

EDITORIAL

SOME REFLECTIONS ON WHOLE PERSON RESEARCH

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I have been thinking lately about what it means to approach my research from a whole person perspective. To be honest, I don't really know. And, yet, I think I've been slowly and inadvertently cultivating this approach since I first started as a researcher, some 20 years ago. My sense is that it involves simultaneously comparing and honing two contrasting images. One is of the phenomenon itself. For me, this is people who are experiencing pain and suffering, but let's imagine for a moment this as the sun. It's hard to look at (and thus study) the sun directly, so a second, simplified image is needed. This is the *image* of the phenomenon that is generated through our research methodologies. This second image is always a distortion of the first. We might use a prism to help us study sunlight, but it can only provide narrow insight into the actual qualities of the sun. Extending this metaphor, I like to imagine my research tools as *a crooked finger pointing at the moon*. My job, then, is to try to straighten and reorient this finger so that it leads us toward the actual *source* of light we want to understand (rather than just directing us to the closest surface lit by its reflection).

Being able to see the distortion within the research-generated image requires an immersion in the phenomenon of interest. I want to cultivate a deep, personal connection with the phenomenon that I'm studying. My hope is to generate a set of memories, feelings or imagined feelings that can be conjured when critical reflection is needed. Einstein famously imagined himself riding on a beam of light, which, in