

# CHAPTER 1

## SITUATING KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

*How is it possible to decolonize (social) research in/on the non-Western developing countries to ensure that the people's human condition is not constructed through Western hegemony and ideology?*

Patience Elabor-Idemudia (2002, p. 231)

*Our current range of research epistemologies—positivism to post-modernisms, poststructuralisms—arise out of the social history and culture of the dominant race, . . . these epistemologies reflect and reinforce that social history and that social group and this has negative results for the people of color in general and scholars of color in particular.*

James J. Scheurich (1997, p. 141)

### OVERVIEW

The main thrust of this chapter is that current academic research traditions are founded on the culture, history, and philosophies of Euro-Western thought and are therefore indigenous to the Western academy and its institutions. These methodologies exclude from knowledge production the knowledge systems of formerly colonized, historically marginalized, and oppressed groups, which today are most often represented as Other and fall under broad categories of non-Western, third world, developing, underdeveloped,

## 2 ■ INDIGENOUS RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

First Nations, indigenous peoples, third world women, African American women, and so on. The chapter commences with discussion of some of the concepts and terms used in the book and an outline of the process and strategies for decolonizing Western-based research. I discuss two approaches in postcolonial-indigenous research methodologies—(1) decolonization and indigenization of dominant research approaches and (2) research approaches informed by a postcolonial-indigenous research paradigm—along with third space methodologies. Western research paradigms, the positivist/postpositivist, interpretive, and transformative, are discussed. The chapter will demonstrate that a paradigm implies a methodological approach with a philosophical base that informs assumptions about perceptions of reality, what counts as knowledge and ways of knowing and values. The researcher's perceptions of reality, what counts as knowledge and values, have an impact on the way research questions are conceived, research approaches, data-gathering instruments, analysis, and interpretation and dissemination of research findings. The dominant Western research paradigms are critiqued from a postcolonial-indigenous research perspective. A case study that shows how methodologies can silence and exclude the views of non-Western, formerly colonized societies is presented, as well as a case study that shows an approach based on decolonization and indigenization of Euro-Western methodologies.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain the decolonization of research process and the strategies for decolonization
2. Appreciate the need for researchers to interrogate the “captive” or “colonized mind” and engage in multiple epistemologies that are inclusive of voices of those who suffered colonization, the disenfranchised, and dispossessed, often represented as the Other, non-Western, third world, developing, underdeveloped, First Nations, indigenous peoples, third world women, African American women, and historically marginalized groups
3. Critically appreciate the influence of Euro-Western history, culture, philosophy, and theoretical perspectives on research
4. Compare and contrast postcolonial-indigenous paradigms and Euro-Western paradigm assumptions about the nature of reality, what counts as knowledge and ways of knowing, and value systems in research

