

Afterword

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Just as we began the introductory chapter by raising a number of questions, in part to frame issues addressed in the chapters to follow, we end with some brief reflections and raise additional questions about this collective decolonizing research project. Why “decolonizing research” and not “post-colonial research”? Post(-)colonialism (with or without the hyphen) is a discourse that is at once highly contested and enormously popular. Shohat (1992) and other scholars note that used loosely, postcolonialism collapses identities of individuals who lived in former colonies and whose experience of colonialism was qualitatively different, for example, the experiences of the white American settler and the Native American or the white Australian and indigenous people of Australia—both groups having been under British colonization. One of the chapters in this volume explores the inexplicable and inescapable positionality of being colonizer and colonized. Postcolonialism, in this case, suffers what Shohat (1992) calls a “suffocating neo-colonial hegemony” (p.105).

We would argue that any construction of the “postcolonial” still embodies much of what is termed “colonial,” similar to ways in which postmodernity embodies modernity (Swadener and Wachira, 2003). In this book, in fact, we have adopted Quist’s (2001) use of the term “postcolonial,” rather than post-colonial, which can be read as “carrying the idea of a linearity and chronology, signifying one period followed by another” (p. 299). As McClintock (1992, p. 85) asserts, “the term post-colonial is haunted by the very figure of linear development . . . and marks history as a series of stages along an epochal road from pre-colonial, to colonial to the post-colonial.” Quist’s (2001, p. 299) use of the term postcolonial suggests that continuity, a back-and-forth relationship, a constant between the past and present-day cultural and sociopolitical relations with implications for

the future. This affords the opportunity of engaging with the continuing complex interrelationships among factors and forces that simultaneously impact the postcolonial situation.

The term “decolonizing,” on the other hand, implicitly carries within it recognition of the existence of neocolonialism, thereby acknowledging the regeneration of other forms/means of coloniality that support a geo-economic hegemony. This geo-economic hegemony then makes possible the “voluntary” immigration of postcolonial scholars to the Western metropolises that sustain and continue their oppression.

Also present in this volume are iterations of the uneasy relationship between the postcolonial scholar (postcolonial here used in a temporal sense) and the Western academy—to which many are beholden and dependent. The colonizing tendencies of the Western academy, paradoxically a place that many of the authors in this volume received their graduate degrees and continue to work in, are often evidenced in the ways in which structures of knowledge within the academy create conditions that exercise intellectual domination that balefully cripple and subjugate Othered knowledge forms. Within many of the critical personal narratives in this book is a resounding resistance to domination by the Western academy of their Othered knowledge forms, and also a rearticulation of indigenous scholars’ ways of knowing.

Chapters in this book have also interrogated implicit assumptions of cross-cultural research. Where do research questions, problems, and methodological approaches come from? Whether researchers are indigenous or non-indigenous, the influence of the Western academy in restricting the frame of what counts for scholarship creates tensions and contradictions in attempts to “decolonize” research. Even with the best of intentions of indigenous researchers or “allied others” (Rogers and Swadener, 1999) working in collaboration with indigenous researchers, particularly those with Western education, it is very hard to break away from the colonizing/Western authority claims of what constitutes research, who frames the research questions, for whom the research is intended/will be consumed, and, therefore, in whose language the research shared, validated, and disseminated. Another, related issue alluded to in several chapters is the question of who benefits from research with indigenous people.

Further questions that emerge include: Who has the power to name, and how does naming reify existing power relations? Who defines and legitimizes what counts as “scholarship”? Where are some of the current “data plantations” in educational research? Is experience, particularly “indigenous insiders’ experience,” a necessary precursor for asking the right questions in pursuit of culturally legitimate scholarship—or can the privileging of “insider” experience be problematic? Are the tools for decolonization available

only to indigenous researchers or can this be a shared process? If so, what are cautionary signs or limits of cross-cultural collaboration?

In terms of the roles of indigenous versus non-indigenous scholars and the cultural validity of research, questions raised by Angela Cavender Wilson (1998), in her essay “American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American Indian History?” are relevant. Her work relates to issues raised in this volume—particularly questions concerning who has the right to tell a group or culture’s history. Wilson (1998) states,

When the topic of writing about Indians comes up the first questions that come to mind are, who is doing the writing? why? and what do the subjects have to say about this? These are questions that rarely have been considered by those in American Indian history, but they are extremely important when addressing the ethical and moral considerations that arise when those outside the culture write about subjects who can speak for themselves. (p. 23)

These issues are reflected in both Julie Kaomea’s and Kathryn Manuelito’s chapters. Kaomea problematizes her role as an indigenous academic working in Native Hawaiian educational communities and describes her efforts to incorporate Native Hawaiian protocol and tradition and forge “hybrid indigenous/Western research methodologies that draw from and speak to both indigenous and Western ways of knowing and being.” Manuelito problematizes Western discourses of “self-determination” and explores how members of a Navajo community enact self-determination as *they* understand it. Central to this chapter is not only the importance of better understanding how indigenous communities frame, resist, and reconstruct popular discourse, but the critical role of indigenous language to convey cultural meaning making.

Wilson (1998) further addresses the large body of historical scholarship on American Indians completed with virtually no contact with Native people or primary sources and asserts that

The idea that scholars can “sift through” the biases of non-Indian written sources sufficiently to get at the Indian perspective is presumptuous and erroneous. These scholars should not discontinue their research in the field, but they should discontinue the pretense that what they are writing is American Indian history. This kind of scholarship remains, instead, American Indian history largely from the white perspective. (p. 26)

In terms of her advice to non-Indian researchers, Wilson (1998, p. 25) argues strongly against researchers “swarming to Native communities to

record stories from our precious elders," and in favor of "slowly developing acquaintances with Indian people and giving Native people from the community they are studying the opportunity to comment on their work while it is being written."

Another strand that runs through several of the chapters in this volume is the authors' individual and collective struggles and resistance of the "subalternity," namely, the rejection of feelings of mental inferiority and habits of subservience and obedience that the Western academy often enacts upon them. The critical personal narratives in this volume speak of various attempts to resist appropriation of their Othered knowledge forms, while engaging in a cautious dance around issues of valorization, in which their work and voices are dangerously elevated to the level of being "representative" of a culture or spokespersons for a civilization. Several chapters in this final section explore the dangers of the English language as the language of research that, as the authors observe, is often the language through which indigenous knowledge forms are represented often without regard to what is lost in translation and transculturation. Many of the authors in this volume are constrained and caught up in the use of English as the language of research representation—a very colonizing endeavor—from which, though they are aware of the dangers of English, they cannot extricate themselves. The intellectual vagabondage of the postcolonial scholar in the Western academy and the production of the knowledge of Othered/indigenous knowledge for and within the academy are compelling dynamics, which several of the chapters have explored.

Indeed, for such postcolonial/indigenous scholars, the identity politics and professional experiences in the Western academy can perpetuate the oppressions of colonization and serve to render such scholars invisible and/or excessively visible—particularly if they, like the authors in this book, are engaged in "decolonizing" research and postcolonial critique. As Devon A. Mihesuah (1998) states, in reference to indigenous contributors to his book *Natives and Academics: Research and Writing about American Indians*,

Some contributors have faced the reality that their stances are not accepted by many scholars, and they are accused by some as being "oppositional," "political," "radical," or "emotional." . . . Those of us who have been perceived as "not fitting in" with mainstream academia have continued our work, slightly bruised, perhaps, but undaunted. We still believe that our discussions are necessary. After all, the ideas we present are similar to those Indian scholars have expressed verbally to each other for years. None of us pretend that we have all the answers, but we do be-

lieve there are alternative ways of researching and writing about Indians. (p. x)

Although Mihesuah's (1998) book focuses on American Indian experiences, it could be argued that a number of the issues raised have parallels in the lives of indigenous people in other contexts.

Another question raised in the Introduction and addressed at least implicitly in several chapters related to ways in which hybridity theory might inform the struggle to decolonize research—not serve as a "resolution," but complicate it in critical ways. Hybridity theory (e.g., Bhabha, 1994; McCarthy, 1998; Spivak, 1999), which deconstructs cross-migratory patterns, relationships between colonizers and colonized, and hybrid forms of information, policy, and shifting, mutually influenced, practices, would seem to relate to contributors to this book who have been frequent border-crossers between traditional culture and heritage language(s) and the colonizing/privileging world of Western higher education.

Walter Mignolo's (2000) book *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* acknowledges the role of hybridity and border thinking in the decolonization project, but cautions that discourses used for framing this endeavor often reflect modernist/postmodernist Western epistemologies and continue to silence histories and metaphysics of the "colonized." As Mignolo (2000) states:

I see decolonization imbedded in border thinking and transience epistemology as different ways of transcending the colonial difference. I see deconstruction, instead, as a critique of and from modern epistemology more concerned with the Western hegemonic constructions than with the colonial differences; and the colonial difference from the perspective of subaltern knowledges . . . Thus, deconstruction within Western metaphysics needs to be decolonized from the silences of history. Decolonization needs to be deconstructed from the perspective of the coloniality of power. The logic of the conversation shall change, not just the terms. (pp. 323–324)

Mignolo (2000) further argues that "decolonization should be thought of as complementary to deconstruction and border thinking complementary to the 'double séance' within the experience and sensibilities of the coloniality of power" (p. 326). In this reading of the potentiality of hybridity theory, Mignolo (2000) asserts that

Double consciousness, double critique, an other tongue, and other thinking, new *mística* consciousness, Circolization, transculturation, and culture of transience become the needed categories to undo the

subalternization of knowledge and to look for ways of thinking beyond the categories of Western thought through metaphysics to philosophy to science. (p. 326)

Much has been written about and from a postcolonial and increasingly transcultural or hybrid perspective. Given the present context, in which knowledge is highly contested, disputed, and negotiated, postcolonial/indigenous (?) scholars working in the Western academy as "voluntary" immigrants find their voices as researchers muffled and often silenced in the cacophony of noises/voices that claim authenticity. Identities for this postcolonial scholarship are both ambiguously multiplied in this context and highly depoliticized. In this volume, we have chosen, instead, to focus on decolonizing research and at once several questions beg to be asked—particularly whether research itself is colonized/colonizing. Assuming, with Smith (1999) and others, that research is both colonized and colonizing, what are those dynamics? Who has/is colonized/colonizing research? Can it be decolonized? How can it be decolonized? Far from providing formulaic answers to these broad questions or roadmaps for postcolonial researchers, contributors to this book have actively grappled with these issues in an attempt to forge a pathway on which decolonizing researchers might gingerly tread.

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