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Ways of Being in Research

Mark Daley and Sean Wiebe

University of British Columbia

I am reborn. This is my dawn. Real life has just begun. Deliberate living: conscious attention to the basics of life, and a constant attention to your immediate environment and its concerns; for example, a job, a task, a book.... It is how one relates to a situation that has value. All true meaning resides in the personal relationship to phenomenon, what it means to you.

John Krakauer, *Into Thin Air*

Daley: These days, the term research barely evokes any kind of imagination or intrigue. Neither does it capture our fascination nor bring to mind the excitement of discovery. In fact, after polling promising high-schoolers on what is called forth into the imagination at its mention, the idea of research was most approximated as "the acquisition of in-depth knowledge," and some were bewildered that imagination and research could even be related. Why? Research has inhabited a place closed-off to the heart.

Wiebe: That has invariably been my experience. And so "Research" is the BIG word of this issue. It is the legitimate word; the word giving this online journal its credibility. As such, "Research" is a word of domination and intimidation: dare I say that research is an inhuman word?

Daley: Yes, because research requires that we pay special attention to codes and borders, keeping the human-being out of the way of fact gathering; good research has told us to keep our passions away from our academic interests. There are two realities: one in which we live, and one in which we know the world. The two are not to be confused. The knower and the known are bereft of connection, left entirely in positions devoid of intimacy.

Wiebe: Intimate research. A paradox? Existential research. Narrative research. Poetical Inquiry. [\[1\]](#) How do we begin to even name it? Certainly what emerges is an obligation—at the very least—to explore ways of conducting research that matter to a *living-breathing* knower.

Daley: Stepping back for a moment from conventional approaches to doing research, we get a sense of its insufficiency as mattering to the places we live, and so we must wonder if research really explains anything meaningful at all. Useful? Maybe. Meaningful?

Wiebe: And in stepping back, we may find that there are ways of *being human* that matter, that bare and express meaning, both to the researcher as a human being and to the wider community where the researcher performs.

Daley: The title of this issue lets us explore the possibilities beyond conventional research. Consider the following: "Ways-of-Being in Research," and "Ways of Being-in-Research." In so conceiving

these expressions and looking at what is joined, a question emerges: “What is mastering the performance?”

Wiebe: Explain that.

Daley: The performance is essentially what it is we are involved in uncovering, and how we derive meaning therein. The question arises, “what is controlling my acting?” What am I operating within that directs and constitutes all that I become while involved in the inquiry?

Wiebe: Derrida has come to similar conclusions. In his essay, “The Future of the Profession” he argues that our act of professing is “to declare out loud what one is, what one believes, what one wants to be, while asking another to take one’s word” (35). [2] He calls attention to the idea that our being is at the heart of making claims about the world.

Daley: So, we have ways-of-being and the research is subordinate, or we have being-in- research and our lived experience is subordinate. What is brought out: the research or the person? What is sacred: the explanations to which we must acquiesce or one’s reality from which meaning is brought forth?

Wiebe: Our personhood, our manner, ultimately, our very existence. Research must not subsume or subjugate who I am.

Daley: Can we successfully re-contextualize ...ways made possible for inquiries considered “legitimate” as research?

Wiebe: Many of our contributors to this issue have attempted just that. They have understood themselves as being in continual relationship to research, finding many ways to imagine that relationship to be fruitful: their submissions have explored new methodologies, pushing the boundaries of methods of inquiry.

Daley: Lived research, or what you earlier called intimate research, is more than pushing the boundaries of method. Ways-of-being strikes possibilities not only for whole new ways of seeing and experiencing reality, but for how that reality is brought to our understanding. Being-in-research, on the other hand, limits what is permissible for study and worthy of being known, not to mention how it is allowed to be understood. Which sounds more welcoming to you?

Wiebe: When I first pronounced the phrase “Ways of Being in Research,” I started imagining the multiplicity of ways in which research could be conducted. This was a creative start—a place to begin. But I think you are right. I was still unconnected to what matters to me personally.

Daley: Ways-of-being permits discoveries that matter most to the researcher in being human (existential realities), and not as merely explaining reality fundamentally outside the person. Although appearing novel, this inquiry is not a contrivance by any means, and here we invite criticism. Make note that before any generalizations are to be made by us as researchers, the significance of phenomenon researched are already said to be affective upon us, therefore having impact upon our person prior to our discoveries. In other words, even though our research has the appearance of objectivity, disclosing the observer as an impartial and disinterested eyewitness, we have to be aware that we as researchers have asked a question in the first place. Something about our way of being in the world has prejudiced the very question posited from which we will engage the world and uncover findings. Hence, we assume this thing in the world matters to us. But protocol has it that this be kept concealed.

Wiebe: It seems like the pervasive question is still why hasn’t research been permitted to matter to our existence?

Daley: Right. It has been all too often a mere matter of mind. So we have a pretense of its belonging

only to the world of impersonality, when what generated inquiry in the first place was something deeply human—the desire to relate ourselves to the world.

Wiebe: We are realizing that meaning resides in the personal relationship to phenomenon.

Daley: There are a lot of ways of understanding that though. The question we are asking is, “why are we doing research in the first place?” What are we seeking to know (understand)? Let me ask, instead of research mastering us, shouldn’t it open possibilities to us for what matters most to our existence, or better, to our way of being-in-the-world? But in fact, our way of knowing-about-the-world has produced a faulty engagement with reality, one that is replete with tensions between representations that reduce and simplify relations between people and phenomena. So, if former ways of explaining reality have subjugated us in our world, falling short of describing relations in dynamic terms, then are we not morally obligated to search for legitimate ways of apprehending our world in closest relation to where we experience living?

Wiebe: That is why I now gravitate to a different understanding of *Ways of Being in Research*. In addition to examining “ways” of “research,” I’m finding that more possibilities emerge in understanding research as “ways of being.”

Daley: We are living in between two radically different constructs of the very same expression linguistically. Turn to Heidegger on this. Heidegger’s notion of *Da-sein* (being-in-the-world) is precisely about the possibilities of living in the space of the myriad of tensions and unknowables. [\[3\]](#) This expression poses a continuum of possibilities.

Wiebe: Why live in between? It seems as if everything said above has favored an existential research over a methodological research. Why not simply approach phenomenon from within a discourse that we favour?

Daley: Because, as Ted Aoki says, we need to live in the third space—between the modern and postmodern, between the structured and the playful. We are identified by “outer” as much as by inner. There are poles within which “being” is animated and wherein the demands of “legitimate” research are also met.

Wiebe: So in reference to the title of this issue, we ought to take note of where *being* is in relation to the phrase: *Ways of Being in Research*. It (being) is not on the outside, nor is it under or above any other term. In fact, it is in the middle. It is within. It is situated in a way least skewed to the right or to the left.

Daley: I like that. So we might say that its location is less prejudiced or dominating. It is not interested in proving anything, or justifying its horizon or modality as if having more merit than alternatives. Instead, we can best conceive being-in-research as emanating from being-in-the-world, and therefore, “adding” to existing conversations of meaning making, yes, even as rendered conventionally.

Wiebe: Being in the gap, intentionally dwelling in the place of tension, offers a kind of impartiality that empirical research hasn’t been able to take hold of. Now, contented in the in-between place, there is relation to the endeavor of research that is less biased.

Daley: I think the substance of this point is honesty. Our inquiry will always have bias, limitation—hiding elements of life even when *attempting* to disclose. So, to admit partiality from the start and face the limits of our own horizon presents more hope for knowing. Being-research is free to admit its nakedness. It is a starting point for inquiry, opening itself to the dialogue of other lived experience, in the hope that a more authentic understanding may emerge. It is not possessive of its discoveries, but delights in the other in the conversation of life.

Wiebe: *Being* can admit to socially constructed places, can admit to not knowing, can admit to

weakness in method—it invites peering into. It says, “Test us. Let us have a conversation.”

Wiebe: Let us realize, research is a conversation and conversations do have short-comings. No one stands from the place of nowhere. In other words, the university does not float in the air. It is planted, rooted in tradition, scholarship, and ways of research informing everything we think, say, and do.

Daley: So are we. Research will never be able to forsake being informed by previous scholarship, and that may be a strength. It is certainly not excluded here.

Wiebe: Haven’t conversations been going on from the beginning anyway?

Daley: Research has been like this all along. Adding to, refining, objecting, affirming—these are the marks of what we consider meaningful conversation—and research.

Wiebe: Foucault believes that. In spite of his assertion that there is no idealism, one must still always be asking a question in retrospect concerning how what has operated in the past has informed the present. [4] So the past is always a necessary point of engaging, and not to be an object for criticism, but for illumination.

Daley: Then let’s enter the possibilities. Within this research will occur performances instead of products, and living possibilities instead of representations; it is at-hand in anyone’s imagining, emanating possibilities from no matter where they are thrown into the landscape of the disclosing agent.

Wiebe: The other thing that comes to mind is pictures versus words. The beauty of contemporary scholarship is that instead of research being a dot in a line of successive contributions to knowledge, it now lives largely within a wide space of an eternity of possibilities. Ways-of-being and being-in-research are two poles on a continuum. What opens before us is a permissive and inclusive research, permitting a continuum of the possible within two meanings (and two divergent practices) of the very same expression.

Daley: So before we have had (.) but now we have ().

Wiebe: Research is not distinct from our relation to life, as if there were a higher way of being in life, or a method of being in life that was qualitatively more valuable than another. Certainly, we can be more illumined or more fulfilled or more attentive to our being in the world. But a way of research does not elevate one’s place in the world as if he or she, by nature, had a better being than any other.

Daley: Research within this expression may then be construed as a more intentional approach to being alive to our experience, our historicalities, and our possibilities, not in a fashion dictated by a question, but by a presence to our relation to all things as they bear on being in the now.

Wiebe: So, we end with a beginning: a call to our readers to play in the spaces of the text. Not casting aside the articles which emphasize one or the other, but looking for their lived experience within that research—this is the possibility.

[1] In discussing terms of reference for the vast possibilities associated with alternative methods of research, we have found ourselves limited by language in addressing intrinsically human realities. As such, the names we have assigned to describe this research are left as they were disclosed in our conversation. So, rather than attempting to construct a definition that would by nature reduce the magnitude of what is being suggested in our inquiry, we invite others to join our conversation.

[2] Derrida, Jacques. (2001). "The Future of the Humanities." *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*. Ed. Tom Cohen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[3] Heidegger, Martin. (1962). *Being and Time: A Translation of "Sein und Zeit"* Trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press.

[4] Foucault, Michel. (1978). *What is Enlightenment*. Trans. Martin Henson. Based on an unpublished French manuscript.