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Decolonizing Methodologies: Research And Indigenous Peoples



Synopsis

To the colonized, the term 'research' is conflated with European colonialism; the ways in which academic research has been implicated in the throes of imperialism remains a painful memory. This essential volume explores intersections of imperialism and research - specifically, the ways in which imperialism is embedded in disciplines of knowledge and tradition as 'regimes of truth.' Concepts such as 'discovery' and 'claiming' are discussed and an argument presented that the decolonization of research methods will help to reclaim control over indigenous ways of knowing and being. Now in its eagerly awaited second edition, this bestselling book has been substantially revised, with new case-studies and examples and important additions on new indigenous literature, the role of research in indigenous struggles for social justice, which brings this essential volume urgently up-to-date.

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Customer Reviews

Looking at Western research practices from the 'underside' of a positivist paradigm deeply entrenched and diffused throughout public and private educational, governmental, and corporate tentacles, Linda Tuhiwai Smith is a Maori (New Zealand) intellectual presenting a counter-methodological narrative stemming from a collective indigenous historical cynicism and whose voice bespeaks the refusal to be objectified by an inherently racist and imperialist mode of constructing knowledge and re-presentations of non-Western peoples. Deconstructing Western research paradigms is simply an act of defiance and resistance for Smith, particularly since she

constructs a radical alternative methodology rooted in self-determination, social justice, intellectual property rights, and active participation in all knowledge-making, contributions to the research processes, and dissemination of 'findings'. The exigency of articulating a research methodology aimed at critical praxis for Western and non-Western peoples interested in indigenous issues emerges at a point where globalization and neo-liberal imperial practices and investments are opening new spaces for the unilateral and/or predominant benefit of Western research regimes that continue capitalizing and objectifying indigenous peoples through racist and incorrigible projects that erase human dignity, i.e. Human Genome Diversity Project. The book can strategically be divided into two main sections: the first section explores the contemporary and historical legacy of an imperial tryst between Western scientific, economic, and ideological formations shaping relations with alterity (Chapters 1-5); the second section outlines a radical alternative methodology for conducting research on indigenous peoples and issues (Chapters 6-9).

'Decolonizing Methodologies' is written by someone who grew up within indigenous communities, 'where stories about research and researchers intertwined with stories about all forms of colonialism and injustice' (p. 2). This book contains ten chapters ; it, however, could be divided in two major parts. The first part challenges the history and legacy of the cultural assumptions behind research and knowledge of colonial culture. Tuhiwai Smith, in the first part of her book, adopts a feminist and critical theory framework to challenge Western paradigm of research and knowledge production. She claims that the term research is linked to European imperialism and western colonialism and 'is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary' (p. 1). Referring to some prominent (and deconstructed) questions of Spivak (1990) , i.e. who should speak ... and who will listen? , the major critical and indigenous based questions that cover and direct the subject matter of the book are: Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its result be disseminated? (p. 9-10). Furthermore, The author Smith presents two fundamental questions in the first chapter of book; 'is history important for indigenous peoples' (p. 29), 'is writing important for indigenous peoples' (p. 35). Tuhiwai Smith's work draws from a number of renowned figures in critical tradition and particularly in emancipatory theory. Foucault, Said, Freire, Marx, and Thiong have had a greater influence on Tuhiwai Smith's work and her 'emancipatory goals'.

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