Article

Indigenous Research and Romantic Nationalism

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Abstract: In recent years, "indigenous research" and "indigenous methods" have become prominent themes in the general field of qualitative methodology. These ideas and their implications raise serious questions for the wider conduct of social research. We will outline some of those ideas, subjecting them to scrutiny, and ultimately using them to question the rise of Romanticism in contemporary social methodology. We develop these ideas to question the contemporary emphasis on the personal and the experiential in current methodological commentary.

Keywords: indigenous research; qualitative methodology; romanticism; local methods; local traditions; knowledge creation; categories

1. Introduction—Some Distinctions

We discuss a number of key issues, paradoxes and problems surrounding Indigenous Research (IR) and Indigenous Methods (IM), as proposed and practised in recent decades. They are key aspects of a yet broader movement to de-colonise social research. The impetus to de-colonise social research on the part of Indigenous scholars is understandable. It is undeniable that academic research (in all fields) is dominated by English-language publications, reflecting the dominance of English as the global lingua franca, and the consequent poor visibility of scholarly work in other languages (even major world languages). The significance of de-colonising research cannot be denied. However, this should not render it immune from commentary or criticism, especially when it itself rests on shaky epistemological and methodological foundations. De-colonising research is inextricably linked to the promotion of IR, to the extent that they have to be discussed together. Again, the appeals to IR are not always coherent, and they are in need of conceptual clarification. The latter are also linked to calls for greater attention to Indigenous forms of knowledge [1]. These are not unproblematic.

To discuss IR as part of the wider field of qualitative methodology, it is useful to make some elementary distinctions. First, we witness an emphasis on IR and "indigenous researchers". That is, a promotion of research undertaken by members of a given Indigenous people. As we shall see, this is not without attendant problems, since Indigenous is a category that is in practice used highly selectively. Secondly, there are proposals concerning Indigenous epistemologies. As we shall see, claims for Indigenous epistemologies are too often couched in terms of over-simplified categories and contrasts. Thirdly, there are claims concerning Indigenous Methods, arguing for the superiority of research strategies that are congruent with local culture. As we shall argue throughout this paper, the third seems often to be a disappointing pay-off after the two kinds of more general claims. The distinctive character of IR often seems illusory at worst, exaggerated at best.

2. Who Are the Indigenous and What Does It Take to Be an Indigenous Researcher?

We need to pause and ask: Who are the indigenous? The methodological literature in fact gives no definitive answer—indeed it could not, as the category itself is highly problematic. Inspection of

the recent methodological literature strongly suggests that it is currently confined to a small number of peoples. In particular, we see work from people of North American first nations, and from a Pasifika or Māori or Australian Aboriginal heritage. Other examples would be research on Sami issues and work on genres in literature by Russia's Indigenous People. However, to talk of "Māori research" or "Sami research" often rests on the assumption that we can readily draw boundaries around such groups. This is a rather naïve assumption based on the idea that people who share ancestry of some kind also share location, culture, class and all forms of social and cultural capital. This is often not the case. Contemporary people move and mingle. Consider the Sami people. We find that the Sami language in their traditional territory called Sápmi stretches across parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. In Norway, we find Sami persons across the whole country, and, like most Norwegians, mainly in cities and more urban areas, both inside and outside of Sápmi. There are no statistics on the Sami, but the areas with the densest Sami population are in the more rural areas of the north. Some Sami people live outside this area (many in Oslo) just as many non-Sami persons live within it [2]. Despite this, it remains conventional to refer to a Sami population, to Sami politics and policies and to Sami research (though Sami research is not confined to researchers of Sami origin). In general, we certainly cannot assume that in the contemporary world, marked by social and geographical mobility, there are ethnically homogeneous people, living in geographically bounded territories, with a single shared culture, forming shared "communities".

Personal experiences and family stories often guide researchers' thematic interests, but this is different from arguing that these are necessary conditions for exploring such research topics, or that such experiences not only give easier, but also privileged access to grasp others' parallel encounters or experiences. We simply cannot take such assumptions of privilege for granted. We know that individual pain and pleasure are deeply embedded in the collective and cultural which makes both memory and personal experience that are constructed through shared narrative formats [3,4]. However, the fact that experiences may nurture an interest in the field and facilitate access to stories is no guarantee for exclusive analytic insight. The same applies to arguments on physical ancestry, especially if discovered later in life, which leads to our second point. To let an interest in local epistemologies nurtured by widened inquiring frames inform our research is a question of the quality of qualitative research, and not one of ethnicity or indigeneity. Myra C.Y. Lee [5] illustrates this in her discussion of research ethics and the Confucian worldview. She asks if there is a need for East–West polarization and suggests a middle way. This is echoed from a South Asian perspective by Ajeet N. Mathur [6], who, rather than rejecting Western research, calls for a variety of frames of inquiry, and by Yogesh Atal [7] on Indian sociology, who points to the need for making exogenous elements suit local requirements.

Attempts to legislate regarding who is truly indigenous are always problematic, often resulting in an absurd (but dangerous) calculus of purity. Registering to vote for the Sami Parliament in Norway is a case in point. The right to vote is granted to anyone who feels Sami and who speaks the language at home, has or had parents, grandparents or great grandparents who spoke Sami at home, or is a child of a person currently or previously registered. Some [8] claim this would rule out a person brought up in a Sami environment and who speaks the Sami language but does not have ancestors who spoke the language at home. On the other hand, a person with no knowledge of Sami language and practices, but has ancestors who did fulfill the language requirements, is free to register. This definition is not identical to the definition of who is a Sami person, but is linked to democratic rights in the region of one's home area. This has led to more debates over the identity issue or the question "Hvem er egentlig same?" ("Actually, who is a Sami person?") The web page is in Sami and in Norwegian) [9]. The issue, at national, family and personal levels, is complex.

This is a recurrent issue in IR. It is, for instance, reflected in the book *Indigenous Pathways* edited by Mertens et al. [10], where the definition of indigenousness varies from biology and blood-lines to interpretative approaches and self-identity. Their apparently simple question "Who is Indigenous?" is complex, as is the related issue who can speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples and communities?

We recall this from the early debates of feminism with the most radical definition that reserved feminist research to being "by and for women". Apart from disqualifying all male researchers, this strand also took for granted a fixed gender-identity. As discussed further below, the rhetoric of indigenous identity does not always do justice to the potential complexity either of research or of identities.

A definition of "Indigenous people as being those descended from the pre-invasion inhabitants of lands that are now occupied and dominated by others" [10] reflects the political dimension of critical indigenous research but is not unproblematic in a world of migration as well as the many demands for new nation states, which create tensions surrounding insiders and outsiders, majorities and minorities, social segregation and the promotion of parallel institutions. It is hard to draw boundaries around spaces and places in a world where members hold alternative and flexible identities, and who live, love and labour beyond their ancestors' places. Michael Jacklin [11] refers to Frances Peters-Little who asks "who is community?" when the notions of community are complicated by processes of migration. In practice, advocates of IR identify with and conduct research with an extremely restricted range of groups. The complex history of contemporary nation-states means that there are many minorities that are or have been dispossessed, oppressed and marginalised, their language suppressed, and their independence denied. However, the great majority of them are not represented in appeals for IR. The literature is dominated by scholars representing Maori, Australian Aborigine, American First Nations, Sami, and a small number of other peoples. As we shall go on to illustrate, however, this does not prevent advocates from generalising from those few examples to "Indigenous" people in general.

3. Indigenous Epistemology

The claims of IR are based on the identification of Indigenous Epistemology. This is too often based on crude (mis)representations. The research strategies of the West/North can be rendered in almost caricatured terms, as if there were a single, paradigmatic orthodoxy that permeates all "Western" social research, and as if that were dominated by over-simplified versions of "science". Consequently, the modes of Indigenous knowing are contrasted with research strategies that few "Western" scholars would themselves endorse. Certainly, few qualitative researchers today would subscribe to a narrowly modernist or positivist perspective, based on simplistic images of science. However, calls for indigenous epistemology are couched in such terms. Examples of this rhetorical trope include the following:

Based on the Western understanding, research in general may be defined as an investigation or experiment aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts. Research includes collecting information about a particular subject, revising accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, and the practical application of such new or revised theories or laws [12].

Porsanger expands on those observations:

The Western paradigm for research articulates theory and scientific methods, which are chosen in order to explain a particular phenomenon and guarantee an objectivity of research. Processes of theorizing and measuring what is considered to be "scientifically acceptable" have been based on Western philosophy and imply a notion of objective research [12].

This is a very crude stereotype of research. While some social scientists might endorse the views that are roughly represented here, the great majority of qualitative researchers, including sociological and anthropological ethnographers, would endorse a more nuanced, less scientistic, less monolithic, view of the research enterprise.

In a similar vein, Wilson [13] asserts the following:

One major difference between the dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that the dominant paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore knowledge may be owned by an individual.

This is a puzzling characterisation—not least in the odd formulation that "knowledge is an individual entity", which seems nonsensical. Wilson contrasts this with a characterisation of Indigenous research:

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, not just with research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all of creation [13].

Again, one can only protest that "Western" scholars can certainly endorse the view that understanding is relational (though perhaps not always quite as all-encompassing as the entire cosmos!), and equally firmly do not believe or act as if all research-based knowledge were a private, personal possession. These essentialised and inaccurate representations will not do as the basis for methodological debate. Ethnographers in particular will almost universally acknowledge the relational view of their own and others' understanding. At the same time, they would certainly not embrace a view of knowledge as a commodity, nor that it is a purely individualistic enterprise.

Indigenous epistemology is described as being relational rather than individualistic and embodies distinctive culturally-defined values. For instance, Russell Bishop invokes the Maori concept *whanaungatanga* to furnish an epistemological frame. Literally based on notions of kinship, the term encompasses relatedness, with a focus on the group rather than on the individual [14]. Such epistemologies are based on local concepts. However, they are too readily translated into universal categories of Indigenous thought. That is, replacing a supposed homogeneous Western epistemology with a homogeneous, essentialised Indigenous one. So while the local is celebrated over the global, local modes of understanding are obscured in this over-generalisation. For instance, Kovach [15] constructs the following composite type: "...this particular research approach flows from an Indigenous belief system that has at its core a relational understanding and accountability to the world...Indigenous epistemologies hold a non-human centric relational philosophy...and while tribal groups hold differing relationships with place, as evident in local protocol and custom...there is a shared belief system among tribal groups...". So "tribal" people all share the same orientation towards knowledge, just as all Western researchers share the same narrow paradigms.

4. The Problems of Metaphors and Categories

In her work on discursive constructions of strangers, Ruth Wodak writes that "Hegemonic discursive forms of inclusion and exclusion create an 'imagined community' that does not comprise 'Others' or Simmel's strangers" [16]. Dvora Yanow [17], in his work on metaphors and categories in the field of immigration, focuses on their role in creating reality in policy and administrative practices, and we could add indigenous research. He looks at the importance of establishing the point of view from which categories have been named and claims categories in political discourse takes one of two forms. A *slotting* category has distinct boundaries and is exhaustive. Everything belongs to one category only and with no overlap. A *prototyping* category, on the other hand, has less pronounced demarcation lines and resemblance is sufficient for inclusion. The former is more problematic as when one or more elements do not fit the existing categories or fit into more than one category. These become "leftovers" or "category errors". We recognise this from statistics on immigration with "Western" and "non-Western" categories where others cause "category errors". Yanow argues that birthplace as in the above two subcategories has become a substitute for "race", a discourse now forbidden, with purity as opposed to impurity or "pollution". In statistics, these refer to the native "normal" inhabitants as opposed to the otherness or difference. The point is not the immigrant programmes, but "the framing of the problem...through the metaphoric language of political discourse supported by state defined categories". The potential danger is with "its achievement, silently, through shared, tacit knowledge".

Linda Tuhiwai Smith [18], a leading Indigenous scholar, points to the old problem of the dominant cultural group's definition of the native and "the desire for 'pure', uncontaminated and simple definitions of the native by the settler" to continue to define the other, whereas the native has a desire to escape the definition and to be free. Our point is what categories do and the frames in

which this takes place. The consequent use of binaries—as in colonised/coloniser, indigenous/settler, non-Western/Western—creates slotting categories that are determined by ancestry and place. Though Smith has "cautionary notes" on these definitions, rejecting native identities and hybridities, the wider discourse of IR treats such categories as fixed. Elina Hill [19], in contrast, criticises Len Finlay, who is inspired by Smith and whose call is "Always Indigenize!" and refers to Smith's emphasis on de-mystifing and re-centring Indigenous knowledge. According to Hill, the term "to indigenise" (rarely used by Smith, she says) means to bring something under control, dominance, or influence of Indigenous local people. Hill argues that such theories, strategies and methods as "indigenization" rather may work in the opposite direction, mystifying and constructing difference, always oppositional, never at the centre. She asks "Why not focus on the 'vision' of indigenous thinkers (and peoples) instead of 'indigenizing vision'?" [19]. She is also explicit that this takes more self-critical work by non-indigenous people.

Amani K. Hamdan [20] argues that "Narrative [Inquiry] as a Decolonising Methodology" gives voice to Muslim Arab Women in Canada "to contrast dominant images in Western literature and popular culture". This illustrates that researchers concerned with decolonisation also choose among the existing range of methods and analytic strategies. However, not all indigenous researchers recognize decolonising research as part of the indigenous research category. Margaret Kovach [1] argues that "An Indigenous paradigm welcomes a decolonizing perspective"...with reference to Linda T. Smith who appreciates this argument due to the focus on Indigenous-settler relationships. However, they see decolonizing research as part of the transformative paradigm within the western tradition as promoted by American Donna M. Mertens, one of the co-editors of the above *Indigenous Pathways*. Being White and Western, she does not share indigenous ancestry and has no experience from indigenous way of life. We find this insistence on boundary and binary problematic.

Kovach [15] points to their different anchors with decolonizing research centred in the settler discourse as opposed to Indigenous research anchored in Indigenous knowledge. She points to the "relational nuances of an Indigenous paradigm" that makes it "critical to moving forward with an Indigenous methodological approach" as in the conversational method which honours orality, the relational and the use of stories. Other examples would be Russell Bishop's collaborative storying [14], Bessarab's yarning [21] and the Hawaiian talk story [22]. Narrative is thus portrayed as a mode of knowing that differs from Western qualitative research. Accordingly, according to Kovach, "in presenting a story as data the research participant's story is intact and speaks for itself" [15]. At the same time, we read that members with the particular tribal Indigenous knowledge need to participate in the interpretation phase of the conversational method. Would that be necessary if stories speak for themselves? We may also ask if the interpretation will be accessible to the wider audience. Comprehension may be hard for other Indigenous groups, non-Indigenous political actors or "new" Indigenous members who lack prior local knowledge.

There are challenges that locals may handle more easily than others and we advocate respect of local protocols in all fieldwork. However, researchers—indigenous researchers included—report dilemmas of different kinds. Non-indigenous Michael Jacklin [11] writes that it is almost impossible to fulfill all aspects of cultural protocol requirements in IR and refers to internal conflicts over such matters as getting community permission or the return of benefits to the community, or staying loyal to collaborative narratives when information received may cause harm. He also refers to Canadian First Nation writer Sewid-Smith who felt she had to break with her cultural tradition when an American anthropologist (Harry Wolcott) had been invited to attend her father's potlatch in the Kwakwaka'wakw culture of North-Eastern Vancouver Island. Still, she decided it was for the better. Samoan Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi [23] faced a parallel dilemma when writing about Samoan rituals and chants and their meaning, knowledge traditionally only available to custodians of family knowledge. With the traditional custodians passing away, he saw a need to document them. His work led custodians to say that he had abused his special access.

5. Indigenous Methods and Local Knowledge

The pursuit of IR is often accompanied by claims concerning indigenous methods. The precise nature of such "methods" is, however, problematic. Inspection of the methodological texts suggests that such "methods" nearly always turn out to be forms and occasions of *talk*. As we have seen, talk, conversation and narrative are promoted as Indigenous Methods *par excellence*. We find for example a group of "Kaupapa Māori Derived Methods". One, the Hui (a Māori word for gathering or meeting), is described as a particular method in which "a consensual collaboratively constructed story" is "paramount" [24]. Another, "Collaborative Storying", accentuates participants' accounts of significant events and narrative interviews. The difference here is with "the critical and co-joint reflection on experiences, and the co-joint construction of meaning and interpretation of these experiences amongst the participants and the researcher" [25]. However, an insistence on meaning being co-constructed is widely shared by constructionist and interpretative research approaches and is not unique to IR. The imperative of inviting members to co-interpret data is typical of much action research and is also not confined to IR. While Indigenous cultures are expressed in narrative form (amongst others), it is not the case that non-Indigenous scholars are incapable of such comprehension. The work of Dell Hymes, a pioneer in modern anthropological linguistics, is again exemplary. His work on Native American talk is highly attentive to the *forms* of verbal performance, and his development of *ethnopoetics* pays due analytic regard to the Indigenous narrative practices [26].

There is a recurrent attempt to recuperate the authentic elements of a culture, often in ceremonial and aesthetic terms. Hence, the various first peoples are readily celebrated in their primordial state, couched in distinctive cultural traditions. When Kovach [1] provides examples about first-nation Americans, they are based on such topics as the significance of the Rain Dance or the pipe ceremony. Now, one would in no way wish to deny the significance of such cultural manifestations, but it leads to a view of culture that is not exactly anachronistic, but achronic—out of time and out of contemporary social life. It is far from clear from such a perspective that the Cree peoples so described undertake any "ordinary" activity, or engage with non-Cree social institutions.

As a consequence, IR turns out to be almost exclusively based on forms of talk that are not inherently distinct from some methods of "Western" qualitative research—the collection of data from informal conversations and "active interviewing" [27] to group discussions or focus groups. Moreover, such an emphasis on talk means that other approaches to ethnographic research, such as participant observation, are diminished [28]. There are several consequences. First, the emphasis on ceremonial forms of talk constructs indigenous cultures as oral and defined primarily in terms of "tradition". Secondly, it can diminish the possibility of studying everyday practical activity and knowledge-in-action. Thirdly, it restricts the research gaze by ignoring studies of material culture, sensory culture, or mobility.

It is clear that social occasions in which narratives are shared can be highly valued, and that these are among the mundane ceremonials whereby a shared culture of talking and listening is enacted. However, the identification of such occasions is not a matter of indigenous methodology. There are a vast number of ethnographies of communication, narrative studies and discourse studies that document such ceremonial occasions—from party-political conferences to narrative enactments among poor African-Americans and antagonistic exchanges of riddles and ritual insults in Turkey to medical case-conferences or scientific meetings in the USA. They are local forms of social encounter; they have distinctive social arrangements; they are occasions for the display of seniority and deference and of narrative skill. They are mechanisms whereby key aspects of shared culture are brought to life and transmitted, from one individual to others, from generation to generation. However, one does not have to be indigenous to the culture in question to appreciate their significance, and one does not have to be a member of the social group in order to analyse their forms and their functions.

In at least some IR, on the other hand, analysis is abandoned for—or subordinated to—celebration. Research too often ends up as an endorsement of the Indigenous culture in question. There *are*, undoubtedly, distinctive forms of representation that characterise particular cultures. Somerville's

study [29] of space and water in Australia, developed partly through art-works by Aboriginal collaborators, is a case in point. Artwork of this sort can be interpreted by their makers and others versed in the culture. The works used to illustrate and develop Somerville's monograph embody highly evolved ways of representing not merely topography, but also complex social and cultural associations. However, Somerville's monograph is very slight when it comes to a thorough *analysis* of such ethno-geographies and ecological imaginations, and long on evocative writing about her own responses to such indigenous culture. Somerville is not an Indigenous researcher, but clearly feels and claims a close affinity with the Aboriginal way of place understanding. However, analytically, compared with thoroughgoing anthropological studies of landscape and land-use—her analysis is modest.

We thus find ourselves in agreement with Gobo [30], who reviews the "methods" that have been proposed under the aegis of Indigenous research: informal conversations; talking circles; community discussions about preliminary analysis; detailed plans for reporting research results; interviews; and a collective workshop. Gobo then asks rhetorically: What is indigenous in these Indigenous Methods? And provides the answer: not much. Gobo also goes on to suggest that, while a good deal of the recent literature on Indigenous Methods gives a lot of space to epistemological assumptions, little is devoted to technical proposals. As a consequence, IMs do not imply practical methods of data collection and analysis that are distinctive or innovative.

Studies of Indigenous, local knowledge and practices are numerous, but they have not all been conducted by Indigenous researchers, nor do they depend solely on conversational talk. On the contrary, they depend on participant observation and on conventional methods of ethnographic fieldwork. Among the scholars who have addressed local, culturally specific knowledge is Basso, whose work on landscape and memory among the Western Apache is exemplary [31]. He pays close analytic attention to the narrative forms in which the landscape is embedded, including the Indigenous genres that relate places to different frameworks of time and memory. His work is grounded in fine-grained analysis of the language. Likewise, Ingold's finely detailed analysis of landscape and its significance is a major landmark, not least in the understanding of place and mobility [32]. Many studies are notable for the degree of participation that the ethnographer has committed herself or himself to. Marchand's [33] study of minaret building in Yemen provides a detailed account of the local architectural and building practices including techniques for *measurement* and *precision*, which are important aspects of any indigenous system of knowledge and methods. Haase [34] furnishes an autobiographical account of being an apprentice potter in Japan (having previously trained as a studio potter in the United States). He provides an account that will be familiar to students of ceramics: he spent months repeating one basic, small shape of pot, repeatedly failing to satisfy the expectations of his *sensei* (teacher). The apprenticeship of the craft artist depends not on formal, explicit training, but on the observation of the master-craftsman and repeated attempts to emulate his (rarely her) exemplary pieces. These are but examples of a large volume of published studies about indigenous knowledge. The fact that they were not conducted by indigenous members surely cannot render the work nugatory. Indeed, there is a direct parallel to be drawn between the apprenticeship of the skilled practitioner and the craft of the ethnographer [35,36].

Vernacular forms of research are by no means confined to social worlds conventionally regarded as "indigenous". There is a long tradition of Indigenous social documentation in all Western societies. They often share features of contemporary indigenous research, and, in many cases, they anticipate them by many decades. They tend to share the same preoccupations with local traditions, vernacular culture, story-telling and the like. Within the British Isles, for instance, there are very many examples of work by people who were not full-time academics, and who certainly subscribed to no positivist epistemology. We would be surprised if they consciously adhered to any epistemological view, and we are sure that they did not think they were either conducting science, or indeed doing something opposed to science. What they did was to travel and visit, listen and record. In Britain, perhaps the most famous example is the work of Blythe in the village of Akenfield [37]. He too was influenced

by a romanticising vision, recording and recuperating a disappearing form of rural life—based on the seasonal cycles of agricultural work, a social calendar of festivals and observances, and the social relations of the rural community. Likewise, the work of the Mass Observation programme was not based on professional social science (insofar as any such thing existed in Britain), but on essentially vernacular idioms of documentation, made possible by local observers [38]. The same applies to the Norwegian Eilert Sundt who, in the period 1850–1860, documented local life in the Norwegian valleys and country sides by observing and talking to quite ordinary people combined with data from church books and medical records [39] that made him write about demography and population waves later termed "den Sundtske bølge" or "the Sundt wave" long before Malthus and his work. His many books are still available. He talked to people in their garden, living room, fields or elsewhere, made architectural drawings of local houses to study food preservation and hygiene, studied female handicraft, boat and fishery and spent time with Roma travelers of the time. In addition, we can read about his reflections on moving from his theological normative disapproval of what he initially saw as unethical local ways of life to becoming a sociologist interested in documenting and understanding through the actors' own world-view. Though he was well informed about contemporary international statistics, he used local ways and protocols to get his "conversational data". He made the results available to participants through his many talks and pamphlets, disturbed the urban stereotypes about ordinary, poor people, and actively used his parliamentary contacts and literary network to promote social change and to improve local living standards.

6. Poetics of Space and Romantic Nationalism

The promotion of IR has elective affinities with the tradition of Romantic Nationalism. With roots in German philosophy, it became a prominent feature of nineteenth-century nationalist sentiment. Herder [40] provided a philosophical foundation, in arguing for a distinctive unity of a geographically defined people, their language and their culture. Such ideas inspired the rise of nationalistic folk-studies in the nineteenth century, not least in the collection of folk-stories, and the codification of national epics. Of the first genre, the work of the brothers Grimm (from the early 1800) was, of course, the most famous example. National epics were collected, transcribed and published in numerous European countries. Among the most famous were: the Finnish Kalevala, and the Welsh Mabinogion. Beowulf provided the English with an indigenous Anglo-Saxon national epic, while the bogus poems of Ossian were initially welcomed as equivalents for Scotland. National sentiment clearly applied to Norway. After 400 years of Danish rule, the work to create a nation started. Cultural resources included the epic saga of Snorre Sturlason, the sagas of the Viking age in general whether Norwegian or Icelandic, and Norway's own National Romantic period of literature and painting in the creation of "Norwegianness" to celebrate independence. It gave rise to Asbjørnsen and Moe's well known collection of folk fairy tales, at times resembling Indo-European stories, folk songs and dances, and Ivar Åsen's book of Norwegian proverbs and language, marking a difference from the Danish administrative language. Invented traditions included the codification of national costumes, borrowed from French silk textiles and re-created in woollen embroidery. Foreign ideas came across the sea and land and folk merged these new ideas with their own and made it into "our own", as anthropology so often has showed is the case. The process goes on. This makes old oral stories and folk art into meaningful imagined versions of what once were and should be heard and seen as such. We need, therefore, to be wary of appeals to tradition and its identification with a people.

Edward Said's discussion of orientalism is controversial, but it helps to alert us to imagined geography and history [41,42]. He reminds us that "...this universal practice of designing in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs' is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary...The geographic boundaries accompany social, ethnic and cultural ones in expected ways" [41]. For there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help social actors to intensify their own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close and what is far away. This is no less true of the feelings

we often have that we would have been more "at home" in the sixteenth century or in Tahiti" [41]. Of the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard and his poetics of space, Said writes: "The object of a house—its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms—is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginary or figuratively value we can name and feel: thus a house may be haunted, or homelike, or prisonlike, or magical. So space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us" [41].

Romantic nationalism implied that any given people were possessed of a distinct spirit, corresponding to a unique culture, in turn associated with a distinctive geographical location. A similar sensibility lies behind a pervasive notion that there is something primordially authentic in the "folk", that embodies the originating spirit of the people untrammeled and uncontaminated by modernism, industrialism or external cultural forces. It seeks the purity of a people, and sets it apart. The whole world would thus become a series of juxtaposed peoples, each hermetically sealed from all others, culturally pure yet impenetrable. Just as we need to beware Romantic notions of a people, their traditions and their land, we need also to be sceptical of research that is predicated on a relationship of identity rather than difference. As we have seen, there are multiple appeals to such identity as the guarantee of authenticity and accuracy, creating a claim for research validity based on privileged cultural knowledge, biographically-based insight, or privileged access. As we argued above, "being" indigenous is also potentially problematic. Claims to indigenous status on the part of researchers and authors are not necessarily straightforward. These are sometimes matters of *claimed* identity. To take one example, where the facts are identifiable from the author's own biographical reflection, Kovach was born Cree, but adopted by parent of Hungarian heritage, and was not brought up Cree. Indeed, it appears that she had to attend language classes to be able to speak any indigenous American language. Unless we assume that empathy and understanding are mystically in the blood, it is far from clear that Kovach has any more privileged access to understanding Cree indigenous culture than anyone else who has had to learn it from hosts and informants.

Indigenous Research is, therefore, but one example of a Romantic impulse that is discernible across contemporary qualitative social research. Quite apart from its emphasis on ethnicity, knowledge is grounded in personal identity and personal experience. Hence, Indigenous Research shares that characteristic with many other forms of qualitative and critical research. The identity of the researcher, and her or his affinity with the people being researched (by virtue of gender, race, or sexual orientation), is held to warrant the research. The outcomes of research are not primarily analytic, but celebratory. The emphasis is on the social actor as a talking subject. The encounter between the social researcher and the informant in the field is one of communion and shared identity. This is in many ways contrary to the principles and goals of ethnography.

7. Conclusions

Indigenous Research is antithetical to many of the guiding principles of social research in general and of ethnography in particular. Ethnographic research is suspended between the two poles of familiarity and strangeness [43]. Strange social worlds (in the phenomenological sense of "strangeness") are made familiar through participant observation, while familiar settings (in the ethnographer's own culture) need to be de-familiarised in order to gain analytic purchase [44]. One of the clear problems of IR is the insistence that understanding is based solely on familiarity—indeed on identity. There seems to be little place for attempts at de-familiarisation, or, therefore, for the productive tension between familiarity and strangeness. Ethnographic field research is grounded in the human capacity to *learn*, and to do so across cultural boundaries. Adaptation, assimilation, enculturation—these are all predicated on individual and collective acts of transformation. Everything we usefully know from the social sciences tells us that identities are not fixed, but are fluid. Equally, our stocks of cultural knowledge can be added to and extended, amended or even deleted. Not all processes of assimilation are benign. Forced religious conversion is just one example that can violate

and abuse that human capacity, —likewise, the hidden and overt injuries of colonialism. But they can still draw on the capacity to learn new cultural repertoires. And they can be understood "theoretically" by dominated or muted groups. We do not necessarily absorb new cultural requirements and necessities passively and unthinkingly. It is not necessary to assume that all encounters between "Western" scholars and "Indigenous" people must take place within a colonialist or racist intellectual framework. Indeed, the implication that most anthropological fieldwork has been colonialist or racist seems inappropriate to say the least, when the discipline of anthropology has been the most consistently opposed to racist or colonialist discourse concerning "non-Western" peoples.

As Ryen [45] points out, characterisations of "Western" research strategies are not monolithic, and contemporary versions of qualitative research practice offer approaches that are themselves counter-hegemonic. Ryen points out that it is not necessary to contrast models of non-Western research with a single Western orthodoxy. The Western methodological literature contains multiple sources of critique that themselves react against "traditional" paradigms. They include feminist standpoint research, challenges to "science" and "modernity", critical race theory, and critiques of colonialist and orientalist discourse. It is, therefore, regrettable when advocates of Indigenous methods engage in crude stereotyping.

It is the work of the social scientist to try to transcend her or his cultural boundaries. The ethnographer who attempts to analyse the cultural system and social organisation of "others" is not *ipso facto* acting in a colonialist way. Sociological or anthropological understanding is not "given" on the basis of the researcher's own identity or assimilation to the social world being investigated. It depends on *work*. We have to work at making connections, suspending our natural attitude, learning new languages and new skills. None of that comes easily, and it certainly does not come naturally. It is not based on who we are by on what we do.

Hitherto, we have implied that "indigenous methods" are not, on the whole, very plausible. On close inspection, many of the things that are endorsed as indigenous methods are not quite that: they are standpoint research, action research, and local occasions for data collection. But, in many cases, they are not "methods" in the sense that is intended. Equally, local methods of sense-making, of science and so on *are* often documented, but such research does not rely on the empathic relationships implied by advocates of indigenous research. On the other hand, we can extend the argument. We can begin to explore the counter-proposition: *all* methods are "indigenous", in the sense of being shaped by their cultural and historical milieux [46]. If we accept the essential principle of reflexivity in the social sciences, then we have to acknowledge the fact that there are no culturally neutral research methods. The information that the social sciences can collect and analyse is always dependent on research strategies that are themselves cultural artifacts, and are reactive, in that they help to construct the phenomena that they measure.

The technologies of data collection associated with the population census and the sample survey are themselves research methods that reflect the interests and needs of advanced industrial societies. The population census is historically embedded in the needs of advanced industrial societies and of the State. The sample survey is equally associated historically with commercial and political polling. If population enumeration is indigenous to the modern State, then the survey is equally indigenous to a liberal, consumerist society. So too is the focus-group—a research method that owes a great deal to marketing and political polling. It, like many such strategies, has migrated smoothly to the fields of social research. In recent years, the commercial uses of online networking have been assimilated to the social study of social media as well as shared public discourse in a diverse range of domains. The interview is equally "indigenous", to the extent that it is itself a distinctively modern technology for the construction of individual identities, for the construction of personal interiority, and the exploration of selfhood. It of course has multiple cultural roots, from psychoanalysis to celebrity journalism. Life histories and testimony have their cultural roots that precede their use by social scientists. Ethnographic fieldwork has many "indigenous" roots, from literary and social commentary on social conditions, to narratives of exploration, to colonial surveillance. This is not to make cheap

comments about sociological or anthropological research. Rather, it points to an inevitable relationship between research methods and the social worlds in which they are deployed. We should no more expect de-contextualised research methods than we should expect any other social phenomenon to exist independently of culture and social organisation.

Likewise, if there are specific occasions for social research, such as the distinctive forms of social encounter that self-styled indigenous methodologists claim, then we also need to recognise that *all* such information-laden encounters are "indigenous". Once more, if we accept a "Western" cultural array, then we can readily identify a variety of indigenous occasions that can be, and have been, used as key occasions for the collection of data on spoken and other activities. Indeed, distinctive forms of encounter have been at the heart of ethnographic research and equivalent research undertakings: clinical encounters in medicine; classroom encounters and pedagogy; exchanges at the family table; courtroom proceedings; professional meetings and conferences; political debates and confrontations; and celebrity interviews. Indeed, the list is, if not endless, then an inventory of cultural occasions, speech events and the like. These are no less "indigenous" than yarning, story-telling, or the sharing of oral epic, and they are subject to local-cultural variation. We have observed elsewhere [46,47] that contemporary qualitative research is too often characterised by its own forms of Romanticism, especially in the pervasive use of the personal interview, at the expense of sustained analysis grounded in the disciplines of the social sciences. Here, we have argued that IR is in danger of reproducing that trend. Far from there being a sharp divergence between Indigenous and Western methodologies, there is a convergence, while IR adds to it its own form of Romantic Nationalism. Let us conclude with Partha Nath Mukherji on Atal: "Nativistic demands of indigenisation as expressions of 'nationalism, and an argument for the uniqueness of one's own culture that defies any scientific treatment is a thing of the past'" [48].

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