

TOWARDS DECONSTRUCTING COLONIAL REALITY: ASSERTING OUR SPACE IN SOCIAL WORK KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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Received: 02 June 2026 || **Revised:** 18 June 2026
Accepted: 30 June 2026 || **Published:** 31 July 2026

Abstract: Since the enlightenment period in Europe, western ontology of authentic truth has dominated in comprehending, explaining and evaluating everything from the reality of history to the truth of human consciousness. It is seen as part of an on-going process of civilisation and which is free from political attachment. Until recently, knowledge that is produced outside the western framework of rationality and reason has been acknowledged but not considered to be at par with it. Indigenous epistemologies are sanctioned only if the scholarly work is concomitant with spirituality or constructed as a symbolic truth rather than literal. From the post meta-narration notion, truth is subjective and it is significant to understand its construct, to historicise and contextualise knowledge. Celebrating diversity and appreciating differences has become fundamental in today's world. The paper presents the limitation of western framework in explaining indigenous content where indigenous epistemology is needed to reify realities. It will also discuss the power relations within the academics where such an alternative is still struggling to establish in the mainstream platform. The paper will also critique the content of social work education in Northeast, India, which has been constructed from the western philosophical thought, where it replicates a foreign institution, introduced by European settlers

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on the notion of colonialism. Lastly, the paper will attempt to explore frameworks in understanding indigenous social realities.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Epistemology, western paradigm, social work education, resistance & hegemony

Introduction

Euro-American knowledge construction has never been valued free and neutral as claimed by the positivists. It always correlates with power. A Foucauldian perspective offers a conception that there cannot be any knowledge production without power relations nor, power relations constitute without an informed knowledge (Foucault, 1972). It is with the reifying conception of Enlightenment epistemology, where Euro-American holds power to influence and define the other. With this make-believe notion, that there is only one reality and it can be understood only through verifiable scientific methods, which is rational and neutral, other ways of knowing such as folklore, philosophy, poetry and oral traditions are positioned as inferior forms in this hierarchical knowledge system. Commencement of these hegemonic knowledge-power relations marks the beginning of the modern era and Enlightenment epistemology, which is sometimes seen as synonym with modernism (Strega, 2005). The modernisation project with its epistemology to legitimize what is true and what is important, paves way for colonial justification with the power to authorise the image of the other and to rule over it. It is seen as part of an on-going process of civilisation and which is free from political attachment. Said (1979) opines that Enlightenment culture gained its strength and identity by setting it against the other and encourages the subjugated subjects to simulate the superior form. Imperial epistemology assumes that western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only rational ideas, and the only ideas that can make sense of the world, reality, social life and human beings. This oppositional, hierarchical stance contradicts other forms of knowing and it poses a problem in understanding indigenous realities. The term research itself comes with a negative notion to indigenous groups as it denies the validity of indigenous ontology (Smith, 1999; 2012). Indigenous ontology and its epistemology that respects and privileges indigenous concerns, practices, indigenous participation and that reifies indigenous worldview should inform indigenous realities with a goal to decolonise western lenses. Disputes in knowledge also imply a power struggle between the imperial and the other. The Enlightenment epistemology frames

knowledge within different compartments or disciplines. From a Foucauldian perspective, these arrangements which are known as disciplinary knowledge contain specialised discourses, which provide instructions how to organise, to think and to construct and evaluate further truth. Likewise, social work, a concept developed from the same ontology and epistemology to address the implications of industrialisation and modernisation, was imported and transplanted in developing nations.

Knowledge content in social work is unique, where it combines different methods, theories and concepts from other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics and more. Methods of helping of the west were questioned on its applicability and efficiency in implementing across the globe with varying cultures, beliefs and worldview (Gangarde, 1971). With the strong influence from Neo-liberal discourses, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) opines to standardise the content and knowledge. In working with Indigenous communities, the rigidity in the very concept and outlook of the profession where less consideration on the part of social workers for culturally relevant placements, their worldviews and social structure, results in the on-going deterioration of Indigenous communities. Efforts must be made to indigenise the curriculum, so that it will be congruent to the local needs and condition of India and North-East in particular. Owing to the diversity of India, contemporary educators have realised that, there cannot be one umbrella for indigenous framework and knowledge base.

The aim of the paper is to present and explore the western knowledge construction framework and its limitations in accepting and explaining indigenous content where indigenous epistemology is needed to reify realities. It also discusses the power relations within the academics where such a framework is still struggling to establish in the mainstream platform. The paper will also critique the content of social work education in Northeast, India, which has been constructed from the western philosophical thought, where it replicates a foreign institution, introduced by European settlers on the notion of colonialism. Lastly, the paper will attempt to explore alternative frameworks in understanding indigenous social realities. The nature of this paper is descriptive and analytical and the body has been organised in different themes to address the set objectives. Sources are secondary data, accessible on the published books, edited books and journal articles.

Truth in Enlightenment Paradigm

In layman's understanding, 'knowledge' as defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary is perceived as a fact or condition of knowing something with

familiarity gained through experience or association, also, a circumstance or condition of apprehending truth or fact through reasoning. This notion is very popular amongst writers, academicians and other professionals, where knowledge is firstly postulated as an authentic truth in comprehending, explaining and evaluating everything from reality of history to the truth of human consciousness. Secondly, it is popularly believed that capturing this truth is part of the civilisation process that is free of political attachment with the aim to ameliorate the world as those of hard sciences (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). As pointed by Dani W. Nabudere (1997) and Partha N. Mukherji (2005) the idea of escalating human condition around the world or the modernisation project can be traced back to Auguste Comte in his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830) asserting reconstruction of social order through modern epistemology whereby, rejecting other modes of explanation. Couple with Max Weber's theory of modernisation and traditionalism, which moves in the line of Enlightenment ideologies of growth and evolution. This conception of growth was emulated after hard sciences with its scientific methodology, which is supposed to establish a solid, validated truth in the paradigm of knowledge. Thus, modernisation theory that is informed by scientifically derived knowledge sets the foundation in vilifying others that are not within their frame of reference as old and inherited superstitions, prejudices and errors. It also creates a sort obligation that the knower (the enlightened) must catalyse the other to improve the moral condition and ascend to the higher state. In this scheme of modernisation, Weber posits that purposive rationality will replace all traditional form of authority institutions, and belief system with bureaucratic modern structure. This conception was augmented by Talcot Parson through his structural-functional approach whereby modern social organisation of the west be transferred to other non-western societies. The construction and establishment of these discourses of truth and progress have led classical theorists with their philosophical doctrines and racial theory to justify slavery and colonial exploitation (Said, 1979).

Discourses undermining other ways of knowing did not arrived in a vacuum, as Guba and Lincoln (1982; 2005) suggests, these are built around an axiomatic systems which they called paradigm that characterised by sets of assumptions like the belief about the nature of the social world and what is possible to know about the reality or ontology. Ontology can also be understood as a worldview. The second assumption is epistemology, which is the nature of knowledge or what counts as knowledge /truth. Further, it answers questions of who can acquire knowledge and what appropriate methods or stages of test that it must go through to be accepted as knowledge or truth (Snape & Spencer, 2003). The underpinning authority of Eurocentric

knowledge over others comes from the Enlightenment epistemology where it hierarchically demarcates scientific knowledge from the non-scientific ones. As noted by Strega (2005) knowledge is seen as synonymous with science. It was believed widely to be the ultimate and superior form of knowledge as compared to others that are informed by philosophy, folklore and other oral traditions, so much, so it is seen as unreliable. The positivists position themselves within the stern belief that there is only one truth or reality and the only path to such inquiry is through the application of a rigorous scientific methodology which is rational, neutral and objective with a dual relationship between object and subject. Immanuel Kant in his work *Critique of Pure Reason*, which was published in 1781, the work of Wilhelm Dilthey (during 1860s-70s) emphasising the significance of '*Verstehen*' and other social researchers questioned the positivist approach in understanding social world and proposed an alternative paradigm. Still the former dominates and the latter is seen as soft and unscientific (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Although other paradigms have gained more acceptance in today's research, marginalised theorists such as race theorists, feminist theorists and indigenous researchers have criticised the current knowledge domain. They argue that knowledge production has always been organised and produced by certain people and with certain assumptions (Euro-American centric) and it legitimate only certain forms of knowledge that does not represent them or their worldview. Thus, Enlightenment epistemology underpinned with racialized and gendered discourses informs quantitative and qualitative approaches where it transcends power and politics and renders it invisible (Brown & Strega, 2005).

Power in Legitimising Reality

Foucault (1972) asserts that knowledge is much wider than what we understand. It comprises perspectives, ideas, narratives, commentaries, rules, laws, explanations and definitions produced and legitimated by disciplines and institutions. This knowledge has been created to give us its subjects because "we make sense of ourselves by referring back to various bodies of knowledge" (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000, p. XIV). Further, he opines that knowledge is full of contradictions, uncertainties and occupied with cultural prejudices. Influenced by dialectic reasoning of Hegel and dialectic materialism of Marx, he sees knowledge as a power struggle, in the sense that some explanations with certain axiomatic systems and ideology winning over the other. These struggles emerge whenever new knowledge arises to explain a well-informed phenomenon. Winning the struggle determines which knowledge will prevail and the one that yields is buried under the dominant form, which Gramsci called the subjugated knowledge. As he

posits, knowledge is never neutral, but it is closely associated with power or in other words, it is the production of power. He offers a conception that there cannot be any knowledge production without power relations nor, power relations constitute without an informed knowledge. Further, with a similar stance as most critical theorists, he positions power not in one single entity such as the State or some powerful groups but sees power as being dispersed throughout society, having a relational factor. Power-relations also comes from what Foucault called disciplinary knowledge or the expert knowledge or ultimate truth of the field. The expert in disciplinary knowledge such as professors, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists and other field professionals provide instructions to the society on how to think and how to act upon it. One way of legitimising such disciplinary knowledge is to organise and centre on 'names' of the author or originator of the knowledge.

If you were doing a subject in psychoanalysis at university, for instance, everything would be organised around the work of authors such as Freud, Jung, Adler, Jones, Reich, Klein and Lacan. These 'names' hold a privileged place in the discipline—the commentaries and theories they produce carry what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls 'cultural capital'... (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000, p.22)

Experts within disciplinary knowledge think within a specific space with specific webs of ideas influenced by a discourse or discourses. Here, discourse can be seen as a window through which it allows us to make sense. Mills defines it as a "set of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalised force, which means that they have a profound influence on the way that individuals act and think" (1997, p. 62). Here, we see discourse arranges ideas, values, and norms, which is to be accepted as truth and those that are to be undermined as illegitimate. In other words, social or power relations determine the inclusion and exclusion of ideas and it works by masking such power in discourses. To understand the hegemonic relational nature of a discourse, we must look at one of Gramsci's key concepts of hegemony where he opines as a concept of truth, ways to understand and to act is diffused throughout the society and it sustain via institutions where, morality, values, social arrangement, political and cultural realities are those of the dominant group. Institutions such as schools, universities and media also, experts and intellectuals act as hegemonic apparatuses or instruments to exercise hegemony (Finocchiaro, 1984; Woolcock, 1985 & Morton, 2003). The source of power to influence, govern and represent the other comes from their own legitimised reality of reason and rationality that the truism of others must be facilitated by the west, since their truth is unscientific and invalid.

Indigenous Knowledge and Worldview

Recalling the discussion above, that our assumptions about the nature of our world lie in our ontology or in other words, our worldview. Thus, comprehending the rationale and scope of knowledge employed in particular societies is to understand how that society perceives and understands their world. Hart (2010) suggests that all knowledge has a close relationship with worldview. In layman's terms worldview can be understood as our perception to which we express our relationship to the world where it signifies our conviction and outlook. Ghosh (2004a) viewed it as a matrix encompassing the totality of cultural experience and that explains the concept of relation of man with man, man with environment and man with supernatural forces. Knowledge and indigenous knowledge in particular is guided by their cognition, perception and affective map and how they make sense of the phenomena and ways, how they meet their end. Further, the emergence of indigenous worldview results from their close relationship with the environment. Hart (2010) articulates the principles offer by Leanne Simpson (2000) that in indigenous world

Knowledge is holistic, cyclic, and dependent upon relationships and connections to living and non-living beings and entities. Second, there are many truths, and these truths are dependent upon individual experiences. Third, everything is alive. Fourth, all things are equal. Fifth, the land is sacred. Sixth, the relationship between people and the spiritual world is important. Seventh, human beings are the least important in the world (p.3).

Toelken (1996) notes that this position is central to the Navajo, one of the tribes in the turtle island where maintaining the balance and harmony is possible only through reciprocal responsibilities with nature. Likewise, the Khasis, one of the oldest indigenous groups in northeast India is no exception. It expresses these similar principles in their framework. The essence of Khasi worldview revolves with the concept of '*Ka Hok*', which is the underlying reality that encompasses and governs everything in the universe. *Ka Hok* can be looked at from two-fold principle, ¹as the law of nature that oversee all the movement and order of the physical universe and ² as a Moral law. There is no equivalent word for *Ka Hok* in English which describes the cosmic law as well as the moral law and holds everything good in itself. Not to mitigate the concept, Ramsiej (2006) articulates, "the comprehensiveness of the field of operation of *Ka Hok* is evident in the notion that both gods and men are bound by it" (p. 64.).

UNESCO in 2018 projects indigenous knowledge as the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings and it informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. Indigenous knowledge has a close relationship or ties to the land and all that lives in it. This relationship is so deep and it is tied to natural laws. Settee (2011) argues that this knowledge has sustained Indigenous communities for millennia. In addition, this inherited knowledge includes the traditional forms of knowledge developed by parents and other elders in relation to ways of knowing, relationships/codes of conduct. As pointed out by Nongkynrih (2018 a) indigenous communities in Northeast India, have been surviving with minimal dependency from the outside world. Their knowledge of survival and practices are highly sustainable such as “the terrace cultivation of the Angami tribe in the state of Nagaland, the wet rice cultivation of the Apatani tribe in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and the sacred groves of the Khasi tribe in the state of Meghalaya” (p. 108). In contrast to the western knowledge that promotes individualism indigenous knowledge revolves around the value of collectivity. This concept is extended in their relationship with the cosmos and all the co-existence. For instance, to a Khasi, his conduct and relation to his fellow beings and nature is more important than committing to a doctrine or dogma. In the Khasi worldview, the environment and human beings are closely connected. Separating one from the other means to disconnect the culture, identity and life itself. He draws his identity, history, knowledge and ancestral wisdom from the environment and it is the environment that sustains his livelihood and other aspects of social life. Settee (2011) reflects that most of the aboriginal people see indigenous knowledge as ancient knowledge for community life and well-being.

The difference between indigenous worldview and that of the dominant western cultural worldview has been acknowledged by scholars but in spite of this variation, there has been no attempt to genuinely understand and examine their sequential and critical thought, as the Enlightenment paradigm deems such perspectives as primitive and incoherent (Hart, 2010). As highlighted by Linda. T. Smith (1999; 2012), Shawn Wilson (2001), Margaret Kovach (2005), Little Bear (2009) and other Indigenous scholars that Indigenous Knowledge should be enquired from an Indigenous Research Paradigm. Taking three essential elements, i.e. (1) Ontology, belief and nature of things, (2) Epistemology, ways, limit and validity of knowing of that reality and (3) Axiology, the set of morals and ethics of the community, which we will briefly explore in the following section.

Knowledge Informing Social Work Today

Knowledge content in social work and community organisation in particular is unique, where it combines different methods, theories and concepts from other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics and more (Desai, 1974). The inception of social work education in India, started with the initiative of the American missionary, Clifford Manshardt in Sir Dorabji Tata Trust 1936. Although his experience was from American social work, he also has an orientation towards the Indian ways of working. Curriculum in the first ten years was made relevant to India. However, after a decade, especially schools established after independence, courses offered were drifted to the American pattern (Ranade, 1974; Mandal, 1989). The influence of American social work in India, emanates from the exposure of Indian social workers to their social work education via US government's Technical Cooperation Mission and the Council of Social Work Education Exchange Programme (Mandal, 1989). This influence has led to the extensive use of books and journals from America in Indian schools, which raises the question on the ability of students to practice in India with concept, theory and technique based on American cultural ideologies. Although the programmes claimed to be secular in their curriculum content, largely it is driven by ideologies, such as capitalism, social Darwinism and individualism (Desai; 1974; Mandal, 1989; Nadkari & Joseph, 2015; Pathak, 1974; Ranade, 1974).

The curriculum content has changed over the years; from charity it has progressively moved to welfare and slowly it moved to development and recently to human rights and social justice. However, not all these former perspectives have not been weeded out or come of age but they exist simultaneously. With the report of the Review Committee of the Second University Grants Commission, the focus has shifted from the clinical based remedial approach to a rights-based underpinning with empowerment methodologies, social action and policy efforts. Globalisation of curriculum has become a major debate today. The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) has been engaging in several global initiatives. These initiatives are never neutral, often they reflect the position of a hegemonic discourse of neoliberal ideology and modernist notions of progress and development (Sewpaul, 2014). The standardisation is seen as a neoliberal project. Sewpaul (2014) believes in the importance of the contextualisation and context specific curriculum stating that the human experience cannot be understood outside of its social context. However, there are others who believe it otherwise.

Healy (2014) noted that there are too many reported instances in which imported methods have done more harm and marginalized rather than strengthening the indigenous systems and ways of working. Efforts must be made to indigenise the curriculum, so that it will be congruent to the local needs and condition of India and Northeast in particular. However, indigenisation does not negate knowledge sharing with other parts of the world nor stop to collaborate with external partners. The curriculum as noted by Nadkari & Joseph (2015) should equip students with emancipatory ideologies, theories and practice of social transformation rather as suggested by Pathak, Ranade and Desai in 1974, to cater to the job opportunity and market.

Normative and Ideological Perspectives

Practicing social work and working with communities in particular comes with a certain set of norms, values, beliefs of what the exercise ought to be, and how it should be carried out. Social work associations both national and international reaffirm their commitment to the value of dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, social justice and human rights (Agnimitra, 2010). Ross (1967) propounded a frame of reference, underlining a certain acceptance of concepts and facts as foundation in working with the people (see Ross, M. G. 1967. *Community Organisation: Theory, Principles and Practice* 2 ed.). Here, he recognises the bias of such value assumption that guides action but he believed it to be more useful than otherwise.

Putting the perspective in an ideological framework, Ross conceptualised the practice with those sets of norms reflecting in the Liberal and Modernisation framework. First, his understanding of the community as a linear and evolutionary form, drawing from the modernisation lens, is changing with the pressing industrialisation and urbanisation. Factors that initiate and foster changes are explored and local conditions are checked for progress. Secondly, non-euro political structures are disproved and challenged by creating liberal democratic institutions. By creating these institutions, basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and other economic opportunities were assumed to be met. Thirdly, self-help is projected as a residual conception of social policy, whereby the state plays a limited role in dealing with social problems, which is expected to be managed effectively by the private organisation. This framework with residual welfare model has also fostered the development of western social work in India and other Third World countries (Midgley, 1984).

In 2003, the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) underlined social justice and human rights to be the foundation of the practice. Although,

it is generally agreed upon, the position of these ideals is based on theories of value, that is part of an institutional environment exercising claims upon the socialised individual (Stanley, 1967). For instance, social and distributive justice is a normative subject, arranged and distributed with particular conception to maintain equilibrium. In social work literature, social justice has not been defined categorically (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wenocur, 2011).

The interpretation of justice relies on the perspectives of different ideologies. Stanley (1987) distinguished the concept from two broad frameworks. From the lens of liberal and neo-liberal humanism, value is emphasised on the (1) sacredness of the human personality drawing from Kant's norm that no human should be seen as a mean only, (2) high standards of living drawing from economic norms of growth and productivity and (3) individual participation in one's destiny which is understood as the primary norm of democracy. In a Marxist humanism perspective, the concept of human personality and slavery is expanded and reinterpreted to abolish the 'wage slavery' and also stresses on individual liberation from the struggle for material existence and division of labour. And to further redistribute resources to realise the ideals such as those of the aristocrats. And for this necessary transition even authoritarian measures are justified (Woolcock, 1985; Morton, 2003).

As a normative practice, it is obvious that community workers take different ideological positions. But the practice in India largely has remained apolitical (Andharia, 2009; Siddiqui, 1997). One of the reasons for remaining apolitical is that community workers in India are dependent on the State and international agencies. The other is that the training has always centred largely on a non-directive approach, where workers are expected to remain a value-free individual, who mediates and coordinates between different spectrum of views. As pointed out by Siddiqui (1997) deliberating on ideology is significant, as it informs on the discourse and to avoid any contradiction in your goals and action. Although the above frameworks are mainly based on materialist analysis, nonetheless, it reflects the importance of ideology in practice and normative positions that it takes. Community work should understand different normative orientations and ideologies to respond to change and resistance. Especially to counter any hegemonic ideology, metanarrative that subjugates the other (Andharia, 2009; Jha, 2009).

Towards Decolonising Knowledge

As discussed earlier, the production of knowledge and the power to legitimise it has always been the privilege of the coloniser over the colonised. This very essence facilitates the power to justify their dominance.

Regulating and sustaining this power is aided by formal rules and norms of the disciplinary knowledge produced within their cultural ontology. Linda T. Smith (1999; 2012) states that Indigenous peoples must research, write, and restore back our rights in defining ourselves with our worldview. This reclaiming of knowledge cannot and should not be produced from the fundamental framework of the Enlightenment paradigm, which denies the validity of indigenous ontology, but from an Indigenous Paradigm centring on Indigenous understanding and ways of knowing. Aligning Indigenous Paradigm within Post-colonial literature has also been questioned as it fails to realise the continuing ways in which Indigenous are colonised and excluding claims of indigeneity. Lawrence and Dua (2011) states that limitation with postcolonial framework has indirectly endorsed the on-going colonisation. Further, they urge the Global South to analyse such a framework critically in understanding Indigenous reality as colonisation has dominated and shaped lives even after they left, also power and sovereignty have never been restored back but transferred to another master. Delving into the details of post-colonial literature is beyond the scope of this paper, the author suggests exploring and discerning its limitations before applying in Indigenous studies. Coming back to Indigenous paradigm, as pointed above, it is essential to understand the three elements i.e. Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology in Indigenous research, which we will briefly explore.

The diversity of Indigenous groups around the globe has raised questions for any generalisation. Defining specific features, identical or consistent patterns of an indigenous worldview is challenging, however, elements like collectivity, communality, experiential, holistic, spirituality and interconnectedness are common to a majority of indigenous groups (Ghosh, 2004; Hart, 2010; Sefa Dei, 2011; Settee, 2011; Baskin & Sinclair, 2015). To remind what Leanne Simpson opines, the reality in the Indigenous world is holistic, experiential, interrelated with all co-existents, sacred.... (refer to the above). As postulated by Guba and Lincoln (1982; 2005) where the ontology informs the epistemological direction, Indigenous epistemology or ways of knowing is fluid, non-linear and relational and has a close relationship with the cosmos and everything in it. Kovach (2005) points out that epistemology encompasses the spirit of collectivity, reciprocity and respect with all co-existents and this understanding is purposeful and practical. These practical knowledges are passed from generation to generation through folklore, cultural practices and other forms of oral tradition. Drawing from her assertions, in Indigenous epistemology, experience is a legitimate way of knowing and storytelling is a

legitimate way of sharing knowledge (also see Qwul'sih'yah'maht & Thomas, 2005).

Moving to the ethical consideration, when working with Indigenous peoples in the production of knowledge, researchers should eradicate ethnocentrism. Methodology should align with Indigenous ontology and epistemology so that it will have purposeful and practical relevance. We must centre our concepts and worldviews to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Smith; 1999; 2012). Other Indigenous researchers proposed some ethical guidelines to Indigenous research. Firstly, the research findings will be the intellectual and cultural property of the community. Secondly, reviewing all findings should be reviewed with the community to ensure accuracy and avoid misinterpretation. Third is to involve the community in planning, executing and evaluating research processes and results. Baskin (2005) also suggests that community members involved in research should be recognized as research assistants and be given due credit. In 1999, Cora Weber offered some fundamental ethical principles in working with Indigenous peoples and these principles have no order and the need to prioritize one with the other. These principles proposed are- All forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected. Respect does not simply mean knowing and following basic rituals and practices but believing and living that relationship with all life forms. Second, research will be for the benefit of the community. Third, the foundation of indigenous research must lie within the reality or the lived indigenous experience. Fourth, any theories developed or proposed will be grounded in and supported by indigenous epistemology. Fifth, the integrity of any indigenous people or community should never be undermined by research. Lastly, researchers should anticipate transformation of participants in the research process.

Exploring Indigenous Paradigm is conceptual rather than defining in strict terms as those of Enlightenment principles. The methodology and cultural protocol are left to be determined by the respective Indigenous group. As Indigenous researchers, we must be aware of both the worldviews, as it will give an edge to discern and construct our knowledge. For instance, the application of standardised measures of rigour and validity as evaluative criteria in knowledge production, in Indigenous paradigm, one never claims the status authority and objective truth of such knowledge (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Strega, 2005). Decolonising knowledge should not only end in producing alternative and ancillary explanations as those of other qualitative methods. In addition, it does not negate knowledge sharing with other parts of the

world nor stop collaborating with other partners from the west. But, sharing of knowledge should be on an equal ground where not just the Indigenous peoples contextualize western knowledge but also the western world taking our knowledge and applying it in their context.

Conclusion

It has been long enough that the imperial permits and defines what is legitimate and what is not. Determining our reality through Indigenous Research Paradigm is a form of resistance in this hegemonic power-knowledge relation with the colonial knowers. In working with Indigenous groups, their worldview and ways of knowing should inform practitioners and researchers. Moreover, to have an edge in the practice, both researchers and practitioners should critically discern between worldviews and its axiomatic systems in avoiding complicity in colonisation projects.

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