
Piste de lecture

Research as Resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous, and anti-oppressive approaches, 2nd Edition

Leslie Brown & Susan Strega (eds), Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2015, 312 p.

Résumé et commenté par

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Susan Strega and Leslie Brown's (eds.) second edition of *Research as Resistance* offers a collection of research stories contributed by social activists who recognize that research is an inevitably political act. As the sub-title suggests, the contributors approach research work from a range of emancipatory perspectives as they engage with questions of identity and inclusion, and while some chapters speak to research projects and processes that are more compelling than others, all the authors share a commitment to communicating marginalized perspectives in authentic ways.

The book opens with a strong introduction in which the editors invite the reader to consider why we tend to focus our research lens down instead of up. Even social justice researchers tend to be more preoccupied with marginalized people as the subject of our research, instead of how people benefit from that oppression: “We do not investigate wealth as an individual pathology in the same way that we explore poverty” (: 6). Even readers well acquainted with anti-oppressive practice are encouraged to reflect upon how we can strive for an even stronger commitment to more inclusive, participatory research practices.

One of the structural strengths of this small book is the way in which it presents theoretical and experiential discourses on critical, indigenous, and anti-oppressive research approaches side by side. Chapters by Karen Potts & Leslie Brown, Margaret Kovach, Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha, Susan Strega, and Teresa Macias, look at how traditional social science methodologies not only fail to generate new responses to enduring questions about well-being but, in fact, contribute to compounding oppression. In these chapters the language of methodology—epistemology, ontology, data, liberal and objective versus critical and subjective perspectives—are unpacked. For the novice researcher these chapters offer a solid introduction to the research traditions that we inherit and seek to transform by bringing new questions, perspectives and ways of knowing to our exploration of human rights and community development. Margaret Kovach and Adam Gaudry both contribute chapters about Indigenous methodologies, which are not always well explained in mainstream research literature. Including these two distinct perspectives here implicitly reminds us of the rich diversity within Indigenous histories and ways of knowing.

One of the other stronger theoretical chapters is Teresa Macias's chapter on “Doing Foucauldian Research Discourse Analysis”. As required reading for most emerging researchers, Michel Foucault can be a very daunting undertaking. Macias's chapter is one of the best introductions that I have ever read to help orient students to his philosophy of power.

Interwoven throughout the book are stories of experiences in which authors more intimately explore the challenges and potentially rich rewards of working from critical and anti-oppressive perspectives. Therefore, in the same volume that offers Kovach's and Gaudry's systematic explanations of the evolution of indigenous methodologies we are given a research story by Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Anne Thomas) that offers personal insight into how we can accept and honour stories that give meaning to historical events and contemporary policy. In other chapters, Jenny Holder, Heather Fraser and Michele Jarldorn, and Elizabeth (Eli) Manning share their experiences in community action research with a grassroots organization, over coffee with women who share past experiences of intimate partner violence, and disrupting hegemonic assumptions about gender in exploring discourse about men having sex with men, respectively.

The narratives contained in this collection demonstrate that research is both intimate and political. There are no illusions about objectivity in exploring marginalized perspectives and bringing them out of obscurity. Research can sometimes be corrective of the commonly consumed version of truth, or sometimes invite us to consider truths that few have even inquired about before. While the preoccupation that several of the writers have about their relationship with their project and its participants can get tedious at times, it also reminds us that sometimes the democratization of research can be tedious and very difficult to do. Compromise is inevitable.

Still, *Research as Resistance* is ultimately a hopeful volume about the revolutionary potential of social justice methodologies. It is quite exciting that new researchers can come into this knowledge right from their undergraduate courses. We need to know the research traditions we inherit in order to improve upon them going forward, but I think that new researchers can start right here without having to go through the rite of passage that their social justice teachers had to endure, struggling to fit our questions and the data/stories into traditional, normative methodologies that just don't communicate the very many ways of knowing how to live in this world.