

Indigenous Research Methodology: Exploratory Discussion of an Elusive Subject

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The possibility of a defined *Indigenous Research Methodology* is exciting to indigenous and non-indigenous scholars alike, though probably for different reasons. Present assumptions suggest that such a methodology would determine standards for authenticity of indigenous research, and would enable a more effective critique of research dealing explicitly with indigenous reality. The question of who should participate in the development of an indigenous research methodology is critical since every scholar who has any connection with indigenous research topics or indigenous people will feel directly impacted. Responses to the question will indicate the form or quality of interactions between indigenous and non-indigenous scholars grappling with the political, social, and personal issues that assuredly will arise in any discourse of an indigenous research methodology. Such a concept might be perceived as a threat to existing forms or models of knowledge and knowledge creation. While indigenous scholars must be aware of such reactions, they will nonetheless experience themselves as the “active-centre” in the process of any indigenous research which they choose to live through. They are a piece of the heart in the body of growing indigenous knowledge. Indigenous research methodology is and has always been the central structure of support for the creation of indigenous knowledge. There are some principles which underlay most indigenous research – where this is understood to mean research conducted by indigenous people. Moving however to a discourse which includes indigenous and non-indigenous participants in an academic focus on indigenous research methodology might profitably include a consideration of such principles as (a) the interconnectedness of all living things, (b) the impact of motives and intentions on person and community, (c) the foundation of research as lived indigenous experience, (d) the groundedness of theories in indigenous epistemology, (e) the transformative nature of research, (f) the sacredness and responsibility of maintaining personal and

community integrity, and (g) the recognition of languages and cultures as living processes.

La possibilité d'une définition de la méthodologie de recherche autochtone est exaltante pour les autochtones autant que pour les universitaires non-autochtones, bien que probablement pour des raisons différentes.

Les postulats actuels suggèrent qu'une telle méthodologie détermine des standards d'authenticité pour la recherche autochtone, et autoriserait une critique plus efficace de la recherche abordant explicitement la réalité autochtone.

La question de savoir qui devrait participer au développement de la méthodologie de recherche autochtone est sensible puisque chaque universitaire qui a une connexion avec les topiques de recherche autochtone ou la population autochtone en ressentira directement l'impact.

Les réponses à la question posée indiqueront la forme ou la qualité des interactions entre les autochtones et les universitaires non-autochtones en corps à corps avec les problématiques politique, sociale et personnelle qui feront indubitablement surface dans tout discours à propos d'une méthodologie de recherche autochtone.

Un tel concept pourrait être perçu comme une menace pour les formes ou modèles de connaissance existants et pour la création de connaissance.

Bien que les universitaires autochtones se doivent d'être conscients de telles réactions, ils feront néanmoins l'expérience eux-mêmes en tant que "centre actif" dans le processus de toute recherche autochtone qu'ils décident de poursuivre.

Ils sont au coeur du corps de la connaissance autochtone grandissante. La méthodologie de recherche autochtone est et a toujours été la structure centrale du soutien à la création de connaissance autochtone. Il existe quelques principes qui sont à la base de la plupart des recherches autochtones - lorsqu'il est entendu que cela signifie des recherches conduites par des autochtones. Aller cependant vers un discours qui inclut des participants autochtones et non-autochtones dans une perspective universitaire quant à la méthodologie de recherche pourrait permettre d'inclure avantageusement des principes tels que (a) l'interconnexion de toutes les choses vivantes, (b) l'impact des motivations et intentions sur les personnes et la communauté, (c) la fondation d'une recherche comme expérience autochtone vécue, (d) les fondements théoriques de

l'épistémologie autochtone, (e) la nature transformatrice de la recherche, (f) le caractère et la responsabilité de maintenir une intégrité personnelle et communautaire, et (g) la reconnaissance des langages et cultures en tant que processus vivants.

The concept of an *Indigenous Research Methodology* holds an attraction which on the surface might appear as simply another point of resistance by indigenous people to yet another attempt by the European “others” to take over our world. The possibility, however, of developing such a research methodology is exciting to both indigenous scholars and non-indigenous scholars alike. Since the notion of a distinct research methodology for or by indigenous people is still at the beginning stages of scholarly discourse, it is likely that a significant portion of the social sciences academies will maintain an interest in the outcome of the discussion. That this interest and excitement is driven by various objectives and perspectives will not hinder the pace of the dialogue, but it certainly holds the capacity to affect the final shape or definition of any such methodology.

With this in mind, the contribution and indeed the leadership of indigenous scholars to this discourse would seem to be a logical requirement. Past experience has taught us, however, that such logic rarely transfers into the real world. Here, the voices of indigenous people are usually not heard in any meaningful way. Superficiality and politeness tend to characterize exchanges of words, not meanings, between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Very few individual members on either side of this divide are ever motivated enough to endure the suffering that is required to move beyond the politeness and to enter into the creation of shared meanings through conversation.

The preceding remarks are intended to provide context for the rest of this paper. I am hoping that I can avoid two other fairly common non-indigenous responses to indigenous voices: (a) they are the inarticulate ramblings of schizophrenia, and/or (b) the whines of dissatisfied and ungrateful children. The former response most common in academic contexts sounds more sophisticated.

Also, I need to state clearly that the thoughts expressed in this paper are solely mine and I do not in any way intend my words to be understood as claiming to define or describe indigenous research methodology for or on behalf of anyone else. This clarification addresses

two significant points of responsibility. First, since this is not intended to be a work of fiction, it is important that the reader be aware that I am not a representative voice for any group of people. It is still a common error to mistake the one indigenous voice for the collective. Even disagreement amongst the voices is interpreted as confusion and lack of clarity on the parts of the speakers; we are not granted the privilege of holding individual thoughts and opinions. Second, it is important for me as a writer to notify you that the words I am “speaking” are mine and that I accept full responsibility for their impact. Naturally, I am hoping that they will bring only good effects.

The interest that non-indigenous scholars might have in indigenous research methodology would probably depend primarily on their disciplinary focus and their research experience. A high interest would be displayed, for example, by those who have done some, or most, of their work in a discipline or subject area related to aboriginal peoples. The specific tribal, legal, or academic nomenclature used to identify their particular subject group would not matter in this case. If the quality of their academic work had ever been challenged by an indigenous person or group, these researchers would welcome an academic focus on indigenous research methodology.

There are two assumptions which underlie much of the present discussion on indigenous research methodology. The first assumption rests on the development of standards. A defined methodology suggests the possibility that researchers would have a standard by means of which they could measure the authenticity of their research or work specifically related to indigenous people. A concern with authenticity and correctness in anthropological writings which deal with aboriginal peoples, for example, would be much allayed if an indigenous research methodology could circumscribe the parameters and provide some shape for authentic, and therefore acceptable, indigenous research. The idea that this methodology could provide a standard measure for indigenous research authenticity presupposes the existence or certainly the possibility of a genuine indigenous end result or research product which arises from the application of an indigenous research methodology. The further supposition is that the product is measurable for comparative purposes. If we consider that there could be as many varieties of indigenous research methodologies as there are indigenous scholars, it is unlikely that the application of one theoretically-derived indigenous research methodology would result in the creation of a standard prototype to

guide future indigenous research. The second assumption underlying the discussion is that such a defined methodology would enable a more effective scholarly and public critique of research identified as dealing explicitly with some aspect of indigenous reality. Again, the many varieties of indigenous research and the many aspects to any social reality prohibit the likelihood of validating this assumption. Nonetheless, the impact of these assumptions is obvious when we observe that indigenous as well as non-indigenous scholars are dialoguing from these foundations, each with their own, often oppositional, perspective. That is a convincing indication of the need to formally address indigenous research methodology as a theoretical framework which is already affecting social science research in indigenous communities.

The significance of these assumptions lies in the danger that if we as indigenous scholars presume to come forward with a definition or a formal description of an indigenous research methodology, we must also accept responsibility for how those words may be used. Each of us has only to refer to the past experiences of our own people or to the history of indigenous people on this continent to be reminded and to recognize that much of what we have offered as beautiful and life-giving to the incoming peoples was transformed into brutality and destruction for us. As an indigenous scholar in the university context of thought and talk, of words, it becomes critical for me to watch my words and to be prepared to accept responsibility for the effects of my words to build or to destroy. At this stage of my work on the topic of indigenous research methodology, I am proceeding with care. I do this because the topic itself implies effects on indigenous people in general. More importantly and more specifically, while the context of a university may support a scholar's freedom to express learned opinions, it does not with the same strength and impunity guarantee support to the people and communities who may suffer as a result of those learned opinions. I also proceed with care on this topic because it has the potential to create changes – major changes for all scholars involving themselves in the lives of indigenous people and indigenous communities and indeed, major changes for those people and those communities. And, as could be said about any force of change, some degree of opposition and criticism is predictable from those who perceive such a force of change as a threat to their established authority and control. Indigenous research methodology as a concept does seem to imply some changes in terms of the ownership and creation

of knowledge, the forms and definitions of knowledge, and the utilization of knowledge in relation to indigenous peoples.

Scholars who have recognized and incorporated into their own work an active respect for the principles of interaction with indigenous people, no matter what form that interaction may take, will perceive immediately the benefits to scholarship in general if an indigenous research methodology was to be formally addressed as a topic of research. The question of who should participate in such research would likely be the initial focus since every scholar who is connected in any way with indigenous research topics or indigenous people will feel directly impacted. Because these scholars will be indigenous and non-indigenous, the temptation for both groups will be strong to give in to political sensitivity and avoid the address of this critical point. Unfortunately, as evidence in cross-cultural interactive dialogue has often demonstrated, our mutual reluctance and avoidance only ensures that the question remains as an unvoiced subtext, influencing all scholarly effort and discussions, often negatively, because collectively we can't stand ourselves for being such cowards! Political sensitivity can sometimes serve a good purpose in the protection of those who cannot or will not speak for themselves. However, in this case, if we accept the challenge of building a response to this question, that response could very appropriately serve as the basis for a model of the intricacies surrounding what I referred to earlier as principles of interaction between non-indigenous and indigenous people, researchers or not. This may not be a definition for indigenous research methodology, but it could serve as a potential starting point.

When we consider the motivations that guide research, it is clear that the intention of most researchers is that their research will somehow benefit those *other* people who are connected to the research process. Usually, these others constitute the research subjects, involved to varying degrees and in various ways with the researcher and the project, depending upon the methodology used by the researcher. Assuming the good intentions, then, of most researchers, I will also assume that non-indigenous scholars who conduct research with or amongst indigenous peoples would appreciate the opportunity to discover that there are ways to actually fulfill that intention. Participating in an academic discourse of indigenous research methodology would easily constitute the first stage of such an opportunity. A researcher who has realized that the benefit of research can and should actually be moved beyond mere good intention

and into some form of actuality within the subject's world is ready to make appropriate and responsible choices in relation to the purpose and form of their research. These decisions about the purpose and form of research will affect and to varying degrees determine the content and methodology of research. Perhaps of equal significance is the fact that these decisions will also impact upon and determine the type of personal experiences that are available to non-indigenous researchers working in indigenous communities. A non-indigenous scholar who is willing to share the challenges of developing a model for an indigenous research methodology will find the process an excellent preparation for making informed and conscious decisions about doing any form of research in areas directly affecting indigenous ways of being and knowing. The possibility of such an outcome, of course, is contingent upon the form and degree of involvement that indigenous scholars will choose to have in this process.

If appropriate preparation of non-indigenous researchers for work with indigenous communities were the only result of an academic focus on indigenous research methodology, I believe that would be enough to justify the work. Such a result would help to eliminate the arrogance and the irresponsibility which characterizes the manner and/or methods of many non-indigenous researchers working in indigenous communities. These attitudes shape their research questions and determine the methodologies for the research project. Because there is still the tendency for the sciences, including the social sciences, to value and work for objectivity, the influence of researcher attitudes and beliefs on research is steadfastly ignored or denied. In the field however, where the researcher has been working with indigenous people, these subjects will have become very aware of the impact of researcher attitude. Unfortunately, in most projects, these same subjects will have no means of entering their observations into the research data or incorporating their interpretations into the conclusions.

“Unconscious irresponsibility” has always been one of the bases for excusing criminal and inhuman acts conducted by unprofessional and unethical persons and institutions against indigenous peoples. The commonly accepted explanation for these “irregularities” in conduct is always couched in terms that imply a misunderstanding of a good intent. Therefore, it is argued, since there was no malicious intent, what we have is a case of unconscious irresponsibility. So easily is the criminal rendered innocent and the victim(s) powerless! I have suggested earlier that an

academic focus on indigenous research methodology would move scholars toward a stronger sense of professional and ethical accountability. With a movement in this direction, the tendency to excuse institutional injustice against indigenous people as “unconscious irresponsibility,” for example, becomes less socially and politically acceptable. Indigenous research methodology thereby becomes an effective means of increasing the possibility that research with indigenous people will be a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration.

The controls over research in indigenous communities have traditionally rested in the hands of the university and, indirectly, in the social institutions and industries that are served by the university. This is not to imply that these are bed-partners but to recognize that the survival of the university and of higher educational institutions in general is becoming more and more dependent on the financial support of and goodwill of industry and business. The implications of these forms of partnerships on indigenous research and indigenous communities are frightening unless we continue to believe that researchers are scholars who are truth-seekers first, and mercenaries much further down the line of priorities and alternatives. Even with this consideration, competition in post-secondary institutions is very high for research grants and scholarships. The promise of these awards is to enhance scholarly potential for high-status careers as academics and researchers. A major part of scholarly accomplishment today is dependent on the number of scholarships and awards received. Many of these are tied to research projects, and it is commonly accepted that this research, locally and internationally, will reflect the purposes and interests, and thereby the social and political perspectives of the particular benefactor. We have no reason to believe that the goodwill of industry and business would support the development and application of any theory which threatens the university’s control over knowledge and the systems for creating that knowledge, especially if that university is one of their partners. Partnerships, after all, imply shared goals and objectives.

Yet, that is exactly what an indigenous research methodology would present – a threat to the university’s control over definition and creation of knowledge. One primary objective of such a methodology would be, after all, to place control over certain forms of knowledge back into the hands of the indigenous people themselves. But a threat is not exactly a reality; it merely alludes to a possible reality. We do not react to the

threat of being struck in the same manner that we react when we are struck. If we ever did manage to develop an indigenous research methodology, one that was equally respected by indigenous and non-indigenous scholars, the academic community could, if it chose to do so, begin to regain the trust of the indigenous peoples. Indigenous research methodology implies both a theoretical model and its applications, and the existence of these formal structures based on indigenous thought must inevitably lead to the dismantling of research structures based on western notions of scientific and intellectual hegemony. At least we hope they will lead to dismantling where the applications of traditional research precepts and practices have historically been used for the concealment and support of inhuman and genocidal practices behind the veil of objective scholarship.

While much of my previous commentary is applicable to indigenous scholars as well as to non-indigenous scholars, there is one category of interconnected topics which I would foresee as an integral part of the indigenous research discourse conducted by indigenous scholars in particular. This one category would connect the notions of sovereignty, nation-building, and/or the actualization of tribal consciousness. The inclusion of these aspects in the discourse enables us to directly address those legal and psycho-social implications that are usually ignored in non-indigenous discourses on research. Other than that, the concept of a research methodology that is purely reflective of indigenous people and indigenous experiences is exciting simply because it means that indigenous scholars will enter into their research with a two-fold challenge. Each individual researcher must be aware of two sets of simultaneous processes and practices which he or she is using as both an indigenous person and an indigenous researcher. Each research project will be a research project layered over a research experience layered over a personal experience layered over a research project. Living through and integrating the thinking, visioning, talking, intuiting, and/or writing of these layers (for some people and some sections using two languages) is the form of rigor demanded by the present forms of indigenous scholarship. Perhaps at some time in the future, indigenous scholarship will be presented primarily in indigenous languages, either orally or written, and it will spring from the roots of its own histories to contribute meaning and inspire creative, spiritual, and intellectual forces to the continuous renewal of indigenous communities.

For the moment, however, the indigenous scholar faces the formidable challenge of meeting the standards of two knowledge systems in any research connected with a university. How we choose to meet this challenge is unquestionably a personal decision, and, as is true for any other researcher, our decisions will be based on the significance and weightings that we assign to the particular factors that go into making us who we are as individuals and as parts of a community. There are external factors which sometimes prohibit us from making decisions which reflect who we are – they become decisions which spring from our social and physical circumstances. An awareness exists amongst most indigenous people that poverty and physical need will sometimes provide the motive for the way individuals conduct themselves in relation to others. This includes how people make decisions. While this response to poverty is not peculiar to indigenous people, the pervasion of poverty as a constant in the lives of most indigenous peoples should be recognized openly as an obvious factor in how indigenous persons as individuals will make decisions and respond to institutions. Many institutions, including universities, are perceived as representing those who hold the ticket to a life without poverty. Indigenous persons must consider all aspects of a decision carefully because personal decisions will affect not only the individual but the whole extended family, and to varying degrees, the community. Despite this way of approaching decisions, there is seldom any pressure from the community in terms of how to live a personal life and how to make decisions. It is understood and accepted that the right to make personal choices includes the responsibility to live out the effects of that decision. The assumption is that the decision-maker will have sought guidance and will be as fully aware of the consequences of the decision as is possible. In the application of these thoughts to research and the creation of knowledge by indigenous scholars, it is very likely that the range and forms of indigenous research will be as varied and broad as the thinking and circumstances of the individuals who make the decisions about motives and objectives, content, format, and methodology for their research.

Having considered all of this, and without being so reckless as to propose a model for an indigenous research methodology, there are some principles which if we were to formally and thoroughly investigate, we would find underlays most indigenous research – that is research which is wholly conducted by indigenous people. Some of the principles were brought forward in a class with Dr. Stan Wilson near the end of January,

1997. I am grateful to my colleagues for their contributions to my own thinking about what would be included in an outline of principles to guide Indigenous Research Methodology.

Some of these principles will be recognized immediately as springing from the *Indian* teachings which have been available in English language print for about 100 years. I only ask that you remember that these teachings have been handed down to indigenous people through families and communities, and in a variety of different languages and forms. Nonetheless, to many people, these words were first met as beautiful sayings or poetry. As such they have sometimes served as artifacts of beauty and knowledge. But even as artifacts, they touch hearts and the human need for aesthetic connections in our world. We have included these principles in our lives as inscriptions of encouragement that we carry on our keychains, or we write them on pieces of deerhide or birchbark and hang them on our walls to remind us of the people who spoke the words. I have seen these words honored in homes of 13 people in two rooms. I have also seen them honored in homes of four people in 12 rooms. And I have seen them honored by indigenous people and non-indigenous people alike. This form of respect is a response to the life-giving force and timelessness that these words contain.

There is no prioritization to the order in which the following principles are presented, nor are they the famous words of an Indian teacher. Most of them require little or no elaboration and explanation. They are voiced in the words of indigenous scholars struggling to find ways to do research and uphold their understandings of scholarship with integrity and responsibility to themselves and their communities. The principles that guide such scholarship recognize that:

- All forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected. This is a powerful command for transformation in the way we conduct any business today, including research. Think about implementing a research project while these words are ringing in your heart: "The earth and myself are of one mind. The measure of the land and the measure of our bodies are the same." These words come from Chief Joseph or Thunder Traveling to Loftier Heights (McLuhan, 1971, p. 54). Respect does not simply mean knowing and following basic rituals and practices as part of the protocols of interactions with indigenous people. It means believing and living that relationship with all forms of life, and conducting all interactions in a spirit of kindness and honesty.

- The researcher must be certain that the motives for doing the research will result in benefits to the indigenous community. Checking your heart is a critical element in the research process. It is not done only once during the project, but many times and according to different reasons. Negative elements at the source of the project could bring suffering upon everyone in the community, and the obvious source of any research project is the heart/mind of the researcher. Personal recognition and rewards for research and scholarship are not good motives for doing research in the community. You as researcher will benefit only to the degree that your people benefit. A good heart guarantees a good motive, and good motives guarantee benefits to everyone involved. These are laws that are derived from the spiritual learnings of an ancient people – surely they represent wisdom and the result of centuries of research. Only because we have experienced the humility which always accompanies wisdom are we permitted to use such a teaching in this context. The wise ones do not alienate the scholars of their communities – not today and not a hundred years ago.
- The foundation of indigenous research must lie within the reality of the lived indigenous experience. I have deliberately avoided making statements that could be interpreted as comparisons between non-indigenous research and indigenous research. However, this particular principle seems to need a reference for clarification purposes. Refer then to the tendency and pressure on all scholars to ground their research – form, content, and methodology – on the insubstantial reality of academic thought. Such a reality, though not denying the power of thoughts, is composed of ideas. These ideas with no physical trappings of culture are nevertheless not objective and culture-free realities. Ideas are always the reflection of some particular researcher's view of the world, put forth to support or invalidate a particular set of political, sociological, and ideological paradigms. Indigenous researchers will be expected to ground their research knowingly in the lives of people as individual and social beings, and not on the world of ideas.
- Any theories developed or proposed will be grounded in and supported by indigenous epistemology as it is lived out and given form within the community. Underlying the shapes and conditions of indigenous communities are the theories and explanations that spring from the people themselves – theories that explain the many facets

and connections of our individual and collective lives. Here, over the thousands of years that we have lived together, respecting each other's individualities, the philosophers and the prophets of each generation have carefully pulled together the threads that compose our epistemology, our ways of knowing, our science of knowledge. As with any other people, not all of our members are philosophers or conscious creators of knowledge. If we as indigenous researchers want to participate in the creation of knowledge within our own way of being, then we must begin with an active and scholarly recognition of who our philosophers and prophets are in our own communities. These, after all, are still the keepers and teachers of our epistemology.

- Transformation is to be anticipated within every living thing participating in the research project. Further, it will be recognized that we as researchers must assume a certain responsibility for the transformations and outcomes of the research project(s) which we bring into the community. The basis of this responsibility rests again on personal decisions and their effects in the context of a broad interconnectedness. Transformations occur as a natural result of (personal) internalization of learnings. In this way, new concepts or ways of being, doing, and thinking will enter into and affect the indigenous community. Our responsibility as researchers is connected thus to transformations which come about through our research projects.
- The integrity of any one indigenous people or community could never be undermined by indigenous research because such research is grounded in that integrity. The only reason for making this point is to respond to the argument already cited that indigenous research poses the same threat of undermining the integrity of indigenous communities as does non-indigenous research. I recognize that the key to the usefulness of this principle seems to lie in the possibility of being able to identify indigenous research with total accuracy, but I also know that the principle contains within itself an accurate definition and test of authenticity for indigenous research.
- The languages and cultures of indigenous people are living processes and research with the creation of knowledge is an ongoing function for the thinkers and scholars of every indigenous group. It is through the activation of this principle that indigenous persons are participating in the context of university scholarship. Indigenous

scholarship reflects inherited ways of being and knowing and we as indigenous researchers have a responsibility to maintain and constantly renew the connections with our ancestors and our people through the practices of these ways.

These principles are not intended to be anything except points for consideration along the way. I believe that indigenous research will come into its own form. Whether or not it flows into place as a research methodology is not of major significance at this juncture of the road and the time. What is of considerable significance is that the words by themselves – Indigenous Research Methodology – seem to contain enough force to capture and hold the imagination of every scholar who holds an interest in the reality of the indigenous world. Surely we will take that somewhere wonderful!

Indigenous scholars today cannot perceive themselves as researchers at the margins of another larger and somewhat better society. We are not simply dispossessed and oppressed peoples who must strive to build intellectual bridges from our world into a foreign world which will judge the quality and content of our intellect before it decides whether or not to accept us as scholars. We have our own experiences on which to base our research. We have our own languages, our own philosophies, our own values to guide our research. We have ancient principles of human interaction which come to us in new words for each generation, and indeed as new words for each researcher. Our intentionality and relationships with our communities will determine all aspects of the research we undertake as indigenous scholars. While I cannot speak for other indigenous scholars, I have still to discover if the university, as a place reserved solely for the pursuit and creation of knowledge, has the capacity to offer me that visionary's space which I need for my advancement as an indigenous scholar. I must seek the visionary's space because the primary source of teaching and guidance comes from the spirit world. The place where I wait must be a place of compassion, stillness, humility. The environment for indigenous research is found where the spirit of the researcher finds these qualities.

In conclusion, let me invite you to read this paper as one of the first formal discussions of my ideas on indigenous research methodology. I present this as an incomplete work, but obviously all of my work is incomplete! I am still struggling to eliminate the schooled tension that I acquired in believing that every question has one right answer, so I am always waiting for the thinking to stop, for that one glorious, culminating

second when I know the whole answer to one question. I have been relearning that that moment will not come, at least not while I am in a thinking mode. I am also realizing that I must have learned to trust other thinkers or, at least, relearned to trust my own thinking. I am not so afraid state through the existence of my own being and my own work that I am unable to buy into the notion that the content of research or scholarship in any form can be treated as complete, objective, or final. My purpose in research is to contribute to an ongoing process of thought in which my contribution is one little breath: Where would I look to find the beginning or the end of a breath? Even if I were to ask the question, the answer would simply be another breath. Research becomes a process of life wherein one breath leads to another breath in an unending flow to the one uniting force of creativity. I have read that science does not contradict such thinking anymore.

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