

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London and New York: Zed Books; and Dunedin, New Zealand: the University of Otago Press. 1999, 208 p., Index. ISBN 1 85649 624 4.

What a wonderful book! I must say that this is a fresh, innovative contribution to research methods and makes transparent the impacts of imperialism on some of the world's colonized peoples.

Smith's challenge was to create decolonizing strategies within research. When I first held the book, I noted that it is small with a nice cover featuring faces of women, has an index, notes at the end of each chapter, and a very inviting "Conclusion: A Personal Journey." It was this last piece which I read first. Smith contextualizes herself in the writing of this book and makes a critical point about holding "officials" (and official knowledges, I might add) accountable because they have inherited and live with the consequences of colonized power. Like Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), I think Smith writes about the need for deconstruction of official talk, of those knowledges formed by others to represent indigenous peoples. Plus, one of the numerous Canadian connections is established early with Smith's identification of one of her indigenous colleagues (Jo-Ann Archibald of the Sto:lo Nation and Director of the First Nations House of Learning at UBC).

The book itself consists of an introduction, ten chapters, the conclusion and the index. The overall goal is to develop "indigenous peoples as researchers"(p. 17). The foundations for the rest of the book exist in the all-important introduction. The book's tasks are two-fold. The first is to deconstruct Western scholarship and make the decolonizing framework visible. The second is to create ways of researching that are "respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful" (p. 9) and that focus on stories of resistance and hope as well as on marginalization. Amongst other points, we, the readers, are introduced to a) the need to consider research methods, indigenous people, and imperialism always "in the same breath," b) the concept that research has something at stake and that the practise of researching is a humbling experience, c) the concept of a network of the "world's indigenous peoples," and d) research which involves self-determination, decolonization, and social justice. The keys are numerous here, and I found myself going back and re-reading this introduction several times as I progressed through the other chapters.

The first four chapters take us, the readers, on a journey of decolonization: decolonization of the practice of research and of the knowledge produced by such research through an intensive look at imperialism, history, writing, and theory. As the journey continues, we are introduced in the second chapter to what research looks like "through imperial eyes," full of rationalism, institutionalism, and objectivism (the legitimacy of "looking at" indigenous peoples). She uses the metaphor of archive. By now, I, as reader, am already getting a little unsettled about my research past, and so I should be. This is a consciousness-raising exercise for researchers, even those who have worked from the margins. The third chapter casts the reader further into the analysis by positioning modern research traditions firmly within the context of "Enlightenment," modernity, and liberalism. Balanced against these are "the arguments of different indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape, and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen" (p. 74). And, in the fourth chapter, we are to imagine ourselves being "travelled through" by researchers "with a mission" (p. 78) and then looking at who gets to trade that knowledge that is created. Indigenous or not, this chapter alone makes the book worth reading.

Chapters 5 through 9 take the reader on a journey through what research can become if it is developed in alternative ways that are more connected with and sympathetic to indigenous peoples. Everything is under examination here: who has knowledge, development of indigenous research agendas, decolonizing of ethics and research ethics, descriptions of numerous examples of indigenous research (25 of them), and a case study of Maori research. These chapters really bring home how research needs to be done differently in order to not recreate imperialist knowledge creation. The final chapter stands as a challenge for the researched to become the researchers and, in return, for those who have been part of traditional imperialistic research, to become much more involved in the enterprise of decolonizing research practice.

Overall the book is readable, engaging and terribly important to researchers who do not want to recreate "the sins of the past." It is well referenced and clearly articulated, and is full of engaging stories and revelations which all contribute to a text that I highly recommend principally to senior undergraduate students, graduate students, and all research-methods teachers. It is also extraordinarily useful for researchers and research organizations working in interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary ways and/or to community-based researchers. People not interested in research but interested in indigenous cultures would also find this book a riveting read. Finally, I agree with one of the authors quoted on the back cover, that "no budding author should be allowed to leave the academy without reading this book." This is a courageous book, one that pushes the margins of research and really helps us to reconceptualize what it is we are doing when we research in the social world. I give it the highest of praise and I will be researching differently in the future because of Smith and her work.

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