

Leslie Brown and Susan Strega. *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches, Second Edition.* (Toronto, ON: 2015, Canadian Scholars' Press. Pp. 269, ISBN: 978-1551308-82-1.)

Katie K. MacLeod

Volume 38, Number 1-2, 2016

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1041600ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1041600ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (print)

1708-0401 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

MacLeod, K. K. (2016). Review of [Leslie Brown and Susan Strega. *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches, Second Edition.* (Toronto, ON: 2015, Canadian Scholars' Press. Pp. 269, ISBN: 978-1551308-82-1.)]. *Ethnologies*, 38(1-2), 300–302.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1041600ar>

Leslie Brown and Susan Strega. *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches, Second Edition*. (Toronto, ON: 2015, Canadian Scholars' Press. Pp. 269, ISBN: 978-1551308-82-1.)

Research as Resistance takes a critical look at the resurgence of marginalized knowledges, including those of women, the disabled, sexual minorities, and racialized minorities, and how these knowledges are employed within research to work against dominant knowledges and methodologies. Gender, class, and race are central aspects of social research; however, they are continuously at the periphery. This book emphasizes an anti-oppressive research approach which encourages researchers to commit “to a set of principles, values, and ways of working, and [that] can be carried out anywhere – it’s a matter of choice amid various constraints” (p. 18). In other words, not all ethics review boards and communities will hold you to the standards of anti-oppressive research; it is the choice of the researcher to morally operate within these guidelines themselves.

As a researcher, distancing oneself from dominant knowledges and methodologies presents an opportunity to explore the ways research can be used as a tool for social change in its ability to expose subaltern knowledges and the power they hold for resistance. Editors Susan Strega and Leslie Brown emphasize that this second edition contributes new material on engaging meaningfully with research subjects and being a critically reflexive researcher, especially in relation to the researcher’s positionality.

Authors reflect and critique their research methodologies through epistemological and ontological foundations since dominant research and methodologies operate within an epistemology of Whiteness. In her updated chapter, Margaret Kovach argues that transformational research must operate on “the epistemological assumption of these varied methodologies contend that those who live life on the margins of society experience silencing and injustice” (p. 46-7). It is through these reflections that authors establish their positionality. In her own reflection, Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha notes how anti-oppressive research allows for dialogical and fluid ontological claims, along with situated and embodied knowledge that is grounded in lived experience as an epistemological foundation.

In reflecting on the foundations of research methodologies, a critique of “outsider” research emerges. Kovach notes that within decolonized methodologies, the solution of “community-based” research continues to operate within the White or outsider paradigm. Within their respective chapters, Margaret Kovach, Qwul’sih’yah’maht (Robina Anne Thomas)

and Adam Gaudry provide complementary analyses on Indigenous methodologies and how they need to involve elements of engagement, respect, and reciprocity. Citing leading scholars on Indigenous methodologies (Smith 2012; Wilson 2008; Minde 2008; Chilisa 2011), these authors outline important guidelines for researchers working within Indigenous contexts. These include, but are not limited to: recognizing indigenous knowledge as legitimate knowledge; building a relationship of reciprocity with participants and community; respecting collective knowledge and worldviews; respecting storytelling as methodology; ensuring research will benefit the community; and including the community in the research decision-processes.

In addition to these guidelines, authors on Indigenous methodologies also encourage researchers to look into the histories of the communities and understand the socio-cultural dynamics at play while becoming self-aware of our privileged positions as researchers. This is true of any research context; however, is especially important when working with populations on the margins. Potts and Brown emphasize the importance of being flexible within a research setting through operating within an anti-oppressive epistemology. They note that researchers should be open to input on the project and be willing to redesign based on the needs of the community. In particular, they emphasize that research needs to have a wider scope for what “counts as knowledge” (p. 38) and for researchers to ensure the research is available and accessible to their population.

There is a continuous negotiation of one’s theoretical positionality in research. Moosa-Mitha argues that anti-oppressive theory is both critical and difference-centred (p. 67). Susan Strega outlines how she has merged poststructural and radical feminist theories to guide her research through understanding power as relational and rejecting dualism to overcome dominant epistemologies. Eli Manning’s exploration of genderqueer methodologies is a practical application of Strega’s analysis. In this new chapter, Manning uses queer theory to create distance from dichotomies’ ways of thinking and navigate the problematic binary within the modernist ontology in order to move towards the development of a queer ontology.

The five new chapters (Holder; Fraser & Jarldorn; Manning; Macias; and Gaudry) in the second edition are excellent resources for students. They present practical examples in using qualitative methodologies, positionality, community engagement, and discourse analysis. Jenny Holder provides an overview of how she negotiated her position within a community action research project in a practical application of the anti-

oppressive methodologies. Holder outlines challenges to informed consent, participant withdrawal, and confidentiality within a small group setting. Heather Fraser and Michele Jorlorn provide a detailed outline of how to analyze a complex interview, interpret transcripts, identify trends, and translate the interview narrative into an academic text. Both Manning and Macias demonstrate how they were able to navigate different theories in order to apply them within a social justice framework. Gaudry outlines his positionality as a Métis researcher navigating space as an Indigenous person and a researcher, an insider and an outsider.

The new additions to the book clearly fill a gap in the application of anti-oppressive theory to the real world. These chapters provide cohesion to the strong theoretical and methodological material present in the original chapters. Eli Manning's chapter adds an intriguing addition in terms of the experiences of sexual minorities; however, there is still a gap in material covering the disabled and non-Indigenous racialized minorities. While I appreciate and agree with the critiques of "outsider," White, or Western research in this book, I caution readers against a holistic "insider" perspective on social justice research. Objectivity can be lost when the researcher is too close to the situation and elements may go unnoticed due to familiarity. Despite their position as an insider, if one is in the privileged position of a researcher, one's positionality shifts, albeit partially, to that of an outsider.

*Katie K. MacLeod
Dalhousie University*