigenous knowledges in academic knowledge production in development studies.

Given my position as a non-Indigenous researcher and my training in Eurocentric approaches to development studies, it is important to recognize that I must attempt to avoid appropriating the voices of Indigenous and anti-colonial scholars. As Castellano (2000, p. 23) has argued, however, the role of non-Indigenous persons in the struggle to centre Indigenous knowledges should be to create a space for this marginalized knowledge within a variety of institutions, including the academy. By engaging with and acknowledging the works of anti-colonial and Indigenous scholars in this analysis, I hope to contribute to the opening up of a space for Indigenous knowledges to challenge dominant Eurocentric development discourse by questioning the power relations that have allowed dominant scholars and institutions to define and interpret Indigenous knowledges. This analysis will have implications for the practice of international development as well as for the theoretical field of development studies.

As a final caveat, I wish to be clear from the outset that the goal of this research is not to undermine the credibility of initiatives seeking a development process informed by Indigenous knowledges. As I describe in further detail in the literature review that follows, I fully agree with the critical Indigenous scholars who view the centering of Indigenous knowledges in the pursuit of development as crucial. This analysis focuses on problems with Eurocentric development research and practice, rather than on the goal of bringing Indigenous knowledges into development itself.

### *Research Questions*

In this thesis I will employ an anti-colonial discursive framework and theories of Indigenous knowledges put forward by critical Indigenous scholars to analyze and discuss

the implications of how the notion of Indigenous knowledges has been taken up in academic development research and knowledge production. More specifically, this examination will focus on how Indigenous knowledges have been brought into development scholarship through qualitative applied anthropological research, and subsequently into the programs and practices of dominant development agencies.

As described in further detail below, literature on Indigenous knowledges by anti-colonial and Indigenous scholars, particularly within the field of education, has yet to be considered in conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledge in mainstream development discourse. In light of the principles of anti-colonial thought and the omissions in the existing literature on Indigenous knowledges in Eurocentric scholarship in development, this thesis will offer a response to the following main research question: How have Indigenous knowledges been researched and conceptualized through qualitative academic research in development studies, and how does this compare with conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges in scholarship by critical Indigenous scholars in education? In order to answer this complex question I will focus on the following sub-questions:

- a) How have Indigenous knowledges been studied and conceptualized through ethnographic research in selected development studies ethnographies?
- b) How does work by critical Indigenous scholars on Indigenous knowledges challenge the practices and conceptualizations revealed in the previous question?
- c) What are the potential implications of this analysis for studying, researching, and teaching development in ways that will contribute towards centering Indigenous knowledges in development and disrupting the dominance of Eurocentric approaches to development?

In order to respond to the first two sub-questions, I will conduct a meta-ethnography of selected qualitative case studies on Indigenous knowledges in development. I will then analyse the results of this meta-ethnography through an anti-colonial lens by referring to scholarship by critical Indigenous scholars on Indigenous knowledges. This two-phase approach will be aimed at exploring: the power relations inherent in development scholarship; the problems that arise through these inequalities; and potential opportunities to resist and change these practices.

#### *A Note on Language Used in This Text*

Throughout my text I purposely refer to Indigenous knowledges in the plural form; I do so in order to avoid reinforcing dichotomies between “science” and Indigenous knowledges, a problem which Agrawal (1995) cautions against. By referring to Indigenous knowledges in the plural, I aim to acknowledge the multiplicity of Indigenous knowledge systems that exist in various contexts. However, as I address throughout this thesis and especially when outlining the anti-colonial discursive framework and critical Indigenous scholarship, I argue that the experiences of colonialism and marginalization make writing about Indigenous knowledges together a valid exercise.

This clarification of language in relation to Indigenous populations mirrors my references to “Eurocentric knowledge,” “Eurocentric science,” and “Eurocentric disciplines” throughout the text. Again, I wish to avoid constructing a binary between Indigenous knowledges and Eurocentric “scientific” knowledge. Indeed, scholars such as Semali & Kincheloe (1999), Shapin (1996), and Thésée (2006) have shown that Eurocentric scientific knowledge is itself a form of local knowledge, born out of a particular social and historical

context. As Crossman and Devisch (2002, p.112) write, “The local/global, indigenous/universal polarity is symptomatic of geopolitical strategies in which particular knowledge systems and cultures are so powerful or globally pervasive that they no longer recognise their status as local(isable) knowledge.” As I demonstrate in my discussion in the next chapter of colonialism and its inherent links with research and knowledge production, it is the ways in which Eurocentric knowledge claims to be universally valid that makes studying it in relation to the multiplicity of Indigenous knowledges relevant and pressing.

### *Outlining the Organization of the Thesis*

In the following chapter I provide a literature review to situate my analysis. The literature review begins with an explanation of the anti-colonial discursive framework, followed by an overview of literature by critical Indigenous scholars on Indigenous knowledges, highlighting the issues this literature addresses and the conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges that it puts forward. I move on to situate the origins of development scholars’ interest in Indigenous knowledges—with its roots in participatory approaches to development—and then trace the scholarship on Indigenous knowledges in development studies over the years. Finally, I review critiques of existing approaches to Indigenous knowledges in development, and highlight what an anti-colonial analysis can add to the discussion.

Chapter three outlines the methodology I employed in conducting this analysis in order to answer the research questions stated above. I explain my combination of the anti-colonial discursive framework with the use of the meta-ethnographic methodology, presenting an argument for the use of meta-ethnography as a tool for analyzing the practices

of knowledge production in development scholarship, and how development scholars have interpreted their research to conceptualize Indigenous knowledges. I go on to explain the procedure for conducting the meta-ethnography, and describe how I refer back to the scholarship of critical and Indigenous scholars in order to analyze the results of the meta-ethnography from an anti-colonial standpoint. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the research methodology that I have employed in my study.

In the fourth chapter I present the findings of my meta-ethnography, beginning with a brief overview of the studies I selected for inclusion. I then address the results of the meta-ethnography by organizing my findings into four broad categories of metaphors commonly used by ethnographers: metaphors pertaining to the context in which Indigenous knowledges are situated, metaphors that describe how the ethnographers define and conceptualize Indigenous knowledges, metaphors articulating the ethnographers' views of the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and Eurocentric scientific knowledge, and finally metaphors addressing the purpose of research on Indigenous knowledges in development. I conclude this chapter by providing a summary of the line of argument concerning Indigenous knowledges in development that can be inferred from the synthesis derived through the meta-ethnographic analysis.

Chapter five refers back to the writings of critical Indigenous scholars on Indigenous knowledges to present an analysis of the results of the meta-ethnography. I address each of the categories of metaphors revealed by the meta-ethnography in turn before investigating topics in the critical Indigenous literature that are conspicuously absent from development studies approaches to Indigenous knowledges—namely, consideration of Indigenous languages and spirituality.

Finally, in the last chapter I address my third research sub-question by discussing the implications of the results of this analysis for those of us studying, teaching, and researching Indigenous knowledges in development. I address articulations of alternative approaches to development based on critical Indigenous scholarship, and how such approaches might contribute to the goal of centering Indigenous knowledges in development studies. In doing so, I also discuss obstacles to these alternative approaches inherent in the global university system, and again draw on critical Indigenous scholarship to highlight opportunities for overcoming such obstacles.



## **II. Literature Review**

The notion of Indigenous knowledges has gradually been taken up in development studies and development institutions over the past three decades. More recently, however, Paul Sillitoe—one of the scholars that originally championed the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges into development studies and development practice—has claimed that initiatives focusing on Indigenous knowledges in development have failed to incite the types of positive changes that he and other development scholars had originally anticipated. He refers to the efforts that have taken place to date as a “brief fashionable moment on the back of the participatory movement” (Sillitoe, 2010, p. 12). Meanwhile, critical Indigenous scholars (examples include Dei, 2000, 2008; Dei, Hall & Rosenberg 2008; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Smith, 1999) writing about Indigenous knowledges—mainly within the education literature—continue to emphasize the importance of centering Indigenous knowledges.

There is a clear disjunction between this claim by Sillitoe that initiatives to incorporate Indigenous knowledges into the study and practice of development have failed, and the continuing calls from critical Indigenous scholars writing in the education literature for the centering of Indigenous knowledges. This disjunction provides a starting point for the questions I ask in this thesis. Through my research and analysis I argue that this disjuncture should not be addressed as a question of whether or not links between Indigenous knowledges and development should be made; rather, this disjuncture raises the question of how links between Indigenous knowledges and development have been interpreted, incorporated, and too-often omitted in development research and practice.

In this chapter I first provide an overview of the anti-colonial discursive framework, illustrating how it will be useful in addressing this question. I will follow this discussion of the anti-colonial discursive framework with a review of the literature on Indigenous knowledges from critical Indigenous scholars who are writing mainly in the field of education. I move on to trace the origins and progression of the development studies literature on Indigenous knowledges. Finally, I provide a review of the recent yet scarce literature that offers critical analyses of scholarship and development practices that attempt to centre Indigenous knowledges, highlighting how an anti-colonial analysis of these issues can expand and strengthen these critiques.

*The Anti-Colonial Discursive Framework and the Question of Indigenous Knowledges in Development*

An anti-colonial discursive framework calls for a critique of the ongoing circumstances of colonized peoples and an imagining of what other possibilities exist, rooted in the perspective and understanding of the experience of those who were subordinated through colonization (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Of particular relevance to the topic at hand, anti-colonial theorists argue that all knowledge systems are situated in particular social contexts, and are therefore highly political (Dei, 2006). As all knowledges serve particular interests, the anti-colonial discursive framework aims to disrupt dominant ways of knowing which perpetuate the social, political, and economic inequalities that persist today (Dei, 2006). Therefore, anti-colonialism is a necessary framework for addressing the questions I pose in this thesis around how academic knowledge production approaches and situates Indigenous knowledges in development.

Questioning the power relations inherent in knowledge production and validation within the academy necessarily involves a critical analysis of the research methodologies employed in producing knowledge (Smith, 1999; Hales, 2006). As the anti-colonial discursive framework pertains to research and academic knowledge production, it is important to consider the effects of race and racism as social facts with real effects on how knowledge is produced (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). As Scheurich and Young (1997) point out in the context of educational research, the racial bias prevalent in research methodologies and epistemologies has its roots in the fact that these epistemologies have arisen out of a particular social history; namely, that of the dominant race. Therefore, these research methodologies represent and perpetuate the perspective of the dominant group (Scheurich & Young, 1997). As Dei (2006, p. 11) writes, “Dismantling colonial relations and practices has as much to do with studying whiteness and oppression as the study of marginalized positions of resistance.” The anti-colonial discursive framework thus provides an appropriate basis for an analysis of the Eurocentric theories and research methodologies used to conduct research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies.

While post-colonial theorizing has focused on highlighting problems with essentialism in research and knowledge production (Angod, 2006), the anti-colonial “theory of difference” (Dei, 2008a) allows for difference to be embraced as a source of collective identities and resistance. As Lattas (1993) argues, post-colonial critiques of essentialism in Indigenous politics leave the power with theorists, while labelling the efforts of Indigenous peoples to base their resistance on their collective memories, experiences, identities, and bodies as “bad politics.” Thus, in examining the politics and power relations relating to

Indigenous knowledges in development, it is important to be wary of such critiques of essentialism.

Anti-colonial thought also acknowledges the role of social structures and institutions in perpetuating inequalities, and in doing so rejects the division of colonized peoples' histories into periods such as colonial and post-colonial (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). In this light, examining the power relations inherent in academic knowledge production on Indigenous knowledges in development studies from the anti-colonial perspective appears to be a crucial line of inquiry. The anti-colonial discursive framework is closely tied with critical Indigenous scholarship on Indigenous knowledges, which I will explore in the following section.

### *Critical Indigenous Scholarship on Indigenous Knowledges*

Scholars outside the domain of applied anthropology and development studies have produced a vast body of literature on the characteristics and implications of Indigenous knowledges. Although this literature—which has emerged in the fields of education and Indigenous studies—is not referenced in dominant development discourse on Indigenous knowledges, it addresses crucial issues concerning how Indigeneity and Indigenous knowledges are theorized, and has sought to reveal the power relations inherent in this theorizing.

Dei (2010) makes the case that Indigenous knowledges are crucial to disrupting Eurocentric conceptions and processes of development. However, as I will show in the research presented in the rest of this thesis, dominant approaches to researching Indigenous knowledges in development studies diverge in several important ways from the principles put

forward in critical Indigenous scholarship.

As a starting point for identifying what is meant by “critical Indigenous scholarship” on Indigenous knowledges, Dei (2008a) sets out a number of key points that characterize critical Indigenous scholarship. Critical Indigenous scholarship is inherently anti-colonial, acknowledging the ongoing effects of colonialism and the need for decolonization. This scholarship recognizes land, history, culture and spirituality as crucial bases of knowledge, yet also as sites that are continually shaped by unequal power relations. Critical Indigenous scholarship rejects divisions between the academic and the political; as Dei (2008a, p. 10) writes, “the politics of knowledge production for Indigenous and Aboriginal scholars is to claim our agency through self-actualisation and collective empowerment.”

Critical Indigenous scholarship also highlights the epistemological racism from which dominant knowledge derives its power (Dei, 2008a.). According to Scheurich and Young (1997), epistemological racism is evident in how various epistemologies exist as products of specific social histories and circumstances, yet research methodologies and academic scholarship tend to be based exclusively on the epistemologies of dominant social groups. As Semali and Kincheloe (1999) have demonstrated, the epistemology of Western science is based on notions such as the separation of the knower and the known, the supremacy of reason, the dominance of humans over nature, and the modernist belief in the existence of one rational truth. This relates back to the topic of academic knowledge production on Indigenous knowledges in development, and brings the issue of research methodologies and knowledge production into question.

A number of critical Indigenous scholars have pointed to the discipline of anthropology and ethnographic research methodology as key tools that have been used in the

subjugation of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledges (Smith, 1999; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Trask, 1999). As will be explained in more detail in the following section of this chapter, research on Indigenous knowledges in development also emerged in the applied anthropology literature, and often drew on ethnographic methodologies. This connection to disciplines that have been labelled as problematic by critical Indigenous scholars makes tracing the historical framework of development studies an important point of analysis for the research at hand.

Although Smith (1999) writes broadly about “colonizing disciplines”, suggesting that all academic disciplines stem from epistemological racism rooted in the Enlightenment period, she acknowledges that anthropology and ethnography have been most closely connected with the study and description of the “primitive Other”. Focusing on research on Indigenous knowledges, Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) also point to ethnography as a Eurocentric approach taken by anthropologists to portray Indigenous peoples and knowledges as static and likely to disappear through contact with European influences, while ignoring questions of how colonialism had already affected Indigenous societies and knowledges. Highlighting the politics of interpretation and epistemological racism in ethnography, Trask (1999, p. 126) writes that, “anthropologists and archaeologists say what they really think: *they* are the experts on Native culture; *they* have superior knowledge of it.” As will be discussed further in the section below on existing critiques of approaches to Indigenous knowledges in development, these issues of power relations and epistemological racism in the research process—particularly in the interpretive accounts of qualitative case studies—have yet to be addressed when it comes to research that has been conducted on Indigenous knowledges in development.

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) caution against overarching definitions of Indigenous knowledges, pointing out that the “quest for universal definitions” is in itself a Eurocentric academic practice, and that such definitions can neglect the multiplicity of Indigenous knowledges. Furthermore, to force concepts of Indigenous knowledges into the organizational categories of Eurocentric knowledge is to deny that Indigenous knowledges can provide an alternative and challenge to Eurocentric knowledge (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000). Despite the flexibility and resistance to fixity of Indigenous knowledges, various critical Indigenous scholars make repeated claims for certain commonalities. I will now provide an overview of these characteristics, as it will be important to keep them in mind for understanding the rest of my analysis.

One of the characteristics of Indigenous knowledges repeatedly identified by critical Indigenous scholars is holism (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Castellano, 2008; Dei, 2010; Holmes, 1996). Holism refers to the interconnection of all aspects and sources of Indigenous knowledges, and the totality of all the senses in acquiring Indigenous knowledges. The interconnections and interactions between all aspects of Indigenous knowledges underscore the dynamism of Indigenous knowledges (Dei, 2010). This characteristic also refers to the holistic conceptualization of society in Indigenous knowledge systems, rejecting the divisions between categories and sources of knowledge taken for granted in Eurocentric sciences.

Connected to this notion of holism is the centrality of spirituality in Indigenous knowledges (Dei, 2008a; Castellano, 2008). Writing about Indigenous knowledge systems of First Nations in Canada, Castellano (2008) identifies one of the sources of Aboriginal knowledge as “revealed knowledge,” which she defines as knowledge attained through

spiritual means such as dreams, visions, and intuitions. Shahjahan (2005) describes how although spirituality is systematically marginalized within the academy through processes such as peer review, ethics and funding guidelines, the division of knowledge into disciplines, and academic capitalism, it has the potential to be a transformative force in academic research. Thus, addressing the implications of a spiritual perspective is crucial, especially considering Dei's (2008a) identification of spiritual identity as an entry point for understanding the experiences and knowledges of Indigenous peoples.

Language and orality are also often identified as important aspects of Indigenous knowledges. Writing on the African context, wa Thiong'o (2005) makes the case that Indigenous languages are essential to understanding and expressing the Indigenous experience. Alfred (2009) asserts that Indigenous languages and the concepts they express are crucial sources of knowledge and resistance for the Onkwehonwe peoples. The issue of language is also central to Castellano's (2008) writings on Aboriginal knowledges, in which she makes claims about the importance of oral transmission of Indigenous knowledges. According to Castellano, oral transmission allows the person narrating to ensure that the knowledge he or she is transmitting will be used responsibly for the well being of the community.

Finally, a number of Indigenous scholars stress the importance of connectedness to local ecologies. Dei (2010) writes that in African systems of thought humans are considered a part of the natural world, and that we bear a responsibility to preserve it. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) describe how the generation of Indigenous knowledges over long periods of inhabiting specific geographic locations means that these knowledges are highly localized, thus offering insights into the interrelationships of all parts of nature.



Bearing in mind these above characteristics of Indigenous knowledges, as well as the issues surrounding research and knowledge production on Indigenous knowledges that I have discussed throughout this section, I will now move on to provide an overview of the origins and history of interest in Indigenous knowledges in the development literature. In order to provide context and situate Indigenous knowledges in this literature I will first provide a brief overview of the history of development theory and practice as typically addressed in the field of development studies before situating the focus on Indigenous knowledges within the emergence of the participatory development approach.

### *A Brief History of Development Theory and Practice*

The origins of Eurocentric approaches to development are often located in the post-World War II period, when, despite efforts directed at the political and economic reconstruction of Europe through initiatives such as the Marshall Plan, American President Harry S. Truman set the stage for a new focus on “the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas” with “Point Four” of his 1949 Inaugural Address (Rist, 2009, p. 71). Rist (2009) argues that this “terminological innovation” shifted the “colonizer/colonized” dichotomy towards the narrative of “developed/underdeveloped” countries. As Langdon (2009, p. 52) suggests, this origin story reveals the Eurocentricity of development studies; as he writes, “if development studies is supposed to be southern focused, why is the view point that frames this era embedded in a declaration of a U.S. President and not the opinions, hopes, and dreams of a decolonizing world?”

Power (2002) points out, however, that the premises upon which Eurocentric development is based—such as notions of progress and the application of reason and

empirical knowledge for the advancement of society—have much older roots than the admittedly pivotal moment of Truman’s address; drawing on archives of European knowledge, religions, and mythologies, scholars such as Power (2002) and Hall (2007) present convincing arguments that the idea of the West first emerged in the Enlightenment era.

Nonetheless, the practice of development in the newly labelled “underdeveloped” world, as it is addressed in development studies, began in the 1950s in the context of the perceived success of the Keynesian economic approaches applied in Europe under the Marshall Plan (Leys, 1996). When these same economic approaches were largely unsuccessful in promoting economic growth in the underdeveloped regions of the world, American scholars in sociology and political science proposed modernization theory as a response to this failure. Modernization theory was based on the premise that shifts in local values and social relations towards those embraced in the West were a prerequisite to achieving economic growth. The keys to development in this approach became instilling Western values through education and transferring Western technology to the underdeveloped world (Leys, 1996). In other words, those in the underdeveloped regions were expected to pursue economic growth by abandoning their own values and social practices in order to become more like the West.

Modernization theory also proved unsuccessful in promoting economic development, however, and Latin American scholars soon responded to this with dependency theories. Dependency theorists argued that the dynamics of the global economic system led to unequal exchange between wealthy core countries and periphery countries, locking the developing periphery into a fundamentally unequal economic structure. According to these scholars,

incorporation into this inequitable global economic system resulted in periphery countries becoming and remaining underdeveloped, through the very economic strategies that had been put forward by economic and modernization approaches to development (Conway & Heynen, 2002; Rist, 2009). Thus, the alternative to this process—according to the dependency theorists—was to reject participation in this unequal global economic system and pursue national economic development strategies that would allow them to operate outside of this global system. This line of theorizing nonetheless maintained the notion of development as economic growth and industrialization, with the caveat that so-called developing countries needed to break free of the inherently unequal global economic system in order to achieve these goals. As such, dependency theories maintained the Eurocentric underpinnings of development as economic growth and progress. Furthermore, as Wolf (1982) has demonstrated, such theories focus on the expansion of European capitalist markets without accounting for Indigenous modes of production that were in place prior to colonial contact, effectively denying the economic histories of Indigenous populations and neglecting to consider these histories as potential sources of alternative conceptualizations of development.

Julius Nyerere's (1968) theories and policies relating to development in Tanzania represent a kind of "African socialism" based on Indigenous values and social relations that poses another challenge to mainstream development theories. As Stoger-Eising (2000) points out, however, European influences in Nyerere's theorizing led to its maintenance of a commitment to the notion of development as modernization. His claims that all Africans were "predisposed to a socialist attitude of mind," for example, not only neglected the diversity of experiences on the African continent, but also defined African Indigenous

experiences and ways of being within the Eurocentric framework of socialism (Stoger-Eising, 2000, p. 131). Moreover, his insistence on governing the nation through a one-party state system revealed a commitment to colonial forms of government.

Drastic changes to the global economy in the 1970s and 80s due to great increases in the volume of international trade and the abandonment of the gold standard led to further destabilization of developing economies (Leys, 1996). In this context, many developing countries borrowed extensively abroad, resulting in the accumulation of high levels of debt that led them to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In response to the growing discrepancy of wealth between nations, the World Bank and the IMF imposed Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which were based on a neo-liberal faith in the power of the free market, as opposed to state intervention in the economy. The debt financing policies offered by these global organizations obliged developing countries to adapt free market policies and austerity measures in order to be eligible for aid (Leys, 1996). Again, these conditionalities represent the imposition of a commitment to development as economic growth and as progress towards the economic and social norms of the West, without consideration for the social consequences of these measures. The SAPs were largely unsuccessful economically, failing to stimulate private foreign investment in the developing world and most adversely affected the urban poor when they resulted in sharp price increases and unemployment (Simon, 2002, p. 87). Although the language used to describe such reforms was modified in 1999 with the World Bank's introduction of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, these strategies retained the focus on neo-liberal macroeconomic reform as the primary development strategy.

Critiques of economically-centred development theory and practice have emerged in

response to the failure of these initiatives to bring about real economic growth and positive change for the populations they are supposed to be helping. Concern for the environment in the face of the exploitation of natural resources in the pursuit of economic growth led to the birth of discourses of “sustainable development,” a framework originally conceptualized by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as development practices that respond to the needs of current generations while ensuring that these actions will not impede the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development approaches have largely focused on balancing economic growth with environmental concerns, however, thus evading deeper questions of reconceptualising development in ways that might not consider economic growth as the basis of development.

The failure of the development approaches described here has led to the emergence of more radical critiques of development theory and practice. Participatory development approaches that emerged in the 1970s are a notable example; these ideas challenged the Eurocentrism, positivism, and top-down approaches that had previously characterized development (Mohan, 2002). Scholars articulating participatory development called for grassroots approaches to development that allowed communities to set their own development priorities and for the incorporation of new knowledges into development theory and practice. Nonetheless, as I demonstrate throughout the rest of this thesis, such approaches have still stopped short of challenging the notion of economics as the primary concern for development strategies. In the next section I will focus on how the interest in Indigenous knowledges in development studies emerged within participatory approaches to development; from there I will critically review the analyses of Indigenous knowledges in development studies that have already been undertaken, highlighting what my own anti-

colonial analysis can add.

### *Situating Indigenous Knowledges in Development Discourse*

I will begin this section by clarifying my usage of the term “development discourse.” Escobar (1995) has written about development as a discourse consisting of numerous Eurocentric disciplines of knowledge that operates within a system of power through which this knowledge comes into practice. I will work with this definition of development discourse to focus on how Eurocentric disciplines have approached the question of Indigenous knowledges in development, attending primarily to the discipline of applied anthropology.

The turn to Indigenous knowledges in development was initiated within the discipline of applied anthropology, and the approach took off in the 1980s in tandem with the emergence of participatory development (Sillitoe, 1998). Scholars advocating this turn to participatory approaches to development called for consultation with communities regarding their needs and priorities (Chambers, 1997; Richards, 1985). This shift occurred in response to critiques of modernization development strategies, in favour of fostering a development process that would be more sustainable and culturally appropriate (Purcell, 1998). An important aspect of the participatory approach to development is the initiative to include Indigenous knowledges in the development process (Mohan, 2002). Inspired by Paulo Freire’s (2008) work in critical pedagogy, one of the most notable research methodologies in participatory development approaches is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), which Chambers (1997, p. 103) characterizes as a methodology of “change and reversals – of role, behaviour, relationship and learning” where “outsiders do not dominate.” While this

approach sounds promising for initiatives to bring multiple voices and sources of knowledge into development, an analysis of how this approach was operationalized in many cases shows that this did not occur outside the power relations of Eurocentric research.

Dominant development institutions such as the World Bank began to prioritize strategies of participatory development in the 1990s (Mohan, 2007). Mohan (2007) differentiates, however, between “mainstream participatory development” and approaches to participatory development that legitimately pursue empowerment for the marginalized. He argues that approaches taken by development institutions have merely sought participation as a way of increasing efficiency in the pursuit of the development goals they have set out, as opposed to allowing challenges to dominant discourse through participation. As I will show, when Indigenous knowledges *were* taken up by powerful development agencies, the problems of mainstream participatory development were evident in the approaches taken.

Although anthropologists had already been studying Indigenous knowledge systems for nearly a century, the first collection of studies explicitly studying the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and development emerged in 1980 with an anthology titled *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Development*, edited by D.W. Brokensha, D.M. Warren, and O. Werner. The editors of this anthology do not offer a definition of Indigenous knowledges, opting instead to let understanding of the concept emerge through the case studies. As an example of some of the problems inherent in the conceptualizations offered in the case studies, a text within the anthology conceptualizes “indigenous technical knowledge (ITK)” by contrasting it with “science” (Howes & Chambers, 1980). According to these authors, ITK and science differ on three main criteria: systems of classification, systems of explanation and predication, and speed of accumulation (Howes & Chambers, 1980). These

authors claim that while science and ITK are similar on the first of these criteria, ITK is inferior on the other two criteria. Furthermore, they argue that there is an important role to be played by non-Indigenous researchers from wealthy countries in “studying and recording ITK and making it academically respectable” (Howes & Chambers, 1980, p. 338). In light of the overview of the anti-colonial discursive framework and review of the literature on Indigenous knowledges from critical and Indigenous scholars outlined earlier in this chapter, these conceptualizations are highly problematic.

More recently, anthropologists have explicitly addressed questions of how to conduct research on Indigenous knowledges in development and the role of researchers in this process. Sillitoe (1998) argues that the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in development is a challenge that is best tackled by applied anthropologists. His work focuses on how the discipline could accomplish this in a way that would ensure that Indigenous peoples and their knowledges contribute to development efforts. According to Sillitoe, the main issue that needs to be addressed is how Indigenous knowledges can be communicated to scientists, development planners, and practitioners in ways that these actors will understand. With this approach it appears that Indigenous knowledges are viewed not as a way of *challenging* dominant development practices, but as a way of *incorporating* Indigenous knowledges into current practices.

Purcell (1998), however, offers a slightly more critical approach, although he also claims that applied anthropologists should facilitate the input of Indigenous knowledges into the development process. Acknowledging the unequal power relations between Western, scientific knowledge and Indigenous knowledges, he concedes that research on Indigenous knowledges should be undertaken either by Indigenous persons themselves, or if by non-



Indigenous scholars in close collaboration with Indigenous communities (Purcell, 1998). Based on this acknowledgement, Purcell argues for a more activist agenda for applied anthropology by suggesting that the discipline should support greater autonomy for Indigenous peoples, rather than serve the interests of the dominant group. In conclusion, he argues that “greater autonomy is at its root incompatible with the structure and process of global ‘development’ as we know it” (Purcell, 1998, p. 268). In this light, it is clear that approaches to Indigenous knowledges which do not support autonomy will undermine the potential of Indigenous knowledges to subvert dominant forms of development by incorporating them into imposed courses of action.

Accounts like Purcell’s and Sillitoe’s establish ideals for scholars conducting research on Indigenous knowledges in development, but give little indication as to how research on Indigenous knowledges in development has actually been carried out. As Mohan (2007) has argued, powerful development institutions such as the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) began to mainstream strategies of participatory development in the 1990s; this included adopting programming on Indigenous knowledges in development. In many of the documents produced by these programs various applied anthropologists, including Dennis M. Warren, David Brokensha, and Leendert Jan Slikkerveer (the editors of an anthology entitled *The Cultural Dimension of Development*, 1995), are cited to generate definitions and characterizations of Indigenous knowledges and approaches to development that include these knowledges. Thus, it seems that these scholars have had a considerable influence on how Indigenous knowledges have been approached in the programming and practices of development institutions.

The editors of *The Cultural Dimension of Development* refer back to the 1980

anthology discussed earlier, claiming that the more recent work presents a more comprehensive approach to Indigenous knowledges in development by including scholarship from a wider range of academic disciplines outside applied anthropology, as well as perspectives derived from the literature generated by a variety of development agencies. Nonetheless, as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter, scholars' approaches to addressing Indigenous knowledges in development have already been subjected to academic critiques.

*Existing Critiques of the Incorporation of Indigenous Knowledges Into Development Studies, and What an Anti-Colonial Perspective Can Add*

To date, Briggs and Sharp (2004) are among the few scholars who have critically addressed the way that Indigenous knowledges have been incorporated into dominant development discourse, including the World Bank's Indigenous Knowledge Program. These authors adopted a post-colonial approach to critiquing the limited nature of the way theorists and development institutions have taken up Indigenous knowledges. Their examination is limited, however, by a number of weaknesses in post-colonial theory that have been raised by anti-colonial scholars (Angod, 2006; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001).

In their analysis and in line with post-colonial theorizing, Briggs and Sharp (2004) caution against approaches to Indigenous knowledge in development which rely on what they argue to be the simplicity of group identities, and the dangers of "extreme localism" or "anthropological particularism". Following a characteristic line of post-colonial thought, they argue that the ubiquitous interdependencies that characterize the world today mean that coherent communities simply do not exist, implying that it is impossible to talk about

“insiders” and “outsiders” to Indigenous knowledges (Briggs & Sharp, 2004). As Angod (2006) has pointed out, however, this post-colonial approach to difference, emphasizing multiplicity and heterogeneity, can have the effect of undermining the potential for resistance that can be found in collective identities and experiences. Such a framework fails to recognize the collective historical experience of colonization and its persistence in present-day relations, leaving the power to theorize and define difference with the post-colonial theorists rather than with the colonized. An anti-colonial analysis, on the other hand, calls for an analysis of Indigenous knowledges in development discourse that recognizes the collective experience of colonization and the epistemology of the colonized as a challenge to current power relations in knowledge production prevalent in dominant development discourse.

Agrawal (1995) offers another critique of the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges into development strategies that, while raising valuable points, presents some of the same problems that trouble Briggs and Sharp’s (2004) analysis. He argues that the ways Indigenous knowledges have been incorporated into development research and strategies to date unwittingly reinforce binaries between Indigenous and scientific. He compares this binary to anthropological dichotomies of “traditional” and “modern” found in the works of anthropologists such as Levi-Strauss. In an overview of the history of Indigenous knowledges in the field of development studies, he points out that while modernization theorists saw Indigenous knowledges as incompatible with modernity and therefore an obstacle to development, the scholars aiming to bring Indigenous knowledges into development—whom he refers to as “neo-indigenistas”—unwittingly maintain the same dichotomous thinking in their efforts to valorize Indigenous knowledge.

Agrawal (1995) argues that the strategies utilized by neo-indigenistas fail to address crucial questions regarding the power relations inherent in the definition and incorporation of Indigenous knowledges into prevailing development discourse. Specifically, by endorsing techniques such as the creation of databases and archives for the preservation of Indigenous knowledge, he claims that the neo-indigenistas fail to recognize that these strategies reproduce the power over knowledge held by dominant institutions. He writes: “While *neo-indigenistas* condemn western science for being inaccessible to local peoples, irrelevant to local needs, and non-responsive to local demands, they fail to see that they themselves are consigning indigenous knowledge to the same fate—strangulation by centralized control and management” (Agrawal, 1995, p. 428). Agrawal thus argues that in addressing questions concerning Indigenous knowledges in development it is necessary to recognize both the differences within these problematic overarching categories and the potential connections that can be made between these knowledges.

Nonetheless, Agrawal’s (1995) analysis neglects a number of crucial issues that the application of an anti-colonial discursive framework would bring to the fore. While he raises important points, his focus on “dismantling the divide” between Indigenous and scientific knowledges and recognizing differences among Indigenous knowledges risks maintaining a post-colonial stance on the issue, upholding the flaws raised in the above discussion of Briggs and Sharp’s (2004) analysis. Thus Agrawal’s (1995) approach does not adequately address the potential for Indigenous knowledges to mount an effective challenge to the dominant development discourse through the employment of collective experiences, identities, and associated epistemologies.

Strikingly, while Agrawal critiques the concepts of Indigenous knowledges put

forward by those he labels neo-indigenistas, for the most part referencing the same applied anthropologists informing the World Bank's approach, he does not engage with the conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges contained in the writings of the scholars in the education literature mentioned above. Furthermore, while he does argue that knowledge should be analyzed based on the interests it serves, its purposes, and how it is produced, he does not delve into the crucial issue of power relations in the research methodologies being used to produce knowledge of Indigenous knowledges in development discourse (Smith, 1999; Trask, 1999; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000).

As I have alluded to throughout this section, these weaknesses in the critical analyses of Indigenous knowledges in development offered by Briggs and Sharp (2004) and Agrawal (1995) can best be addressed using an anti-colonial approach. In the next chapter I will explain the methodology that I will employ in order to begin such an anti-colonial analysis, outlining how this can be achieved through a combination of meta-ethnography and an anti-colonial discursive framework.

### **III. Methodology: Using Meta-ethnography in an Anti-Colonial Analysis**

To answer the main research question set out above I will combine an anti-colonial discursive framework with a meta-ethnographic analysis of academic research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies. Meta-ethnography is a research methodology for synthesizing qualitative case studies. Once cases have been selected for inclusion (a process outlined in more detail later in this chapter), the ethnographic texts themselves become the data to be analyzed in the research. Originally, researchers in education conceived of meta-ethnography as a means of presenting understanding across numerous qualitative case studies in a form that would make qualitative research more accessible to policy makers (Noblit & Hare, 1988). As I will argue, however, this methodology has the potential to be used for more critical purposes, revealing practices of knowledge production in ethnographic studies.

In this chapter I make the methodological argument that meta-ethnography is a tool that fits well with the anti-colonial discursive framework, particularly as it relates to the goal of questioning and disrupting dominant ways of knowing and knowledge production. In what follows I provide: a rationale for utilizing the meta-ethnographic method in conducting an anti-colonial analysis, an explanation of the procedure carried out to conduct this research, and an account of the limitations of the methodology.

#### *Employing Meta-Ethnography in an Anti-colonial Analysis: Challenges and Promises*

The use of meta-ethnography, a research methodology which I explain in full detail in the following section, in an anti-colonial analysis may initially seem like a paradoxical choice. Meta-ethnography is a methodology which stems from the Western interpretive

paradigm. Furthermore, its focus on ethnographic interpretation is largely based on the work of Clifford Geertz (1983), a post-colonial scholar in anthropology. Given the tensions in the relationship between post-colonial theorizing and anti-colonial theory that I describe in the previous chapter, this may initially seem problematic. However, by conducting meta-ethnography through an anti-colonial lens I hope to overcome these apparent contradictions, demonstrating how meta-ethnography can be a powerful tool for de-stabilizing dominant ways of knowing, and hopefully contributing to the creation of space for subordinated knowledges in the academy.

Although meta-ethnography was originally conceived as a way of facilitating the synthesis of qualitative studies into a format that would more easily reach and influence policy and policymakers (Noblit and Hare, 1988), contemporary scholars have claimed that meta-ethnographic research can have more political purposes. Doyle (2003, p. 239) argues that meta-ethnography has the potential to democratize the research process by offering “new conceptualizations of how knowledge as power may be transgressed.” In her argument she claims that meta-ethnography empowers research subjects by amplifying their voices (Doyle, 2003).

As I employ meta-ethnographic methodology in conjunction with an anti-colonial discursive framework, my approach differs slightly from that of Doyle (2003). While I agree that meta-ethnography can be a tool for addressing power relations in the research process, I argue that the political potential of meta-ethnography lies in its ability to question how dominant knowledge has been produced through the use of ethnography and qualitative case studies. Foucault’s (1995) analogy of the panopticon is useful here in highlighting how applying an anti-colonial lens in meta-ethnography raises questions about power and

knowledge. Foucault uses the architectural analogy of the panopticon to describe how increased visibility confines populations in ways that allow them to be studied, classified, and thereby disciplined and controlled. In this analogy the population of prisoners are perfectly visible from the vantage point of a tower located at the centre of the panopticon, but are kept from seeing exactly *how* they are being observed by those within the tower. Extending this analogy to Indigenous knowledges in development studies raises the issue of how power in knowledge production is exercised when Western-trained ethnographers enter the communities they research and collect and represent this knowledge back to the development studies community. We might imagine communities and Indigenous knowledges becoming the prisoners in Foucault's analogy, under the unquestioned scrutiny of Eurocentric research methodologies and epistemologies and constrained by the limitations inherent in existing Eurocentric conceptions of development. Meta-ethnography, however, disrupts such a situation by rendering the ethnographic research methodologies and epistemologies of the researchers visible for study and analysis.

In Noblit and Hare's (1988, p. 7) writings about meta-ethnography as the act of synthesizing, they claim, "we give meaning to the set of studies under consideration. We interpret them in a fashion similar to the ethnographer interpreting a culture." In other words, rather than claiming to amplify the voices of the research subjects in the texts analyzed, meta-ethnographers aim to make the researchers themselves the subjects of this analysis, subjecting their approaches and interpretations to a critical analysis in much the same fashion as their research has provided an interpretation of the Indigenous peoples and knowledges they study.



As Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001, p. 301) write, “The anti-colonial stance fosters the idea that intellectuals should be aware of the historical and institutional structures and contexts which sustain intellectualism.” Therefore, in keeping with the anti-colonial discursive framework I conduct this meta-ethnography with a more complex goal than simply providing a synthesis of qualitative studies as a clearer way to inform policy. Rather, I use meta-ethnography with the goal of highlighting and questioning dominant practices of academic knowledge production and validation in ethnographic research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies. In order to accomplish this I extend the meta-ethnography by critiquing the practices and conceptualizations revealed by drawing on the texts of critical Indigenous scholars writing about Indigenous knowledges in the education literature. In the following sections I provide a detailed explanation of the procedure I employed in pursuit of these goals.

### *Conducting the Meta-ethnography*

While Noblit and Hare (1988) set out a series of seven phases through which researchers can conduct meta-ethnographies, Doyle’s (2003) division of the process into three main phases is more concise, and ultimately more productive. While these phases overlap and repeat throughout the research process, they provide a clear framework for understanding the steps that were taken in conducting the current study. The three phases are: case selection, involving the purposive selection of cases to include in the meta-ethnography; analysis, consisting of reading and identifying metaphors in the texts; and synthesis and grounded theorizing, revealing a line of argument based on comparisons of the ethnographies

included in the study. I outline each of the three phases below, as well as offering an explanation of how I undertook each stage of my own research.

### *Case Selection*

In this stage researchers define their initial interest in a topic addressed by qualitative research and, through a close reading of existing ethnographic accounts on this topic, determine what the purpose of the meta-ethnography might be. As outlined earlier in this thesis, my initial interest was in approaches to Indigenous knowledges in development. My readings of ethnographic texts on Indigenous knowledges in development by scholars in applied anthropology and development studies, informed by the writings of critical Indigenous studies in the education literature and knowledge of the anti-colonial discursive framework, led me to my primary research question: How have Indigenous knowledges been researched and conceptualized through qualitative academic knowledge production in development, and how does this compare with conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges and their importance in scholarship by critical Indigenous scholars? From this foundation I began my meta-ethnographic analysis of how qualitative research conducted in development studies defines, interprets, and positions Indigenous knowledges in development.

Following the identification of a topic of interest, researchers proceed to choose which ethnographic accounts will be included in the meta-ethnography. Noblit and Hare (1988) point out that because of the rooting of ethnographic research in particular cases an exhaustive synthesis of ethnographic literature on a topic will produce gross generalizations that are unlikely to be meaningful or appropriate in the analysis of interpretive research. Sampling in meta-ethnographic research is therefore purposive as opposed to exhaustive,

corresponding to the fact that the goal of such research is re-conceptualization rather than predictability (Doyle, 2003).

Meta-ethnographic studies (Doyle, 1998; Doyle, 2003; Noblit & Hare, 1988) tend to include a maximum of four ethnographies in their analysis. Based on my initial survey of the literature on Indigenous knowledges in applied anthropology in phase one, I opted to include three ethnographies in this study. Although I had originally planned to include four studies, one of the studies that I originally identified based on the criteria outlined below turned out to use too many quantitative approaches and analyses, rendering it a less fruitful text in the endeavour to identify metaphors and analyse the ethnographic aspects of the text.

The process of locating and narrowing down relevant studies to include in this analysis began with the identification of ethnographies addressing Indigenous knowledges that are widely cited in development studies literature and policy documents from development institutions. As I discuss in further detail later in this chapter when addressing the limitations of meta-ethnography, due to the limited sample size the results of meta-ethnographic analysis cannot be generalized as applying to all studies on the topic addressed. Thus, in order to carry out a synthesis and analysis that would provide a meaningful beginning in analyzing ethnographic research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies I prioritized studies that have been influential in development theory and policy.

Looking to the sources included in the recent reviews of Indigenous knowledges in development (Briggs & Sharpe, 2004; Agrawal, 1995; Purcell, 1998; Sillitoe, 1998) outlined in the literature review above provided a starting point: all of these reviews refer to an anthology entitled *The Cultural Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, by anthropologists Warren, Slikkerveer, and Brokensha (1995). Two of the editors of this

volume, Brokensha and Warren, also edited an earlier anthology of studies on Indigenous knowledges in 1980 titled *Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Development*, laying the groundwork for studies of Indigenous knowledges in development and pioneering the conceptualization of Indigenous knowledges in development studies literature (Brokensha, Warren & Werner, 1980). *The Cultural Dimension of Development* is edited by prominent scholars working on questions of Indigenous knowledges in development, and provides an example of work that has been highly influential in the field.

The 1995 anthology by Warren, Slikkerveer, and Brokensha is also repeatedly referenced in background documents of development agencies' programs on Indigenous knowledges, including the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), in their definitions of Indigenous knowledges and conceptualizations of the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and development (Emery, 2000; World Bank, 1998). These citations demonstrate that the scholarship in this anthology has had an impact in both the academic and policy spheres of development. In light of the frequent citation of this 47-chapter anthology in academic writing on Indigenous knowledges in development studies as well as in development policy documents, I selected *The Cultural Dimension of Development* as a source for the studies to be included in this meta-ethnography.

Within this anthology I selected three studies to include by identifying chapters that fit the criteria for a meta-ethnography; not all studies included in the anthology are qualitative, therefore they are not all candidates for a meta-ethnography. Ethnography is defined as "field research that emphasizes providing a very detailed description of a different culture from the viewpoint of an insider in the culture to facilitate understanding of it" (Neuman, 2006, p. 381). Although Noblit and Hare (1988, p. 13) write that the meta-

ethnographic methodology is intended to focus on studies that “define themselves” as ethnographic, they agree with Wolcott’s (1980, p. 56) claim that the essence of the ethnographic contribution is “interpretive rather than methodological.” More recently, meta-ethnography has been described as a “synthesis of qualitative case studies” (Doyle, 2003, p. 321). While all include an interpretation, whether implicit or explicit, of what is meant by Indigenous knowledges and how it can be studied and employed in development, not all studies in Warren, Slikkerveer and Brokensha’s anthology can be classified as qualitative studies. As such, this immediately narrowed the inventory of possible case studies for inclusion.

Doyle (2003) has written that an enhancement to the process of case selection in meta-ethnographic research is to establish boundary conditions for cases included in an analysis. For the purposes of my own meta-ethnography, I established the following criteria for case selection (in addition to the requirement of ethnographic methodology):

- Conceptualization within the text of the meaning of Indigenous knowledges, whether implicit or explicit;
- A description of the space/context in which the research took place; and
- An explicit description of the research methods used in the case study, as well as implicit description throughout the case study of the research dynamics.

As I am interested in ethnographic research on Indigenous knowledges in development in general, I did not establish specific criteria for the sub-topics addressed in the case studies, instead including studies on a variety of topics addressed by research on Indigenous knowledges in development. As Crossman and Devisch (2002) have already pointed out, the vast majority of development studies literature on Indigenous knowledges focus on health

and agricultural practices, thus, unsurprisingly, these were the topics addressed by the ethnographies that I selected for inclusion in the meta-ethnography.

Based on these criteria, the following three case studies were selected for this analysis: “*Como Se Cura*: Patterns of medical choice among working class families in the city of Oaxaca, Mexico” (Whiteford, 1995); “Incorporating Farmers’ Knowledge in International Rice Research” (Fujisaka, 1995) and “Using Indigenous knowledge in a subsistence society of Sudan” (Sharland, 1995). I describe each of these studies in further detail in the next chapter when presenting the results of the meta-ethnography.

### *Analysis*

The second phase of conducting a meta-ethnography begins with a close reading of the texts selected for analysis. Through this process the meta-ethnographer begins to extract key metaphors employed by the authors of the case studies in their interpretation of their research. Noblit and Hare (1988, p. 14) define metaphors as “themes, perspectives, organizers, and/or concepts revealed by qualitative studies.” Doyle (2003) points to the importance of locating oneself in the text of a meta-ethnographic analysis as an enhancement to the methodological approach; this imperative fits well with the employment of an anti-colonial discursive framework in my analysis. Although I discussed my own positionality and discursive starting point in this research in the introductory chapter, it is important to acknowledge here that my positionality and choice of an anti-colonial discursive framework had a significant influence on my understanding of the texts, selection of metaphors, and how I address the interpretations offered by the authors of the ethnographic case studies.

Through this reading of the texts, the meta-ethnographer makes an initial judgment of how the case studies are related. Noblit and Hare (1988) articulate three possible types of synthesis in meta-ethnography, depending on the relationship between the case studies. Where the meta-ethnography includes studies that are similar, the researcher may conduct reciprocal translations as synthesis. This means that the researcher iteratively translates the metaphors of each study into the metaphors of the others included in the analysis. In a second type of synthesis, where studies included in a meta-ethnography are related by their opposition to one another, the meta-ethnographer proceeds with an analysis of the refutations between the texts and their metaphors.

For the purposes of my own research, I have employed the third type of synthesis that Noblit and Hare describe, which they refer to as a lines-of-argument synthesis. In a lines-of-argument synthesis the researcher synthesizes the selected case studies with the aim of making inferences about the topic under study. In the case of the meta-ethnography that I conduct here, the use of the lines-of-argument synthesis allows me to identify common characteristics of the ethnographic studies of Indigenous knowledges in development studies, inferring underlying interpretations of Indigenous knowledges by these scholars specifically, and the power dynamics in the research process generally. I then critically examine these underlying interpretations by referring to scholarship by critical scholars of Indigenous knowledges in the education literature.

At the analysis stage of the meta-ethnography I decided that the studies would be most appropriately translated into each other by identifying common metaphors and analogies between the texts. I used the criteria for case selection, outlined in the previous section, as a starting point for the categorization of metaphors contained in the four texts.

This process allowed me to identify the lines-of-argument synthesis as the most appropriate for this study, bringing me to the final phase of the meta-ethnography: synthesis.

### *Synthesis and Grounded Theorizing*

Having opted to conduct a lines-of-argument synthesis, this meta-ethnography includes two levels of synthesis between the studies. In addition to identifying metaphors and analogies in order to translate the studies into one another, this kind of synthesis also involves inferring a line of argument supported by the studies, or in other words, “discover[ing] a ‘whole’ among a set of parts” (Noblit & Hare, 1988, p. 63). To accomplish this, the researcher develops grounded theory based on a repeated comparison of the case studies in the meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The development of grounded theory necessitates its own discussion here, especially given my combination of the meta-ethnographic method with the anti-colonial discursive framework. Glaser and Strauss (1967) initially proposed grounded theorizing as a way of discovering theory in data in a positivistic paradigm; they based the concept around the imagined neutrality of the researcher and the purported absence of the influence of preconceived assumptions. Formulated in this way, grounded theorizing seems to be at odds with the combination of an anti-colonial lens with the meta-ethnographic methodology. However, Charmaz (2005, p.529) offers a re-conceptualization of grounded theory by taking a constructivist approach, claiming, “a grounded theory informed by critical inquiry demands going deeper into the phenomenon itself and its situated location in the world.” In so doing constructivist grounded theory allows for an examination of the social context in which the



data being studied is rooted, and thus allows for an analysis of power relations and equity issues.

Furthermore, Doyle (2003) has argued for the use of this constructivist approach to grounded theory as a means of making meta-ethnography a tool in democratizing research and knowledge production. Thus, I take this new constructivist approach to grounded theory in my own analysis, allowing me to incorporate the anti-colonial discursive framework into a critical analysis of the production of knowledge of Indigenous knowledges in development studies.

The procedure for developing grounded theory beings with the close reading of the texts included in the analysis to identify categories that encompass similar themes and metaphors across the texts. Referring to Glaser and Strauss (1967), Noblit and Hare (1988) write that the theory emerges through the constant comparisons between the texts and these categories until a grounded theory emerges that both “fits and works.” This means that the categories must apply to and derive from the data included, and be relevant to the explanation of the phenomenon under study (Noblit and Hare, 1988). Keeping the anti-colonial discursive framework in mind, it is important to recognize that in identifying categories of comparison I was working from an anti-colonial standpoint. The findings of this meta-ethnographic synthesis are presented in the next chapter, along with a chart displaying representative metaphors revealed by the coding and synthesis process.

### *Analyzing the Synthesis: Bringing in the Voices of Critical and Indigenous Scholars*

As the goal of this thesis is to provide a critical analysis of academic knowledge production on Indigenous knowledges in development through an anti-colonial lens, the final

step in this analysis will be to bring in the voices of critical Indigenous scholars to highlight how this perspective compares and/or contrasts with the synthesis generated through the meta-ethnography. As Said (1993, p. 66) has written in his analysis of how colonized peoples responded to cultural imperialism through the production of a literary culture of resistance, “non-European peoples did not accept with indifference the authority projected over them, or the general silence on which their presence in variously attenuated forms is predicated.” In an anti-colonial discursive framework, while analyzing and deconstructing dominant practices of research and knowledge production is important, this alone does not suffice: the agency of colonized peoples in resisting and writing back must be acknowledged (Smith, 1999).

In the final chapter, I will look to the literature by these critical Indigenous scholars to highlight the perspective that they have taken on each of the categories of metaphors generated in the meta-ethnography, and highlight any conspicuous absences of topics in the meta-ethnography that might be emphasized by critical Indigenous scholars. In doing so I aim to create a dialogue with the synthesis results and highlight the resistance and alternatives to the Eurocentric paradigm that these scholars have offered. As Escobar (1995, p. 216) writes, changing the development discourse will “require moving away from development sciences in particular and a partial, strategic move away from conventional Western modes of knowing in general to make room for other types of knowledge and experience.” This process of referring to critical Indigenous scholarship for alternatives will provide a starting point for questioning processes of knowledge production in development studies, and will point towards the implications of rethinking the study and practice of development by according discursive authority to voices that are currently marginalized.

*Addressing the Limitations of the Research Methodology*

While I have discussed the merits of the use of meta-ethnography in this analysis throughout this chapter—especially as it relates to an anti-colonial analysis of Indigenous knowledges in development studies—there are limitations to the methodology that I must recognize and grapple with before proceeding. At the beginning of this chapter I addressed the apparent conflict inherent in using a research methodology grounded in the Eurocentric interpretive paradigm for an anti-colonial analysis. However, as I argued earlier in this chapter this apparent weakness can be overcome by modifying the methodology in ways that make it conducive to questioning academic and intellectual practices that marginalize Indigenous knowledges in development studies and development practice.

Even with these modifications in place other weaknesses of the meta-ethnographic methodology must be addressed; specifically, the ways in which meta-ethnography limits the number and types of texts that can be included in the analysis. This methodology limits my study to an analysis of qualitative case studies on Indigenous knowledges in development, excluding experimental and quantitative studies that have been conducted. However, as discussed in the previous chapter in the overview of scholarship on critical Indigenous scholarship on Indigenous knowledges, ethnographic research has been identified as one of the research approaches most closely linked with the subjugation of Indigenous peoples and knowledges (Smith, 1999; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Trask, 1999). Moreover, ethnography is a form of research that allows researchers to present an interpretation of a culture under study, making analysis of the metaphors used to do so all the more relevant.

I must also acknowledge that I cannot claim that the findings based on the case studies included can be generalized to all ethnographic research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies, given that only a limited number of ethnographic case studies can be included to avoid generalizations in identifying metaphors. Nonetheless, this research provides a starting point for an anti-colonial inquiry into how the knowledge that has informed development practice in dominant development institutions is being produced, and illuminates questions that we need to ask ourselves as researchers in development studies.

As explained above, I selected the research included in this analysis based its repeated citation by development institutions and by researchers addressing issues surrounding Indigenous knowledges in development. Therefore, while these studies cannot be said to be representative of all research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies, the prevalence of references to this collection of research not only in academic work in development studies but in policies underpinning development practice is evidence of the relevance and timeliness of these studies to conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges in development.

#### **IV. Results of the Meta-Ethnography**

In this chapter I present the results of my meta-ethnographic analysis. I will introduce the data without incorporating anti-colonial critiques based on literature from critical Indigenous scholars in education; this will take place in the following chapter. Nonetheless, as discussed in the methodology chapter, the anti-colonial discursive framework informs my reading of the studies included in the meta-ethnography. Rather than reading the texts as authoritative accounts of the communities and knowledges they describe, I read the texts with an eye to discovering what they reveal about the framework within which the ethnographers operate in formulating their descriptions. Such a reading fits with my goal of examining the practices that sustain intellectualism in Eurocentric disciplines, as articulated in the anti-colonial discursive framework.

I will begin with an overview of the studies included in the meta-ethnography, as well as providing necessary context by presenting some available information on the authors of the studies. As I move on to present the results of the synthesis I will divide my findings into broad sub-categories. This approach to presenting the synthesis is modeled after that followed by Doyle (1998) in her meta-ethnography on school leadership and teaching.

I will first address metaphors for the context in which the ethnographers study Indigenous knowledges. Next I will set out metaphors used to express the ethnographers' conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges, followed by an analysis of the metaphors employed to articulate the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and scientific knowledge. Finally, I will explore the metaphors used by the ethnographers to describe their approaches to research on Indigenous knowledges, before discussing the overall line of

argument concerning Indigenous knowledges in development that I have inferred from the studies. Crucial categories of metaphors found across the studies included are set out in chart form on pages 61-62, and I draw connections between many of these metaphors by weaving them into my own text based on the suggested methods for presenting ethnographic research proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988).

*Overview of Ethnographies on Indigenous Knowledges in Development Included in the Synthesis*

As described in the previous chapter, all of the ethnographies that I purposively selected for this lines-of-argument synthesis are drawn from the anthology *The Cultural Dimension of Development*, edited by Warren, Slikkerveer and Brokensha (1995). Before presenting the results of the meta-ethnographic analysis, I will first provide context through a brief description of each of the ethnographic studies included.

*S. Fujisaka, "Incorporating Farmers' Knowledge in International Rice Research"*

Author Sam Fujisaka (now deceased) was an agricultural anthropologist who worked with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). In this study he describes a research project on rice farmers in Claveria, Southern Philippines, which involved a team of interdisciplinary researchers. According to Fujisaka, the goal of the study was to use ethnographic research methods to elicit the knowledge of local farmers for use in the development of appropriate technologies to aid in rice farming, as well as to generate priority activities for future research and collaboration with other rice farming regions in the Philippines. The study is primarily concerned with identifying problems based on the

perceptions and agricultural practices of the farmers, as well as with the potential for technology transfer to improve and stimulate agricultural production. The researchers therefore engaged Indigenous knowledges as technical knowledge, which can be used both to reveal obstacles to rice farming and as a way of ensuring that transfer of agricultural technology is relevant and useful in the local context.

*M.B. Whiteford, “Como Se Cura: Patterns of Medical Choice Among Working Class Families in the City of Oaxaca, Mexico”*

Michael B. Whiteford is an anthropologist who received his PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. Opening with an overview of previous “ethnomedical” research in Latin America, Whiteford recounts the experiences of working class families in Oaxaca navigating health care options including “Western medicine” and “folk medical diversity”. In doing so, Whiteford examines the relationship between Western medicine and folk medical practices using ethnographic research methods. The study aims to generate a model for explaining and predicting the medical choices of working class families in the midst of these various choices of medical practices. Based on his results, Whiteford argues that Indigenous medical knowledge and practices provide a “menu of alternatives” that working class families in Oaxaca may choose from when addressing health problems, depending on factors such as the severity of the ailment, availability of financial resources, and cost-effectiveness. Thus, Whiteford approaches Indigenous knowledges as a subset of technical knowledge that can be isolated to focus on health.

*R.W. Sharland, “Using Indigenous Knowledge in a Subsistence Society of Sudan”*

Roger W. Sharland is a researcher with a PhD in Agricultural Extension and Rural Development from the University of Reading. Based on an extended period of participant observation in Sudan with the Moru tribe, in this chapter Sharland describes how the researchers plan to use the tribe’s Indigenous knowledge to “extend” the subsistence economy by increasing agricultural production. The study has a particular focus on technology transfer and the potential of Indigenous knowledges to adapt to change. Sharland argues that in this context Indigenous knowledges are a crucial resource for development practitioners, providing a basis for understanding how extension initiatives can relate and respond to the needs of the farmers. Furthermore, he claims that by applying what he claims are universal scientific knowledge and research methodologies, the technical knowledge of the farmers can be verified, corrected, and incorporated into a scientific body of knowledge as a means of capturing and diffusing it through research and publications. This illustrates that Sharland conceptualizes Indigenous knowledges as technical knowledge that can be subsumed by scientific knowledge.

I will elaborate on the particularities of the themes and arguments put forward in each of these studies in the rest of this chapter, discussing the metaphors and results revealed through the meta-ethnographic synthesis of the texts.

*The Context for Research on Indigenous Knowledges in Development*

Each of the ethnographies included in the synthesis is set in a context that the authors describe in terms conveying economic scarcity—Fujisaka (1995) discusses his subjects’ “resource poor circumstances,” Whiteford (1995) presents working class families as



possessing “inadequate resources,” and Sharland (1995) describes the “subsistence” economy of Sudan. Across these three ethnographies material poverty provides the backdrop for the study of Indigenous knowledges that each author undertakes.

In each case, the authors also devote a portion of their chapters to issues relating to adaptation to changing circumstances. In Fujisaka’s (1995, p. 127) chapter he notes that the farmers of Claveria are mostly migrants, and therefore have had to “[learn] about and... [adapt] their farming practices to local conditions.” Whiteford’s (1995, p. 223) chapter on the medical choices of working class families describes Oaxaca as a “city of migrants,” again highlighting the theme of migration and adaptation to new circumstances. While Sharland (1995, p. 394) does not describe the members of the Moru tribe as migrants, a major theme in his study is questions around “agricultural extension” and the “indigenous potential for change.” He further notes that the Moru tribe would be able to adapt to hypothetical changes brought about by extension initiatives if “circumstances dictate” (Sharland, p. 394), again underscoring the link between Indigenous knowledges and notions of adaptation and survival. Therefore another cross-cutting theme relating to context revealed by this meta-ethnography is this theme of adaptation to changing circumstances and survival.

### *The Concept of Indigenous Knowledges Described and Implied in the Texts*

Although none of the studies included in the synthesis set out an explicit definition of Indigenous knowledges, metaphors within each text reveal their researchers’ implicit conceptualizations of indigenous knowledges. Again, these implicit conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges are similar across the ethnographies included in the synthesis. The authors all describe Indigenous knowledges as being experiential and shared within the

community under study. Fujisaka (1995, p. 127) describes how farmers he interviewed possessed a “shared knowledge base pertaining to local conditions;” Sharland (1995, p. 385) offers a similar portrayal of the knowledge of the Moru as consisting of “values and priorities... based on generations of experience and accumulated knowledge.” Although Whiteford’s (1995, p. 219) description is less explicit in this area, he nonetheless describes the folk medical knowledge of working class women in the Colonia Volcanes neighbourhood of Oaxaca as a “medical world-view” based on their experiences navigating various medical options available to them. Thus, in all of the ethnographies analyzed here there is a common notion of Indigenous knowledges as emerging from collective experience.

Related to this experiential framing is the notion that Indigenous knowledges are inherently linked with local circumstances. Although the metaphors cited in the previous paragraph exemplify this idea, Sharland (1995, p. 385) makes this connection especially clear with his description of the knowledge of the Moru tribe in Sudan as “rational responses to the environment in which they are located,” and of the “details of the agricultural system” as necessarily related to “the wild environment.”

This connectedness of Indigenous knowledges to the local environment, however, is not positioned as a neutral situation. The ethnographers each relate this characteristic of Indigenous knowledges to ideas of restriction, limits, and constraints. Fujisaka (1995, p. 134) refers to the agricultural knowledge and practices of the farmers of Claveria as a “means to cope with their resource poor circumstances,” and Sharland (1995, p. 228) writes that in Oaxaca the use of home remedies or Indigenous healers are often chosen as “an inexpensive option” in the face of financial constraints. Furthermore, the model of medical decision-making that he develops includes the variable of financial situation as a crucial variable in

determining what sort of medical recourse a family chooses to take, along with the variable of severity of the ailment, with more severe conditions being more likely to result in turning to the Western medical system. In keeping with these metaphors of Indigenous knowledges as limited by economic restrictions, Sharland's (1995, p. 385, 389) chapter refers to the knowledge and practices of the Moru as "localized and restricted," having accumulated as a response to "the needs and restraints of the community." This theme of Indigenous knowledges as the product of poverty and economic constraints runs throughout all three ethnographies.

A final common metaphor articulating a conceptualization of Indigenous knowledges that appears across the ethnographies is the articulation of Indigenous knowledges in terms of absences, through both implicit and explicit comparisons with scientific knowledge. Fujisaka (1995, p. 137) writes that the rice farmers had "little awareness of a future need for integrated pest management," calling for raising further awareness of "International Pest Management (IPM) technologies." Whiteford (1995, p. 225) refers to the absence of certain terms from the Western medical canon from the vocabulary used to describe Indigenous alternative medicines, pointing out that words such as "fevers," "chills," "viruses," and "bacterial injections" "are conspicuously absent." This tendency to portray Indigenous knowledges in terms of absences is particularly obvious in Sharland's research. He describes the agricultural knowledge and practices of the Moru tribe as being built on a "weak theoretical foundation," decries the "limitations of farmers' understanding," and remarks that "complicated biological relationships... are often misinterpreted" (Sharland, 1995, p. 391, 393). This tendency for the ethnographers included in the analysis to express their conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges by pointing to absences leads to the next overarching category of metaphors

extracted from the studies, which is the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and Western scientific knowledge.

*Articulations of the Relationship Between Eurocentric Scientific and Indigenous Knowledges*

In their respective ethnographies, each of the authors included in this synthesis describes what they perceive to be the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and Western scientific knowledge. In addition to descriptions of Indigenous knowledges in terms of absences based on comparisons with scientific knowledge, each study is premised upon a particular notion of the relationship between the scientific knowledge purportedly possessed by the researchers and the Indigenous knowledges under study. This binary relationship ties into the ethnographers' approaches to studying Indigenous knowledges, which will be analyzed in the following section of this chapter.

In each ethnographic study the researchers compare the Indigenous knowledges they study with academic findings generated through "scientific" research methodologies. For example, after farmers stated in interviews that the use of fallows as fertilizers was not effective on their lands, Fujisaka (1995, p. 128) describes how the interdisciplinary team of scientists he worked with at the International Rice Research Institute conducted their own analysis, and reported back that the "farmers' perceptions were discovered to be essentially correct." Fujisaka (1995, p. 132) again expresses this notion that the farmers' knowledge needs to be verified through scientific practices when he refers to "farmers' practices being compared to experimental data" before exploring the potential to diffuse the practices through publications and transferring techniques and knowledge to other locations. Sharland (1995, p. 391) offers similar descriptions of the relationship between Indigenous knowledges

and scientific practices, claiming that “[e]xisting practices which are beneficial, but may be lost in a changing world, can be reinforced by the formal scientific sector by giving them a backing that can relate to the growing schooled population.” This reveals that both Fujisaka’s and Sharland’s conceptualizations of the relationship of Indigenous knowledges to scientific knowledge is one in which Indigenous knowledges should be verified and reinforced by scientific knowledge and research.

Whiteford’s articulation of the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and scientific research is slightly different, as his entire study is an examination of how Indigenous knowledges of medicine and health interact with the Western system in the medical decision-making processes of the residents of Oaxaca. In Whiteford’s (1995, p. 219) research the relationship between scientific and Indigenous knowledges is articulated by researching the dynamics of the “‘Western’ medicine paradigm existing side-by-side with beliefs that illnesses are also occasioned by such things as ‘fright’.” In doing so, he describes how working class residents of Oaxaca “believe that this [Western] medical system has certain limitations” (Whiteford, 1995, p. 226), insinuating that Indigenous knowledge of wellness and medicine serves to fill these gaps in the Western medical system. Furthermore, Whiteford (p. 226) suggests that “not everyone is convinced of the value of some traditional medical beliefs and practices,” indicating a “lack of ‘faith’” in Indigenous medical practices. These metaphors imply that Indigenous knowledges of health and well-being are secondary options for working class residents of Oaxaca, insinuating a hierarchical relationship between knowledge systems similarly to that found in Fujisaka’s and Sharland’s texts.

The metaphors pertaining to the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and Eurocentric scientific knowledge in each of the ethnographic texts under investigation

describe this relationship as one in which scientific knowledge remains the primary mode of determining validity, while Indigenous knowledges are to be measured by scientific standards or only used in situations where scientific knowledge is not applicable.

### *Approaches to Research on Indigenous Knowledges*

Commonalities between the ethnographers' approaches to research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies is also evident in the metaphors that the ethnographers employ to describe the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and Eurocentric science. A first metaphor that cuts across each study is the ethnographers' views on how research on Indigenous knowledges can contribute to development initiatives. With their focus on agricultural technology transfer and agricultural extension, both Fujisaka (1995) and Sharland (1995) express this relationship in terms of how their ethnographic research can ensure that farmers' perspectives are considered when planning development interventions. Research on Indigenous knowledges is thus seen as a tool for identifying the needs and problems facing the communities, in order "to incorporate farmer perspectives into the development of appropriate rice technologies" (Fujisaka, 1995, p. 125) or to "incorporate recommendations based on knowledge and needs of the farmers themselves into the extensions system" (Sharland, 1995, p. 385).

Again in this instance Whiteford's (1995) approach to his research is slightly different given his focus on medical decision-making processes as opposed to agricultural development. Nonetheless, a similar theme is evident in his ethnography related to using research on Indigenous knowledges to determine how this knowledge relates to Western medicine in terms of overcoming health problems that are perceived as an obstacle to

development. His research aims to gain an understanding of what factors influence residents of Oaxaca in their choices between Western medicine as represented by the public health system, and forms of treatment based on Indigenous approaches to healing. Therefore, in his efforts “to describe and place folk medical diversity and variation within a larger cultural framework of ethnomedical beliefs,” Whiteford’s (1995, p. 219) goals for this research on Indigenous knowledges are a way of understanding how Indigenous approaches to medicine and health relate to Western development objectives.

Recalling Whiteford’s metaphors to describe when the residents of Oaxaca opt to employ Indigenous medical approaches—specifically in the face of less severe ailments and/or where access to Western medical treatment is too expensive—his research aims to identify when residents of Oaxaca feel they should resort to Indigenous medical practices, giving a clearer understanding of how these Indigenous knowledges work in conjunction with the Western medical system. While his ethnography is less direct in expressing this aim than the ethnographies by Fujisaka and Sharland, the underlying theme of identifying how Indigenous knowledges fit into a framework established by mainstream development approaches is nonetheless present in Whiteford’s account.

Another theme related to the goals of research on Indigenous knowledges in development that each ethnographer articulates is the idea that their work will reveal ways in which ethnographic research can both discover and reinforce Indigenous knowledges and practices that might aid in the development process as they envision it. Fujisaka (1995, p. 138) describes how his research serves “to elicit and make sense of their [the farmers’] technical knowledge,” while Sharland (1995, p. 388) claims that through ethnographic research on Indigenous knowledges “helpful practices can be identified and reinforced.”

“Eliciting” and “identifying” are metaphors which insinuate that Indigenous knowledges remain invalid until they are incorporated into a framework that makes sense according to the epistemological and methodological norms of the researchers. Whiteford’s (1995, p. 219) endeavor “to present a model that predicts ethnomedical decision-making” can likewise be interpreted as a means of bringing Indigenous knowledges into a conceptual framework that suits the norms and standards of Western academic practice. Whiteford also makes repeated references to the unspoken nature of Indigenous medical knowledge and practice, implying that it is through ethnographic research that this knowledge and practice can be translated into a form that renders it accessible and acceptable in academia. Thus the notion of using ethnographic research to “reveal” Indigenous knowledges and place them within the framework set out by Eurocentric academia and development practitioners is a theme that underlies the intentions behind this research on Indigenous knowledges.

### *Inferring a Line of Argument*

Based on the various metaphors found across the studies in the meta-ethnography discussed above, one can infer a line of argument concerning the relevance of Indigenous knowledges in development. Indigenous knowledges, as they relate to development and as conceptualized by the ethnographers, are of particular relevance in resource-poor environments, particularly those located in underdeveloped regions of the world. In the context of development studies, Indigenous knowledges are described as relevant inasmuch as they can facilitate adaptation to changes in circumstances, whether these changes are brought about by migration or by external influences. These knowledges are experiential and strongly linked with the local environment from which they emerged, characteristics that the



ethnographers invoke to portray Indigenous knowledges as limited in their applicability to situations of need and poverty. The ethnographers describe Indigenous knowledges in terms of what they feel is lacking based on attempts by researchers to validate Indigenous knowledge systems by checking findings against scientific data on the same phenomenon. In these accounts research on Indigenous knowledges serve to identify problems that need to be addressed within the framework of a Eurocentric development paradigm, and to incorporate Indigenous knowledges into this framework in order to make them accessible to those working within Eurocentric disciplines.

Although as I explained in the methodology chapter this synthesis cannot be generalized to represent all research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies, it nonetheless provides insight into commonalities in conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges in development in influential studies within the development studies literature. In the following chapter, I look to critical Indigenous scholarship to problematize this interpretation of Indigenous knowledges and their relevance in development studies.

*Table of Metaphors*

	Fujisaka	Whiteford	Sharland
Context	<p>“predominance of the less favourable rice ecosystems” (124)</p> <p>“difficult but typical upland area of Asia” (124)</p> <p>“cash and labour constraints” (128)</p> <p>“resource poor circumstance” (134)</p> <p>“learned about and had adapted their farming practices to local conditions” (127)</p>	<p>“a city of migrants” (223)</p> <p>“working class community” (224)</p> <p>“poor hygiene and inadequate resources” (225)</p>	<p>“a city of migrants” (223)</p> <p>“working class community” (224)</p> <p>“poor hygiene and inadequate resources” (225)</p>
Concept of IK	<p>“technical knowledge of farmers” (124)</p> <p>“shared knowledge base pertaining to local conditions” (127)</p> <p>“means to cope with their resource poor circumstances” (134)</p> <p>“technical knowledge” (138)</p>	<p>“medical world-view” (219)</p> <p>“factors which enter into concepts of disease causation” (219)</p> <p>“unspoken model” (219)</p> <p>“folk medical diversity”</p> <p>“suspected that these notions are more widely practiced than spoken about” (225)</p> <p>“wide range of options” (229)</p>	<p>“rational responses to the environment in which they are located” (385)</p> <p>“generations of experience and accumulated knowledge” (385)</p> <p>“adapted to the needs and restraints of the community” (385)</p> <p>“details of the agricultural system and how it relates to the wild environment” (385)</p> <p>“localized and restricted” (389)</p> <p>“evolved within a specific set of constraints” (393)</p> <p>“depends on what can be seen with the naked eye” (393)</p>
Absences in IK	<p>“little awareness of a future need for integrated pest management” (137)</p>	<p>“terms...conspicuously absent” (225)</p>	<p>“weak theoretical foundation” (391)</p> <p>“complicated biological relationships... are often misinterpreted” (393)</p> <p>“using the limitation of farmers’ understanding as the basis of new ideas” (393)</p> <p>“can point to gaps in local knowledge” (393)</p>

	Fujisaka (cont'd)	Whiteford (cont'd)	Sharland (cont'd)
Relationship between IK and science	<p>“farmers’ perceptions were discovered to be essentially correct” (128)</p> <p>“farmers’ practices being compared to experimental data” (132)</p>	<p>“‘Western’ medicine paradigm as existing side-by-side with beliefs that illnesses are also occasioned by such things as ‘fright’” (219)</p> <p>“believe that this [Western] medical system has certain limitations” (226)</p> <p>“medical problems felt to be unresponsive to western medical techniques” (228)</p> <p>“observations [of report of the Mexican Secretary of Health] are corroborated in this study” (229)</p>	<p>“Loose vernacular terms have been very useful for describing formal scientific ideas” (388)</p> <p>“practical value to the farmers and those seeking to help them” (388)</p> <p>“the two systems of knowledge are thus available to separate groups” (391)</p> <p>“existing practices... can be reinforced by the formal scientific sector” (391)</p> <p>“Formal scientific reasoning can be applied to practices that are not well established or understood” (392)</p>
Productivity/Cost-effectiveness	<p>“lower paddies are the most productive” (133)</p>	<p>“home remedies or choices of indigenous healers are often an inexpensive option” (228)</p>	<p>“readily available source of information that even the poorest farmers can use” (395)</p>
Purpose of Research	<p>“to incorporate farmer perspectives into the development of appropriate rice technologies” (125)</p> <p>“to discover farmer knowledge” (127)</p> <p>“to elicit and make sense of their technical knowledge” (138)</p>	<p>“to describe and place folk medical diversity and variation within a larger cultural framework of ethnomedical beliefs” (219)</p> <p>“to describe the alternative curing strategies, or medical choices, practiced” (219)</p> <p>“to present a model that predicts ethnomedical decision-making” (219)</p>	<p>“scope for sharing [localized and restricted] knowledge more widely or for adapting it to new uses” (389)</p> <p>“to outline some ways in which change can be related to indigenous knowledge” (385)</p> <p>“incorporate recommendations based on knowledge and needs of the farmers themselves into the extensions system” (385)</p> <p>“helpful practices can be identified and reinforced” (388)</p>

**V. Subjecting the meta-ethnography to an anti-colonial analysis: Looking to critical  
Indigenous scholarship on Indigenous knowledges**

The results of the meta-ethnography presented in the previous chapter reveal a great deal about how ethnographic research in development studies has conceptualized Indigenous knowledges and how Indigenous knowledges have accordingly been brought into development theory and practice. I will now move on to address the second component of my research question, subjecting the results of the meta-ethnography to an anti-colonial analysis based on critical Indigenous scholarship on Indigenous knowledges derived primarily from the education literature.

I will begin by addressing each of the categories of metaphors outlined in the previous chapter, bringing relevant texts by critical Indigenous scholars into dialogue with these metaphors to question the theorizing in the ethnographies and illustrate alternative conceptualizations offered by critical Indigenous scholarship. From there I will refer to critical Indigenous scholarship to highlight and challenge the omission of crucial issues concerning Indigenous knowledges in the development studies ethnographies, specifically addressing issues related to language and spirituality.

*Analyzing Contextual Metaphors*

In critiquing the contextual metaphors underlying Indigenous knowledges as addressed in the ethnographic research studies, the first point to be made concerns the exclusive situation of Indigenous knowledges in developing country contexts. Indigenous knowledges existing in settler societies such as North America, Australia, and New Zealand are not only excluded from the ethnographies included in my meta-ethnography, but are

conspicuously absent throughout the development studies literature on Indigenous knowledges. In the anthology from which I have drawn the ethnographies in question, only one out of 47 studies included is set in the context of a settler society, and while it should be clear that Indigenous knowledges are not necessarily possessed exclusively by Indigenous peoples, this study focuses on farmers in North Florida as opposed to the circumstances and anti-colonial struggles of Indigenous peoples in this context (Zambawa & Gladwin, 1995). Meanwhile, the writings of critical Indigenous scholars are by no means limited to the contexts of developing countries—they emerge from a wide variety of global contexts, including a focus on settler societies in North America (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Castellano, 2008) and Oceania (Smith, 1999; Bishop, 1998).

This exclusion is in line with the geopolitical construction of space within the Eurocentric development discourse, which divides the world into developed and underdeveloped regions (Escobar, 1995), and is thus likely related to the theme in the meta-ethnography of locating Indigenous knowledges in resource-poor circumstances. Critical Indigenous scholarship, on the other hand, takes as a starting point the context of colonialism instead of geopolitical notions of “developed” and “underdeveloped” regions. Andrea Smith (2006) further argues that notions of the disappearance and absence of Indigenous peoples and knowledges in settler societies are at the foundation of these societies’ colonial imaginations, being used as a justification for the appropriation of Indigenous land and culture. As opposed to simply locating Indigenous knowledges in situations of poverty, critical Indigenous scholars in the education literature address the situation of Indigenous knowledges as they relate to circumstances of colonialism and its ongoing effects, and the potential for Indigenous knowledges to serve as a source of resistance to these circumstances.

Writing about an Inuit community on Baffin Island, McIsaac (2008) demonstrates that the Indigenous knowledge of this community has not only been crucial in terms of survival and understanding the local environment, but has also served as a source of resistance to colonialism by bolstering alternative understandings and relationships between society, land, nature, and spirituality. Writing more explicitly on development in the African context, in a similar vein Dei (2010) argues that African Indigenous knowledges offer a challenge to Eurocentric colonial and development practices, which have inflicted violence and hardship upon many Indigenous peoples.

These conceptualizations in the literature by critical Indigenous scholars clearly challenge the notion that Indigenous knowledges merely persist in resource-poor circumstances as a means of survival, as well as the notion in development studies ethnographies that Indigenous knowledges should serve as a tool for adapting to changing circumstances brought about by Eurocentric development initiatives. On the contrary, critical Indigenous scholars write about Indigenous knowledges in the context of colonialism and as a source of alternatives and resistance. The legacy of colonialism is thus a very conspicuous omission in these development studies ethnographies, one that underpins many of the other problems with the ethnographers' approaches revealed in the meta-ethnography.

### *Analyzing Conceptualizations of Indigenous Knowledges*

The ideas that Indigenous knowledges arise out of collective experience and are connected with the local environment, as expressed in the development studies ethnographies in question, have some resonance with critical Indigenous scholarship on Indigenous knowledges. Indeed, Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2008, p. 6) include in their conceptualization

of Indigenous knowledges the notion that these knowledge systems are “associated with the long-term occupancy of a certain place.” Critical Indigenous scholarship diverges from the conceptualization offered in the ethnographies on the point of this local basis of Indigenous knowledges, however, when it comes to the assertion that this local basis limits the applicability of Indigenous knowledges.

Whereas in the ethnographies in my analysis Indigenous knowledges are portrayed in terms of their utility in the face of adverse circumstances, critical Indigenous scholars envisage the local basis of Indigenous knowledges as intrinsically valuable. Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) make this clear in their discussion of the ecological relevance of Indigenous knowledges. They argue that while Indigenous ecological knowledge can be compared with scientific ecological knowledge in that it is “empirical, experimental, and systematic,” Indigenous ecological knowledge is unique in that it provides complex and in-depth knowledge of ecology in particular localities (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 44). While scientific approaches to ecology aim to provide general explanations through the discovery of universal laws, Indigenous ecological knowledge provides an understanding of the web of local relationships that exist in a particular ecology.

Furthermore, rather than being solely based on testing and experimenting with global generalizations or short-term observations, Indigenous knowledges of local ecologies are accumulated and ever-changing over generations as knowledge is transmitted and younger generations make observations of changes in circumstances. Wane (2008) makes a similar argument concerning the Indigenous knowledge of elder women in Kenya, demonstrating how the women’s knowledge, which is derived from their connectedness to the land, allows

them to understand and identify the destructive processes inherent in development initiatives affecting the environment.

These conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges in critical Indigenous scholarship thus run counter to the notion in the development studies ethnographies included in this analysis that communities employ Indigenous knowledges due to the constraints of poverty. Rather, connecting back to the argument that Indigenous knowledges are a source of resistance and alternatives to Eurocentric ways of knowing, critical Indigenous scholarship demonstrates that Indigenous knowledges have value far beyond being merely responsive to conditions where communities are dealing with a lack of resources.

Another aspect of the development studies ethnographers' conceptualization of Indigenous knowledges that is problematic when analyzed in light of critical Indigenous scholarship is the exclusive focus on "technical" aspects of Indigenous knowledges. Each of the ethnographers studies Indigenous knowledges in their respective context only insofar as they relate to perceived utility in the sector under study, whether agriculture or health care. As Crossman and Devisch (2002) point out, this focus on the technical aspects of Indigenous knowledges relating to health and agriculture likely extends beyond the scope of the ethnographies included in this analysis to the general approach to Indigenous knowledges in development. This isolation of aspects of Indigenous knowledges that are relevant to the particular sectors or projects that the ethnographers address goes against the concept of holism, which is central to conceptualizations of Indigenous knowledges in critical Indigenous scholarship—see Castellano, 2008; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; and Dei, 2010. The holistic nature of Indigenous knowledges implies that all aspects and sources of these knowledge systems are interconnected, and that the acquisition of Indigenous



knowledges is achieved by engaging all of the senses. This holism also implies the inseparability of spirituality from Indigenous knowledges, which I will address in further detail later in this chapter.

Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) point out that academic research on Indigenous knowledges has often been conducted in a way that Indigenous knowledges are compartmentalized to fit into the divisions and categories that characterize Eurocentric knowledge, which seems to be an accurate description of how the research for the development studies ethnographies was carried out. As they write: “This perspective seeks to incorporate Indigenous knowledge within Eurocentric thought as a racial subset” (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 39). Leading into a critical analysis of the relationship between Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledges as set out in the development studies ethnographies, the research on Indigenous knowledges in the development studies literature is no exception to this critique of Eurocentric research practices.

### *Analyzing the Relationship Between Indigenous and Eurocentric Scientific Knowledge*

As illustrated in the results of my meta-ethnography, the development studies ethnographers imply that the relationship between the Indigenous knowledges under study and the Eurocentric scientific knowledge that their research centres around is one in which Indigenous knowledge claims are measured based on the criteria set out in the Eurocentric scientific paradigm. This is clear in the ethnographers’ tendency to describe Indigenous knowledges in terms of absences in comparison with Eurocentric scientific knowledge. As Dei (1998) has argued, the tendency of development experts to focus on knowledge that local communities lack, as opposed to the knowledge that they possess, is a crucial problem in

development studies. When taking the stance of critical Indigenous scholarship and situating Indigenous knowledges in the processes of colonialism, this conceptualization of Indigenous knowledges in a hierarchical relationship with Eurocentric science is highly problematic.

As Smith (1999, p. 63) has written, the globalization of Western knowledge through colonialism has been a process through which Eurocentric scientific knowledge has been promoted as “the centre of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge, and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge.” As she describes it, colonialism took place on a cultural as well as on an economic level; research and the production of Eurocentric scientific knowledge in the colonies had at its foundation the premise of approaching Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems as objects of research, to be incorporated into the universal Eurocentric body of knowledge. In this process, which relates back to Battiste and Youngblood Henderson’s (2000) critique of how research has attempted to make Indigenous knowledge a “racial subset” of Eurocentric science, any Indigenous knowledges that came under the gaze of researchers was incorporated into Eurocentric science as a new “discovery” (Smith, 1999).

The approach implicitly followed by the development studies ethnographers in investigating the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and Eurocentric science perpetuates the inequitable colonial relations that Smith describes. By attempting to measure the Indigenous knowledges under study through comparisons with the findings of “scientific” modes of knowledge production, the ethnographers can only conceive of Indigenous knowledges as “discoveries” that can be incorporated into existing development paradigms. Again, the possibility for Indigenous knowledges to provide an alternative way of knowing to

the Eurocentric paradigm is denied in the development studies research on Indigenous knowledges.

*Analyzing Approaches to Research on Indigenous Knowledges*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, this theme of incorporating Indigenous knowledges into the unquestioned Eurocentric development paradigm connects to the development studies ethnographers' approaches to research on Indigenous knowledges. Firstly, the notion that research on Indigenous knowledges will serve the purpose of identifying needs and problems to which development interventions can respond again relegates Indigenous knowledges to the role of filling gaps in an already articulated Eurocentric development paradigm. Furthermore, claims by the ethnographers that this research is undertaken with the goal of revealing and reinforcing Indigenous knowledges and their potential contribution to development again implies a hierarchical relationship between Indigenous knowledges and Eurocentric disciplines in which Indigenous knowledges are portrayed as inferior and in need of bolstering by the Eurocentric development paradigm.

When looking at the development studies ethnographers' research methodologies and overall approaches to research on Indigenous knowledges, critical Indigenous scholarship in the education literature has much to say in challenging these power relations and providing alternative research approaches. In response to the negative impacts of Eurocentric research, a number of critical Indigenous scholars have articulated possibilities for alternative Indigenous research methodologies and agendas. Notably, the ethnographers included in the synthesis take their own research methods for granted, without making any reference to these Indigenous approaches to research. A discussion of these Indigenous approaches to research,

however, makes it clear that embracing these approaches would have important implications for how research on Indigenous knowledges in development is carried out.

In the context of the Maori in New Zealand, Bishop (1998) offers an Indigenous approach to research that presents an alternative to the approaches taken by the development studies ethnographers to validating Indigenous knowledges based on the standards of Eurocentric knowledge. The Maori research agenda, named Kaupapa, has emerged over the past decades as a response to Eurocentric research practices that have perpetuated colonial relations by “simplifying, conglomerating, and commodifying” Maori knowledge (Bishop, 1998, p. 200). According to Bishop, research practices are inherently political and linked with Maori struggles for self-determination.

According to the Kaupapa approach to research, the validity, legitimacy, and authority of research findings cannot be evaluated according to any positivist or post-positivist, international methodological framework, as these frameworks constitute external and imposed control over research. Rather, Bishop argues that the validity and authority of research results should be determined within the cultural context from which the research emerges. In the Maori context, for example, knowledge is produced and validated according to *taonga tuku iho*, which translates to “treasures passed down to the present generation from the ancestors” (Bishop, 1998, p. 216). In this approach, concepts from Maori traditions become metaphors for research principles and practices.

A particularly relevant example is the concept of *whakawhanaungatanga*, which refers to the process of establishing relationships (Bishop, 1998). In Kaupapa research approaches this concept is applied to the relationship between the researcher and the community. A researcher is to identify as *whanaunga*, a relative, and to establish research

groups referred to as whanau, which literally means “extended family.” Based on these Maori concepts, the research process becomes one in which all members of the community can communicate and have input into the outcomes of the research. In this approach, the notion of a relationship between the “researcher” and the “researched” is replaced with the notion of a relationship among research participants with equal stakes in the research project.

Bishop claims that it is through such processes that research truly gains the support and participation of the communities, rejecting Western approaches to participatory research and its claims of empowering research subjects. As he writes, the Kaupapa reconceptualization of research cannot occur “within understandings constructed by the researcher, however well intentioned contemporary impulses to ‘empower’ the ‘other’ might be. From an indigenous perspective such impulses are misguided and perpetuate neo-colonial sentiments” (Bishop, 1998, p. 208). Thus, the research process derives from the community itself and its cultural practices as opposed to criteria set out unilaterally by the researcher.

Also writing on Kaupapa Maori research and addressing the question of whether a non-Indigenous researcher could conduct Kaupapa research, Smith (1999) writes that while radical understandings would imply that Maori identity is essential, other interpretations would allow for the collaboration of non-Indigenous researchers willing to appropriately address their social location and situate themselves accordingly within the research project as allies, leaving control of the research to Indigenous communities. Nonetheless, Smith points out that calls for research to be conducted by Indigenous researchers are prevalent.

While Kaupapa Maori research is an Indigenous research agenda developed in the particular context of the Maori of New Zealand, it provides a powerful articulation of an alternative to research on Indigenous knowledges. Given the problematic tendency of the

ethnographers writing in the development studies literature to conduct research using methods and approaches that confine Indigenous knowledges to the frameworks of Eurocentric knowledge, taking Indigenous research methodologies such as Kaupapa Maori into consideration could have weighty implications for how Indigenous knowledges can contribute to re-conceptualizing development. As I elaborate later in this chapter, the increasing emphasis on training Indigenous researchers could have important implications for modes of knowledge production and higher education in development studies.

Having addressed each of the categories of metaphors set out in the meta-ethnography, I will now move on to discuss certain crucial topics relating to Indigenous knowledges outlined in critical Indigenous scholarship in the education literature that the development studies ethnographers included in my meta-ethnography neglect to address.

### *Addressing the Omission of Indigenous Languages in the Ethnographies*

A first area that the development studies ethnographers fail to engage with is the issue of Indigenous languages and their importance to finding alternative approaches to development. In the development studies ethnographies the only mention of Indigenous language is in reference to the argument that “loose vernacular terms have been very useful for describing formal scientific ideas” (Sharland, 1995, p. 388). Not only is this reference minor and isolated, it also exemplifies the problematic tendency to frame Indigenous knowledges as useful only within the boundaries of Western science.

A number of other scholars have stressed the importance of Indigenous languages in resisting Eurocentric paradigms in a way that aligns with Bishop’s (1998) explanation of the use of Indigenous terms and concepts when articulating an Indigenous research agenda.

Alfred (2009) argues that an important aspect of the struggle for decolonization is resisting the Eurocentric terms used to define and describe Indigenous identities and concepts. He takes issue with the discourse of “Aboriginalism” in the North American context, which he writes “is the ideology of the Onkwehonwe surrender to the social and mental pathologies that have come to define colonized indigenous existences” (Alfred, 1999, p. 126).

wa Thiong’o (2005) makes related arguments in his examination of the politics of language in the African context. According to this author the imposition of colonial languages constitutes the colonization of the mind, discrediting Indigenous ways of identifying, describing, and living in the world. Embracing Indigenous languages and the concepts that they express as a source of knowledge and resistance is thus a crucial struggle for the decolonization of the mind (wa Thiong’o, 2005). Smith (1999) also identifies the process of “naming” as one of the crucial projects for decolonizing research and knowledge production. As she writes, the act of naming the world using Indigenous language and terms is an important means of “retaining as much control over meanings as possible” (Smith, 1999, p. 157).

Given this emphasis in the literature by critical Indigenous scholars on the importance of Indigenous language as a source of knowledge and resistance, the absence of any meaningful discussion of language in the development studies ethnographies suggests that this is a topic that needs to be considered if Indigenous knowledges are to provide any real alternatives to Eurocentric development and research practices. Rather than using Indigenous terminology as a tool to explain and implement initiatives by development researchers and practitioners, the focus of critical Indigenous scholarship on language implies that Indigenous

language and terminology should be seen as a source of alternative ways of conceptualizing and pursuing development.

*Addressing the Omission of Spirituality in the Ethnographies*

Another feature of Indigenous knowledges that is consistently emphasized by critical Indigenous scholars but neglected by the development studies ethnographies is spirituality. Van Beek (2000) has argued that spirituality is an issue which development researchers and practitioners are hesitant to address, despite the fact that spirituality is inherently linked with Indigenous ways of knowing and conceptions of development. Even in texts focusing on Indigenous knowledges in development, he points out that spirituality is not addressed; this trend holds true in the meta-ethnography that I conducted.

Wane and Waterfall (2005) make arguments pertaining to spirituality that could be very insightful when considered in the context of centering Indigenous knowledges in development studies and practice. They argue that spirituality—when conceptualized as a way of connecting with tradition, the land, and with others—is not only a crucial foundation of Indigenous knowledges, but should be considered as inherently linked with science and technology. They argue that centering spirituality in scientific and technological knowledge production has the potential to ensure that this knowledge is always situated within a social context, considering the ethics and social implications of the knowledge. In this light, and given the excessive focus of development studies ethnographies on technical aspects of Indigenous knowledges, it seems that a focus on spirituality in development studies could have important implications for disrupting the power relations that perpetuate the relegation of Indigenous knowledges to the status of a secondary supplement to Eurocentric approaches.



Furthermore, Battiste and Youngblood Henderson (2000) describe how Indigenous spirituality provides a way of thinking about relationships among people and with ecologies, considering all life processes to be sacred and connected. According to Holmes' (1996) research on elders' knowledge in Hawai'i, spirituality as the foundation for a reciprocal relationship between humans, land, and all of nature is the basis for sustaining life, providing a very different premise for what might constitute development compared with Eurocentric approaches to development, which focus on economic and material concerns. These conceptualizations relate to Dei's (2010) identification of human-natural connections as a key principle of Indigenous African knowledges, signifying that humans are a part of the natural world, challenging notions of controlling and dominating nature that characterize Eurocentric development thinking.

These notions of spirituality as connection also have implications for how research should be conducted. In her case for "healing methodologies" that allow for an engagement of spirituality and Indigenous knowledges, Dillard (2008, p. 287) argues that such approaches to research must begin with the researcher, "regardless of positionality," opening to "being transformed by all that is encountered and recogniz[ing] those encounters as purposeful and expansive." Engaging spirituality in research on Indigenous knowledges changes the relationship between researcher and researched, allowing for a re-conceptualization of research as responsibility (Dillard, 2006). Therefore, again connecting back to the concept of holism in Indigenous knowledges, embracing spirituality also links into articulations of Indigenous research methodologies by scholars like Smith (1999) and Bishop (1998); engaging spirituality in research requires the researcher to embrace the epistemologies and values of the community in which the research is being undertaken, and

to be open to the transformation that this process can bring about. In this light, when considered as a crucial aspect of Indigenous knowledges spirituality has the potential to play an important role in rupturing the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge in research relations.

The importance of spirituality in conceptualizing Indigenous knowledges is also crucial to emerging alternatives to development offered by critical Indigenous scholars, which I address in the next chapter, along with exploring the implications of this analysis for studying and researching development.

## **VI. Considering Anti-Colonial Alternatives: How to Centre Indigenous Knowledges in Development Studies?**

Having provided an analysis of the challenges that critical Indigenous scholarship poses when juxtaposed with the ethnographic studies of Indigenous knowledges in development, I will now move on to discuss what the implications might be if Indigenous knowledges as articulated in the critical Indigenous literature are to be centered in approaches to studying and practicing development. I address what approaches to development based on critical Indigenous scholarship might look like, followed by what the implications of these approaches might be for development studies in the academy.

### *What Might an Anti-Colonial Alternative to Indigenous Knowledges in Development Look Like?*

Despite the shortcomings of approaches to researching Indigenous knowledges in the development studies literature that are revealed in my meta-ethnography, the works of critical Indigenous scholars offer a source of resistance to the Eurocentric paradigm and possibilities for alternative conceptualizations of development based in Indigenous knowledges. As discussed in the literature review of Eurocentric development theory and practice since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Eurocentric theories and practices have been based on the assumption that economic and material factors are the primary basis for development. Given the emphasis on spirituality in critical Indigenous scholarship, approaches to development by critical Indigenous scholars which take spirituality as the basis for development practice offer crucial alternatives for development theory and practice.

In an articulation of the implications of Indigenous knowledges for approaches to development in the African context, Dei (2008b) outlines five lessons from Indigenous knowledges that should be taken into account, each of which relates to issues raised in the critical Indigenous scholarship discussed in the previous chapter. Firstly, approaches to development must be based in local understandings of social relations and relations with the environment, and must approach such understandings in a way that acknowledges the local peoples' agency in the production of such knowledge and understandings (Dei, 2008b). This relates to the articulations of Indigenous research methodologies, and the need for research methodologies and epistemologies to be derived from the community itself, as opposed to framed by the epistemology of the researcher.

Secondly, and relating to Dillard's (2006) notion of "research as responsibility" based in Indigenous spirituality, Dei (2008b) argues that development based in African Indigenous knowledges must embrace the principle of balancing rights with responsibilities. This implies that development should focus on social justice, and ties into Dei's (2008b) third point that development should constitute a "socialization of knowledge," rejecting the commodification inherent in property rights that underpin Eurocentric approaches to development. Fourthly, and relating to the notion of unity among Indigenous knowledges as a source of resistance to the power relations inherent in colonialism, Dei (2008b) emphasizes the importance of interconnections among individuals, groups, and societies. In this light, approaches to development based in Indigenous knowledges must recognize the connections between issues of poverty and marginalization in various contexts.

The final lesson that Dei (2008b) offers for an alternative development rooted in Indigenous knowledges ties into the idea that spirituality, rather than economic concerns,

should be the foundation for any development initiative. Such approaches would be based on the acknowledgement that any genuine social transformation will stem from spiritual well being, and be founded on healthy interrelationships between individuals, groups, society, and the environment as per the values of local communities. Wangoola (2008) also articulates development ideals based in African Indigenous knowledges as having spirituality as its basis, arguing that prior to the imposition of the Western development paradigm spirituality was the base that ensured that communities could sustain themselves through relationships based on collaboration and reciprocity. In the Hawaiian context, Holmes' (1996) research on the narratives of elders reinforces this idea that spirituality is the foundation for development in Indigenous knowledges, as opposed to economic and material wealth. A respectful relationship with nature and the rest of society would ensure that communities are able to provide for themselves, even if these provisions are not measured in monetary terms (Holmes, 1996).

Considering these articulations of development based in critical Indigenous scholarship on Indigenous knowledges and the anti-colonial analysis of the meta-ethnography offered in the previous chapter, I will now discuss the implications that critical Indigenous scholarship might have for higher education and research in development studies, as well as investigate obstacles to, and opportunities for, making space for Indigenous knowledges in the academy.

*Making Space for Indigenous Knowledges in Development Studies: Obstacles and Opportunities*

In an analysis of how Indigenous knowledges can inform the discipline of development studies, Langdon (2009) argues that there needs to be an awareness of how students of development studies are taught and learn to think about the processes that have led to current Eurocentric definitions of development. Langdon (2009) claims that teaching students how conventional notions of development are articulated within the dominant Eurocentric discourse and then bringing these concepts into dialogue with Indigenous knowledges and perspectives has the potential to destabilize Eurocentric conceptions of development in development studies. Such teaching, he argues, would help to ensure that students consider multiple perspectives and voices in their understandings of development, and that they are sensitive to the power relations inherent in the production of knowledge in development studies.

Given the analysis that I have presented throughout this thesis, I agree that there is a need for students of development to question how knowledge has traditionally been produced in the Western academic context, and to think critically about whose voices have informed the production of this knowledge. Looking beyond the disciplinary boundaries of development studies to the education field, which features literature that offers the perspectives of critical Indigenous scholars, is one way to introduce transformative ideas into development theory and practice, and to encourage students to reflect on their education and the voices that it has included and/or marginalized. As a previous student of the development studies myself, conducting this analysis has allowed me to address questions about power

relations in knowledge production that were conspicuously absent from my undergraduate education.

Although the purported goal of ethnographic studies of Indigenous knowledges in development may be to empower local communities and incorporate multiple voices, the studies included in my analysis approach Indigenous knowledges in a way that denies Indigenous knowledge systems the opportunity to enact alternative approaches to development. In the ethnographic studies that I have analyzed, Indigenous knowledges are not centered, but are instead conceptualized—in Battiste and Youngblood Henderson's (2000) words—as a “racial subset” of knowledge that can make contributions within a dominating, Eurocentric research and development framework. Again, the education literature by critical Indigenous scholars offers alternative ideas that can lead to a disciplinary reconsideration of how research is conducted and knowledge validated in development studies.

Given recent calls by critical Indigenous scholars for more Indigenous researchers and standards for knowledge production and validation that account for the traditions and cultures of local communities, it seems that in addition to re-evaluating Western-based development studies programs there is a need to nurture higher education in developing countries. The study of development should not be reserved exclusively for students with access to Western universities, for this excludes the people who have directly experienced the effects of colonization, globalization, and changes in the environment that development agencies are attempting to address. The question of how to ensure that knowledge is generated and validated according to the standards of Indigenous communities raises the

issue of alternative modes of knowledge production in higher education, particularly in universities and academic research.

In his writings on South Africa, Waghid (2002) argues that in order for higher education to be responsive to the local context and produce socially relevant research and knowledge, conventional knowledge production within the university needs to be supplemented by what he calls “Mode 2” knowledge production. Mode 2 knowledge production is rooted in a specific context where knowledge is negotiated by social actors as they “make sense of their own worlds, to determine their own interests, both individual and collective, and connect their experiences to relevant social issues” (Waghid, 2002, p. 467). This is opposed to Eurocentric “Mode 1” knowledge production, which consists of problem-solving within a disciplinary context. Waghid argues that supplementing conventional Mode 1 knowledge production with Mode 2 knowledge production practices would involve integrating university education and community service, which would allow for a connection between the theoretical knowledge being produced and the practical issues faced in the local context. This approach to knowledge production is also promising for addressing Agrawal’s (1995) concerns about the “strangulation” of Indigenous knowledges when they are documented and archived. By connecting research with community service, Mode 2 knowledge production has the potential to ensure the relevance and preserve the dynamism of development research by basing it in the experiences of the community involved in the research.

Waghid’s description of Mode 2 knowledge production in universities provides an alternative to Eurocentric practices of academic research and knowledge production, in which knowledge is generated out of established disciplinary foundations. Recalling



Bishop's description of Kaupapa Maori research and how it allows for knowledge to be generated through the cultural concepts and practices of the community, Mode 2 knowledge production seems more compatible with the goal of encouraging an Indigenous research agenda in development studies.

In the current system of higher education—especially as it functions in developing countries—initiatives to nurture such modes of knowledge production would likely face difficulty generating productive changes. Altbach (1998) argues that universities in developing countries, which he refers to as “peripheral universities”, usually act as “distributors” rather than producers of knowledge, in contrast to universities located in Western countries, which are more likely to be research-oriented. With less funds and fewer resources than their Western counterparts, these universities tend to follow the innovations and pedagogical directions of Western universities, sometimes to the point of replicating research that has been produced in central universities rather than offering alternative approaches (Altbach, 1998). This situation relates to Fanon's (1966) account of how, following the shift towards independence for the African colonies, privileged citizens who had been immersed in the value systems and trained in the universities of the colonizers became alienated from the daily experiences of the masses. In light of Altbach's (1998) analysis of peripheral universities mimicking the epistemologies of Western universities, it seems that those who have access to a university education in developing countries are likely to find themselves in a position similar to that Fanon describes—they will be educated in a system of thought and practice that is detached from the realities of the local environment and culture.

On the related issue of funding for development research, funding agencies also contribute to the perpetuation of Eurocentric research practices. Economic and social capital play an important role in influencing what and how research is conducted (Braun, 1998). Connecting these circumstances to development research and the marginalization of Indigenous knowledges, Chilisa (2005) suggests that Eurocentric research methodologies and epistemologies are reinforced through the priorities and demands of funding agencies, such as the United Nations family of agencies, bi-lateral donors, and other development funding agencies. In her examination of the case of HIV/AIDS research in Botswana, Chilisa (2005, p. 669) illustrates how Western and Western-trained researchers work within Eurocentric paradigms supported by funding agencies, perpetuating the marginalization of Indigenous knowledges and experiences with HIV/AIDS, labelling these forms of knowledge as “misconceptions or cultural ignorance.”

This situation is the result of inequalities stemming from colonialism and the global economic system, with higher education systems based on Western models and expertise as contributing factors (Altbach, 1998). Furthermore, Naidoo (2003) argues that to ensure competitiveness in the global economy, national governments have been attempting to harness institutions of higher education as global commodities and sites for the production of knowledge that is valued in the global knowledge economy. According to Naidoo this trend has repositioned higher education as a global commodity, as opposed to the traditional notion of higher education as a public good. Related to this process has been the shift in higher education institutions, including universities, towards knowledge production that is more directly linked to the commercial sector (Naidoo, 2003).

In this light, providing an education in which students are encouraged to resist and rupture the boundaries of Eurocentric disciplinary knowledge is challenging, as the global university system is intricately connected to economic and cultural power relations. However, in universities in both developed and underdeveloped contexts it is clear that new priorities and forms of knowledge production need to be embraced if Indigenous knowledges are to be centred in the academy. Programs focusing on development may be a logical place to begin supplanting dominant modes of knowledge production, as such modes of knowledge production allow for the articulation of local priorities for development.

Following this line of thought, Wangoola's (2008) concept of the "multiversity" offers a compelling vision for the transformation of higher education in development studies and cognate disciplines, towards a system that would allow for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges. The multiversity as Wangoola describes it is based on the premise that to effectively tackle the challenges faced by communities around the world a new synthesis is needed between the multiplicity of knowledges that currently exist. Such an institution would promote endogenous development that is rooted in the contexts where it is practiced.

As Wangoola writes: "A *multiversity* differs from a *university* insofar as it recognizes that the existence of alternative knowledges is important to human knowledge as a whole" (Wangoola, 2008, p. 273). This statement makes it clear that centering Indigenous knowledges in the academy, whether in the study of development or any other topic, does not imply an outright rejection of Eurocentric approaches to knowledge, but rather a situation in which various forms of knowledge may contribute equally to a new synthesis, ultimately generating epistemologies and research methodologies that are representative of a multiplicity of experiences. While Wangoola focuses on the multiversity in the African

context, given the analysis presented in this thesis it seems that his conception of the multiversity could have wider applicability as a model for an academy that embraces multi-centric ways of knowing, and that provides space for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges.

## *VII. Conclusion*

Pursuing an anti-colonial approach to analyzing ethnographic scholarship on Indigenous knowledges has raised a number of issues concerning knowledge production in development studies. This study offers the beginnings of a response to weaknesses in the post-colonial analyses of scholarship on Indigenous knowledges in development studies (Agrawal, 1995; Briggs & Sharp, 2004). This has been accomplished by putting ideas from critical Indigenous scholars as represented in the education literature in dialogue with relevant themes in the selected development studies ethnographies, and by highlighting the ongoing colonial power relations in knowledge production that continue to contribute to the marginalization of Indigenous knowledges in development. The results of this research and analysis have a number of implications.

The first important implication of this research is the methodological argument for the use of meta-ethnography in conducting anti-colonial analyses, particularly as these analyses relate to the study of power relations in knowledge production. I have emphasized that the results of the meta-ethnography on studies of Indigenous knowledges in the development literature cannot be generalized to represent all development studies scholarship on Indigenous knowledges. Nonetheless, the recurring themes this meta-ethnography reveals in influential studies within this literature provide a starting point for analyzing research practices and knowledge production in the discipline. Combining this meta-ethnographic methodology with an anti-colonial discursive framework allowed for meta-ethnography to serve the new purpose of critically analyzing practices of knowledge production in ethnographic research. Therefore I argue that this research has the methodological

implication that meta-ethnography could serve as a useful tool in future studies that aim to question and de-stabilize dominant practices of knowledge production in qualitative research, a goal which is central to anti-colonial scholarship.

As revealed in the comparison between the results of the meta-ethnography and critical Indigenous scholarship on Indigenous knowledges, ethnographic approaches to Indigenous knowledges in development studies fail to address Indigenous knowledges in a way that would allow productive challenges to Eurocentric approaches to development. Rather, aspects of Indigenous knowledges that fit into the existing framework of dominant development discourse are subjected to Eurocentric standards of knowledge production and generation, placing Indigenous knowledges in a subordinate, hierarchical relationship with Eurocentric science. Furthermore, crucial issues relating to Indigenous knowledges—particularly language and spirituality—as conceptualized by critical Indigenous scholars are neglected in the development studies ethnographies under investigation in this study.

The alternative approaches to research and knowledge production offered by critical Indigenous scholars emphasize the importance of allowing standards of knowledge validation to emerge from Indigenous traditions and communities; this has important implications if considered as a potential means for reforming research on Indigenous knowledges in development studies in ways that would truly allow for Indigenous knowledges to challenge Eurocentric conceptions of development. I argue that in studying development students should be taught to reflect on how power relations in knowledge production have contributed to how development has been conceptualized and executed. This shift in perspective would put students in a position to consider Indigenous knowledges as true challenges to

Eurocentric conceptions of development, as opposed to a subset of knowledge to be incorporated into existing frameworks.

The need for more Indigenous researchers to conduct research in Indigenous communities is linked to the necessity of re-evaluating higher education in developing regions. Such an investigation will reveal serious challenges to modifying the existing university system so that Indigenous knowledges can be centred in development studies. But, based on the approaches to Indigenous research put forward in the critical Indigenous scholarship in education, this shift is vital if development studies is to be relevant to the people who are imagined to benefit from research in this field. It is clear that in order for Indigenous knowledges to be centered in the academy, and for the training of researchers in Indigenous research methodologies to be successful, institutions of higher education must allow for new forms of knowledge production.

Given the colonial power relations that continue to shape the economic and cultural landscape of the global higher education system, it is likely that productive changes to knowledge production and research practices in universities will have to begin at the grassroots level. development studies programs may provide a fitting place for Indigenous research methodologies and new forms of knowledge production to take root in universities in developing contexts, as these alternative approaches would allow for the articulation of local development priorities in a fashion that challenges Eurocentric development discourse, as opposed to being forced to work within it.

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