COMMONING ETHNOGRAPHY

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Lorraine Lane, Cecilia Lewis, Elizabeth Povinelli, Linda Yarrowin, Sandra Yarrowin,
David Boarder Giles, Melinda Hinkson & Timothy Neale
Jennifer L. Lanterman & Sarah J. Blithe · Katharine McKinnon & Kelly Dombroski
Beaudelaine Pierre, Naimah Petigny, Richa Nagar & Sima Shakhsari
Amanda J. Reinke · Eve Vincent · Alexandra Widmer

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Introduction

Like a second album, the second volume of a new journal can be a tough proposition. Our first volume set the tone for this project, introducing the idea of the commons and asking how the practice of commoning might generate new conversations about ethnography. When the journal launched last year, it was not a culmination, but rather a start: of generative conversations, of relationships with a readership interested in the intrinsic political potential of commoning with/in ethnography. In this volume, we tune in to and amplify questions about ethnographic practice as a form of knowledge production. In particular, we engage with the question put forward in the first volume: "What does combining the idea of commoning with the practice of ethnography allow us to think about or to do that we might not otherwise?" (Elinoff and Trundle 2018: 1). Building on that, here we ask: what if ethnography is a source of commoning differently?

This question of commoning differently, also taken up by the articles in this volume, encourages us to engage with emerging scholarship and a politics of uncommoning. Drawing again on a musical metaphor, we see uncommoning as a *counterpoint* to commoning. Musicians will tell you that a good counterpoint requires two qualities: (1) a meaningful or harmonious relationship between the lines (a 'vertical' consideration – i.e., dealing with harmony); and (2) some degree of independence or individuality within the lines themselves (a 'horizontal' consideration, dealing with melody). Uncommoning, as a political framework for shaping ethnographic commoning, is indeed such a counterpoint. We are inspired by the essay 'Uncommoning Nature' by Marisol de la Cadena (2016) where she draws on the Indigenous struggles with development projects for 'the common good.' In pushing back, in *counterpointing* the narrative on commoning, she allows us to see the complex entanglements between different human and non-human worlds with shared interests as well as uncommonalities. It is in this uncommoning that she locates ways to work beyond difference and the human/nature divide.

Uncommoning, as a framework to understand and reclaim the commons as a progressive political space, is further highlighting by de la Cadena and Mario Blaser in a special issue of *Anthropologica* in 2017. In their issue introduction they unpack community and commons, writing that the:

> […] idea of community denotes a shared domain, which, in light of our perception of uncommonalities, begs questions of scale, scope and relations: How far does the shared domain that constitutes a community extend? What kinds of things does it include, and what kinds of responsibilities do these things demand? What are the possible relations between the commons and the uncommons? In short, the idea of the commons and of commoning call forth an exploration of what making "things" (objects, identities, concepts, ideas and so on) common implies, especially where things might (also) be uncommon (Blaser and Cadena 2017: 186).

This emergent conversation on uncommoning helps us see that to common is not about flattening or settling, but rather about continually making space for dissonance and unsettling.

The contributions to this second volume of *Commoning Ethnography (CE)* collectively push for a commons that does not rest on a singular narrative of what commoning ought to look like. In different ways, these submissions uncommon the commoning project, creating progressive spaces for an ethnographic commons. (Re)claiming the commons to recognise and make space for difference, and to *differently* engage with the conversation on commoning, is a politically vital project for our time. The articles in this second volume of *CE,* then, offer us, in a very nuanced tenor, the differences we need to make space for in the commons or in commoning projects.

For example, Katharine McKinnon and Kelly Dombroski see the human body as a tool or instrument needed for truly engaged ethnography. In placing

their bodies within the space of ethnographic practice and also the neoliberal university, they foreground the academic body as a political refusal of the erasure asked of women within the neoliberal university. The 'common good' of a non-bodied imagined equality in the university is upended here, to instead ask for recognition of different bodies – including women and mothers. In highlighting their bodily differences, they ask the university (and academia) to uncommon its practices in order to work towards a embodied commons. Eve Vincent, in the second article, similarly pushes academic and research narratives to make space for 'pain narratives' and 'critical storytelling.' She highlights her own positionality as a settler anthropologist working in Aboriginal communities, to not erase difference or arrive at idealized narratives of ethnographic productions, but rather to magnify and demystify the different relations that shape the research process. This writing, evocative and honest, opens up space for commoning the ethnographic process *differently* in relationality with our interlocutors.

The next two articles, also in the spirit of commoning ethnographic knowledge production and ethnography, unsettle the ways in which medical anthropologists and ethnographers view and share their research results. In Pauline Herbst's work, the graphic comic serves to make available an accessible narrative about a complex medical condition. This different way of sharing, this different ethnography, is an example of unsettling academic authority and of making space for difference in knowledge production. Similarly, Alexandra Widmer, in revisiting a colonial narrative of a medical encounter between colonial authority and local Pacific sorcerer resistance, provides us with different stories of the same encounter. One singular event is recast through different lenses. It is an act that creatively makes space for voices previously unheard. It *uncommons* the narrative by revisiting and unsettling the presumed settled.

Each of these articles, in their own divergent brilliance, have been fascinating for us to read and engage with. We also note another (minor) difference, or opportunity, to uncommon with the goal to common ethnographic practice. Each of the submissions in this second volume are from ethnographers, but not all are from anthropologists. Thus, as we continue to probe commoning and ethnography alongside each other, we also make space for the disciplinary uncommoning that enables an ethnographic commoning.

A few notes about our editorial decisions in this volume. The issue features articles and text with non-English language words. We have not used a 'standard' practice over the author's decisions to italicise, or not italicise, those words. We have also been careful not to change author's voices in these submissions, with the clear aim that each different contribution, much like each member of a band, comes together to make for a much richer textual (or musical) experience. It is our ardent hope that in each of these texts you can actually *hear* the authors as they engage with the idea of ethnographic practices and outputs. Finally, while the authors have all engaged with reviewer feedback during the peer-review process, we also listened when some of them were not willing to take on the changes requested for various reasons. For some, accepting all reviewer requests would soften the overall tensions they were trying to highlight – especially when engaging with the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous research

practice. We have made these decisions deliberately and hope it appears in the spirit of commoning editorial authority.

Special Section: Labours of Collaboration

Our concern with minimalising editorial authority is reflected in the special section on the Labours of Collaboration. This section is comprised of four pieces: three articles and one performance video accompanied by a transcription. Each of these pieces in their own way shed light on the *very* different forms of collaborative labour as sites of commoning knowledge and ethnographic production. The section has an introduction which maps out the conversations on collaborations that have shaped our own collaborative labours, and also situates the four pieces within larger debates and stories about collaboration.

The four pieces come from a diverse range of academic spaces and encourage a truly multi-faceted engagement with the labours of collaboration. In the first article, 'NGO-Research Collaborations and Conflicts', legal anthropologist Amanda Reinke demonstrates the complexities and possibilities of doing collaborative work with/for non-governmental organisations. The second piece is a collective video performance (and transcript) by Beaudelaine Pierre, Naimah Petigny, and Richa Nagar, entitled 'Performing Embodied Translations: Decolonizing Methodologies of Knowing and Being.' Introduced by Sima Shakhsari, it is an innovative resistance to standardized academic expectations around gaining and presenting knowledge.

The third piece brings the conversation on collaboration in ethnographic research to our own local context in Aotearoa. Rachael Fabish, in 'Pākehā working with Māori – Activists and Academics', makes visible the discussions that can shape the way non-Indigenous researchers need to listen to and learn from Indigenous people in different spaces – i.e., spaces designed and maintained with Indigenous worldviews prioritised. In the final article in this section, 'The Benefits, Challenges, and Disincentives of Interdisciplinary Collaboration', authors Jennifer Lanterman and Sarah Blithe draw on their diverse academic backgrounds to highlight the how deeply entrenched academic systems do not always recognise or support interdisciplinary scholarship.

Collaborative work, as we outline in the section introduction, is not easy. It is a result of multiple entanglements and contestations, but one which is closer to the intellectual and emotional grounding of the commons. Collaborative labours dilute power and redistribute the agentive possibilities across human and non-human spaces. Collaborative labours lay bare the unease, tensions, and negotiations that lead to commoning projects, and they lead to spaces rife with potential to take us beyond the colonial and capitalist extractive private property model we are so deeply enmeshed in. Collaboration, like commoning, is a political project that ethnographers need to attend to if they hope participate in de-centered knowledge production.

This special section on collaboration is the start, rather than an end, of an important conversation on the relationship(s) between collaboration and commoning. As Silvia Federici repeatedly reminds us, there can be 'no commons without community' (Federici 2011a; 2011b; 2014). Thus, for us to collaborate is

not necessarily *to common*, but there can be no commoning without a commitment to different collaborative labours.

New Feature: Interview Transcripts

In the spirit of collaboration and creating space for different ways of engaging with knowledge, we have initiated a new feature in *CE*. This feature will include transcripts of interviews or podcasts that speak to the idea and practice of the commons. This is an opportunity to use the *CE* journal platform to amplify certain conversations that have already appeared in audio format elsewhere. It allows us to examine up close the nuances of commoning projects in different spaces – physical and intellectual.

In this second volume of *CE,* we include a transcript of an interview with the Karrabing Film Collective by David Boarder Giles and Melinda Hinkson, with Timothy Neale producing it for the *Conversations in Anthropology@Deakin* podcast. The Karrabing Film Collective comprises of Lorraine Lane, Cecilia Lewis, Elizabeth Povinelli, Linda Yarrowin, and Sandra Yarrowin. In the interview, they highlight how their Collective works to bring ways of life from their parents' and grandparents' times to bear on the contemporary, amongst other topics. They highlight the political potential rife in everyday collective practices. The Collective is a commoning project on Aboriginal lands, taking on the labour of commoning simultaneously in uncommong spaces like the academic, visual, and everyday.

We hope this new feature of *CE* allows us to make available and boost the signal of conversations around commoning, collectives, and collaborations that are happening in different (largely non-textual) formats.

The peer-engaged review process we employ is integral to *Commoning Ethnography.* For that, we thank our reviewers for their critical and generative engagement with the articles in this issue. This non-blinded review process has instilled a layer of rigorous engagement with the scholarship, thereby shaping the conversations on commoning here in these pages and beyond. Your contributions are immensely valuable and we thank you for your time and generosity.

Also, much appreciation for Lilian Klein at Milk and Honey who checked in on us as we wrote and ensured our tea kettles and coffee cups were always filled. This issues would have been impossible without the sustained care and caffeine provided in our little staff café.

Finally, we would like to thank Debbie Evans in the School of Social and Cultural Studies, and Stella Ivory, a recent graduate of the Cultural Anthropology programme. You are the best team of proof readers we could have hoped for. Thank you!!!

Concluding Thoughts

To some, this volume may appear as a musical duet between its two editors. However, for us, it is anything but. As should be clear by our acknowledgements, we have not done this work on our own. In many ways, working on the second volume of this journal is comparable to releasing an album, where musicians, instruments, recording equipment, sound engineers, producers, album cover designers, record pressers, and audience all contribute to the overall musical experience. For us, when talking about this issue, the musical tenor evoked is one of the *qawwali,* a *Mehfil-e-Sama,* where different voices, ideas, and texts come together in rhythmic and melodic way.

This is the second chapter, second album, second rendition of a discussion on commoning and ethnography that started in 2017. We look forward to continuing to engage with you, our readers, on these and other issues over the next few years with/in forthcoming issues. To that end, we invite you to contribute to this conversation via articles, poetry, fiction, photo-essays, videos, performances, graphics, and other innovative ways. Please see our open call for papers for information on how can contribute to the next issue of *Commoning Ethnography.*

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An Editor's Farewell

Nayantara Sheoran Appleton

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It is bittersweet to say farewell to *Commoning Ethnography* as at the end of this year I step down from the editorial collective. It has been a wonderful three years of seeing this journal take shape over many a conversation, from the hallways of the Cultural Anthropology Programme to the offices of the Centre for Science in Society here at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington.

It has been an absolute pleasure working with my colleagues and reading the diverse range of scholarship on ethnography, commoning, and collaboration. To be part of this intellectual project has been vital to my wellbeing and I look forward to engaging with each new issue in the coming years.

It is hard to say farewell to this beautiful project, and yet I must for two reasons. First, in the next year or two I need to carve out space to focus on some direct political and activist work in South Asia (India in particular, given its current conservative political turn). Maybe someday soon, from that work will emerge a submission or special section on India and ethnographic commoning in post-colonial spaces. The second reason is to create space for new voices and ideas to continue to uncommon and common the ethnographic practice – in and beyond academia.

Ngā mihi nui and namaste,
Nayantara

COMMONING ETHNOGRAPHY

Call for Papers

Commoning Ethnography is an off-centre, annual, international, peer-engaged, open access, online journal dedicated to examining, criticizing, and redrawing the boundaries of ethnographic research, teaching, knowledge, and praxis.

Open Call for Papers

We are pleased to open submissions for Volume 3. We welcome submissions that explore the boundaries of ethnographic knowledge, experiment with forms of ethnographic writing, disturb the authority of single authorship, consider how property norms shape ethnographic research, and rethink communities of ethnographic research in a variety of yet unanticipated ways. We also welcome ethnographic and theoretical accounts of the commoning projects that exist within contemporary life, be they within academia, social movements, political spaces, emergent economies, environmental debates, creative practices or in intimate and quotidian arenas of social life.

We accept standard research articles (6,000-8,000 words), as well as a range of other collaborative, creative and exploratory works (see our website for details: https://ojs.victoria.ac.nz/ce/about). We are interested in reflective, engaged, and impassioned writing. We are also interested in work that challenges norms of ethnographic writing by expanding the rules of authorship and finding novel ways to enhance collaborations with research partners, incorporating their voices, thoughts, and discontents into our own practices of research. We are particularly interested in work that reflects an off-kilter, handmade approach to knowledge production and dissemination; this includes, but is not limited to, new

graphic forms like cartoons or photo essays. We also encourage work that extends the limits of established academic networks, breaches boundaries between the centres and peripheries of academia, and considers critically who and what can be included in our conversations.

Deadline for Open Submissions is April 1, 2020*
To submit please use the OJS submission system. If you have questions or brief pitches for potential articles or special sections, please contact our editorial team at editorsCE@vuw.ac.nz.

*Work submitted after this date will still be considered, but for Volume 4.

Ethnography In and With Bodies
Embodied Learning and the Academic Life

Katharine McKinnon
La Trobe University

Kelly Dombroski
University of Canterbury Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha

ABSTRACT | The body is a vital part of ethnographic experience and learning. This essay reflects on the complex work that the body does during ethnography, not just as an instrument for data collection, but as a means of collaboration, a site of embodied learning, and a conduit for connection and communication that is more-than-verbal. In this contribution we reflect on research engagements that have been profoundly embodied, involving deep embodied learning and communication, touch and connection in the contexts of childbirth, infant care, and midwifery. Building on experiences in China, Laos, New Zealand, and Australia, we discuss the richness and the challenges of consciously collaborating with, in, and via bodies and embodied communications. We also explore what might be learned from the embodied experience of ethnography that we can bring back into academic life: are there lessons we can learn from collaborating with bodies that can help us to thrive amongst the challenges of the neoliberal university?

Keywords: embodied knowledge; affect; maternity; care; vulnerability

Introduction

For ethnographers, our bodies are our research instruments. These bodies are enabled and connected with our places and subjects of research through notebooks, airplanes, recording devices, computers, but *being there*, in the 'flesh,' is really what matters. The affective and embodied labour of doing ethnography is well recognised in countless pieces of writing but for each ethnographer, the lesson must be learned anew, in and through their own body. At some point, we each must learn to collaborate with our body, *this* body, that we find ourselves in, interconnected with others through assemblages of affect and objects. In much the same way that the research instrument of the spectrometer or the MRI machine must be calibrated, cared for, and interpreted with its individual quirks in mind, so too does each body require consideration in ethnographic work. Visible markers of gender, race, or (dis)ability require us to carefully consider our positionality in the field, how we are observed, perceived and represented by others. Indeed, it is no coincidence that thinking and writing about the body has been spearheaded by women and minorities in the academy. For many of us, still, transcending the body is the marker of success in the academic world. The norms of academic writing seldom make space for an explicit recognition of our embodied realities: childbearing, ethnicity, gender and chronic conditions are wiped clean from the twelve-point-font, double spaced manuscripts.

This essay is an exploration of what we might erase when we attempt to wipe clean such bodily presences, an experimentation with writing through the body, and a contemplation of what kinds of scholarship may become possible. What might happen if we pursue a conscious learning with our bodies – collaborating rather than erasing the embodied self, finding language for what is more-than-rational, more-than-cognitive, preverbal or nonverbal, experienced but not articulated? We reflect on the complex work that the body does during ethnography, and not just as an instrument for data collection, but as a means of collaboration, a site of embodied learning, and a conduit for connection and communication that is more-than-verbal. We offer an experiment with how such sensory learning and bodily-knowing might be communicated in the space of academic writing – a medium characteristically dis-embodied and un-feeling, in which registers of the physical and the emotional are very often deliberately diminished or pushed to the side in the performance of professional identities and the formal tone required for much academic publishing. We experiment with how the sensing, feeling, and caring of embodied selves might open up an expanded field of knowledge and knowingness. In this speculative essay, we recount experiences of fieldwork and academic work with and in bodies. We take turns to remember experiences in 'the field,' and offer collaboratively written explorations of how they spark sensations that may just offer recuperative potential for academic life.

Kelly, Christchurch 2019

The baby grizzles, sitting on the floor, dribbling and fussing with a chewy toy in his mouth. He is teething and unhappy, but as the youngest of four, must somehow fit into the daily schedule of preparing for school and work. The noise escalates

and then subsides as I pick the baby up and he nuzzles into me for a cuddle. He is big though, and I can't carry him on one arm. I rely on a long cloth to wrap the baby on me if I need to get anything done at this time of day. I scoop him on to my back, fiddling with the cloth to get it just right. The tension has to be exactly right so that he is held against my back securely but not uncomfortably tight. I take my time, wriggling him around even as he fusses, adjusting the fabric just so, before tucking the long ends of the cloth under his legs so he doesn't fall out and in again at the front so I am carrying him as if wearing a backpack.

I can do this now in about two or three minutes, but it took me three children and ten years to master it. It's called a 'Tibetan' carry, but in all my time doing ethnography on the Tibetan plateau with my first baby, I never saw a Tibetan carry their baby in this way.[1] If I had, I surely would have stopped someone and asked for help to get my first child on my back – and possibly failed. This knowledge, the knowledge of how to wrap and carry a baby with a simple piece of fabric, is knowledge I could not learn from a book, or even a YouTube video (though I tried). Each time I tried with my older children, it would end in tears for us both, sweaty swear words, sore arms and neck, and a sense of failure. With practice, however, I got better. No amount of explaining really helped – I just had to do it, to feel it, to experiment with holding and tightening and tying in just the right way. I also had to learn how to move, just so, to comfort him and perhaps even get him to sleep in the initially unfamiliar back carry.

Today, it works. The years of embodied practice provides tangible payoffs – lunches are made, teeth are brushed, children are readied and hugged, baby is comforted by the bodily presence of a parent – that fine-tuned instrument of movement and warmth. This is an essential embodied collaboration to getting any writing done today.

Writing ethnography is as much an embodied experience as doing ethnography, but, in our home discipline of geography at least, we are less likely to foreground it. Performance ethnographers in other fields actively embrace the 'intelligence in the body' (Olomo 2006: 339), and Māori researchers draw on understandings of mātauranga/knowledge and whakaaro/thought as embodied (Smith, Maxwell, Puke, and Temara 2016). There are also odd spaces in our universities and conference circuits where the full person is acknowledged and, often, ethnographic work is integral to these spaces. More common in our field, however, is to somewhat ignore our bodies as we translate, transcribe, and transform our ethnographic experiences into 'professional' conference presentations and structured arguments.

Writing is also an affective experience that we are unlikely to acknowledge, despite the many writers' guides reminding us of this (Lamott 2015). We seldom give recognition to the emotional labour of remembrance, the exhausting micro-management of schedules and writing environment, the affective pull of our families, and colleagues who want us to do just this one thing. Writing ethnography is as much a more-than-rational encounter as doing ethnography, but we do not often think it wise to foreground this. We often worry

about the vulnerability of communicating in non-academic modes of writing, seen as sentimental, wishy-washy or a cop-out from the task of editing for clarity.

In this essay, we have structured our reflections around three interrelated points on learning through and with the body, linked together by the device of the rebozo: the long woven piece of fabric used in many parts of the world to support women in labour, wrap women post-childbirth, and carry babies close to the body. We have written this sitting across from each other in uncomfortable chairs on a repurposed board-room table while a blustery southerly blows and our coffee rapidly cools in generic university-owned mugs. We have dropped our children at school, Kelly carefully unwrapping her baby off her back and passing him to his father for care, Katharine settling in her children in an unfamiliar school while visiting Christchurch on a fellowship. Our pomodoro timer begins, our structure is drafted, we sit and write, careful to stand and stretch limbs and hands and thank bodies for five minutes each time it goes off.

Fieldwork with bodies

The attention to self demanded by ethnographic field work is well recognised in contemporary geographical literatures on ethnography. Discussions of the need to attend to the 'self' engaged in fieldwork include debates about how to navigate one's own beliefs and sense of the 'truth' against the truths of others in cross cultural work (Shanafelt 2002; Dombroski 2011a, 2011b); the need to grapple with awkward questions of positionality, power, and privilege of the fieldworker (Abbott 2006; Katz 1994; Kobayashi 1994); and the often difficult, and sometimes traumatising, overlapping of personal emotional relationships and the professional work of 'gathering' data (Diprose, Thomas, & Rushton, 2013; England 1994; Warden 2013). Increasingly, the fact that the self is an embodied self has become a focus for reflection and debate, and the presence and meanings of 'bodies in place' (Nast 1998) opened up for exploration. This includes consideration of the ways that 'body-talk' can be deliberately used to elicit connection and communication across difference (Parr 2001).

In ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher is their own research instrument. Like the equipment that might be used to extract core samples of soil for a soil scientist, or the devices used to create and analyse mapping data for a geographer using GIS, research instruments must be kept in good working order, they must be maintained and cared for. In ethnographic fieldwork this means making sure you get rest, time out from the round-the-clock practice of being attentive to the surrounds and relationships you are embedded in. It means remaining attentive to those who you are seeking to learn from/with, and being attentive to yourself. Over the years our fieldwork practices have come to incorporate planning ahead for care of the researching self: making space in bags for portable yoga mats or running shoes or our favourite coffee. The accoutrements required for the body to feel not only comfortable but *comforted* extend to things, objects, food – an array of other-than-human stuff that accompany us into situations where we are likely to feel *un*comfortable much of the time, and assist us to gain vital moments of respite.

The body, and the stuff we connect to and work with as we care for it, are also tools for learning. Ethnographic methods give ample recognition to the observation work done by eyes and ears, the recording done by hands and notebooks, and the cognitive and interpretive functioning of the mind. But bodies also learn and bodily learning is crucial to working across cultures. With time one learns different ways to comport oneself, that knowledge sinking into the automatic movement of the body as it becomes intuitive (Dombroski 2018). How to walk down a street safely in Port Moresby, how to sit well on the floor in northern Laos, how to eat with hands while never putting fingers in your mouth, or to gesture to an object without pointing; learning to feel the disgust of someone wearing shoes on the tatami, or going barefoot in a house in Chengdu – these become natural, instinctive, and ultimately embodied knowings not because we read about them or are told, but because we live them with our bodies.

Kelly, Xining 2007

If I was doing this in New Zealand, I would have just put the baby on the floor. But somehow, I have to get her out of these wet pants and into a clean pair without laying her down on a – seemingly sparkling clean – floor. You just can't put a baby on a floor here in Xining, western China. At least, it doesn't feel right. I've never seen a baby on the floor. On a heated kang that functions as both bed and living area, yes. On a family rug in a Muslim home that functions as a kind of on-ground couch, yes. But on tiled floors, it just isn't right.

I've seen other families manage this – with Grandma and Granddad holding the baby between them, changing on their laps. I once saw someone do it on a piece of newspaper. But mostly, local caregivers are more skilled than I am at knowing when baby is going to wet, and holding them out in the appropriate place (including, as it turns out, tiled floors when necessary). I look around carefully and see there are grandmothers watching. Grandmothers are my best signal for when I am doing something socially inappropriate in this space. At some point, these grandmothers come to live in my head – or perhaps my limbs – to act as my Xining-spatial-awareness monitor. Setting off inexplicable alarms or slight warnings when I suspect, in my body, that something is not quite right. Babies lying on the floor is not quite right, I know.

I lift the sling over my head and spread it out on the tiles. Working quickly – as it still doesn't feel quite okay – I change my daughter's Chinese-style split-crotch pants and stash the wet ones in my bag. I put the sling back on while holding her in my arms – again, not okay to put her on the floor – and secure her again. This research instrument, this body and my daughter's body, experience the different in hygiene spatiality and babycare in a more-than-rational way that exceeds explanation. I just know now, what is acceptable. The trick is to pay attention to that knowledge, to acknowledge my body and somehow write and communicate it in my work on hygiene and space in western China. It is more than a tool or instrument and meaning and knowledge spill over in excess of what can be communicated in text. The spectrometer only partially accesses the possibilities of the substrate;[2] yet the learning of the body as a research tool exceeds what can be expressed or understood rationally.

Both the body as research tool that must be cared for, and the body as a conduit of learning, prompt us to think about the body as a collaborator in ethnography. The body is not just a capsule for the mind (or the soul) but a 'lively' thing, an 'agential object' as Colls and Fannin put it (2013: 1100). Remembering the 'leaky body' of the pregnant woman (Longhurst 2004) and the 'wilful body' that many women find themselves in during childbirth (McKinnon 2019), we wonder about recognition of the body, not only as an instrument, but as an active partner in research. Along with the accoutrements and practices that we engage to care for it, what might thinking of the body as both an integrated and distinct member of a fieldwork collective do for how we do ethnography? What knowledge/ knowingness it is possible to glean? And where does this leave us as academics, embedded as we are in institutions and bureaucratic systems that give little space to the unruly dictates of the embodied self?

Analysing with bodies

Social science training does not foster skills of learning with the body, nor the communication or interpretation of what we come to know through the physical sensations of the body. Even the old (and now discredited) VARK model of learning, that claimed that people naturally fall into one of four categories of learner (visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic), only posited kinesthetic learning as a mode of absorbing knowledge (Scott 2010), not as a mode of learning that actually generated new knowledge in the physical experience. There is a whole field of psychology that investigates the feeling-of-knowing that sits on the tip of the tongue (Hart 1965; Bless and Forgas 2000), but what of the knowing that emerges *from* the body?

Katharine, Laos 2019

I am lying on the floor of the hospital waiting room in the mountains of northern Laos. The tiles are cold, it has been chilly in the mountains these past weeks. I am on my back with my knees folded up to my chest. I feel my pelvis spreading, feel the hands of my friend, the midwife, on my belly and kind words, 'are you okay?' She waits for the answer, her hands attentive and warm. I nod and she returns to her demonstration. She is teaching a group of village health workers, midwives and doctors techniques for supporting a woman through a difficult labour. My 'baby' has shoulder dystocia – it is stuck in the birth canal, its shoulder trapped behind the bones of the model pelvis I hold with my hands. The vulnerable position I am in spreads the bones and help to let the baby through. I feel the opening in my own body, and I am grateful for the modest traditional skirt (sinh) *I am wearing, and for the midwife's protective touch.*

Everyone has a turn to play the mother in labour, the men as well. They lie on the ground, or squat, or kneel, and moan and groan and fall about in hysterical laughter as they play the part. They too get to feel the opening in their pelvis and experience the vulnerability. Every successful 'delivery' is met with cheers. They all have known babies to die and mothers to suffer, and have had to live with their own inability to save them.

Every now and again one of the Australian midwives I am shadowing is asked to attend to a woman that has come in to the clinic from her village. On these occasions the rebozo is inevitably brought out, and its many uses demonstrated: as a support for the belly, a way of relieving pain, and a 'rope' to hang on to during labour. I witness pregnant women, often initially suspicious or hesitant, submit to the ease and comfort the rebozo brings them, their faces relaxing as they respond to the gentle touch of a midwife.

I have entered this research wanting to attend to the ontological differences signalled by culturally diverse, place-based practices in labour and post-partum care. I want to explore what women's experiences in this place might teach us about how childbirth is not a universal feminine experience. But the shared response to the comfort of the rebozo; the warmth and connection of touch; the mutual understanding that grows from taking turns to be prone and vulnerable, feeling one's pelvis opening on the floor – these seem to exist simply as a shared human feeling that resists the complicating tendencies towards postcolonial angst, minority world guilt, or valorisation of either the 'Western' biomedical or 'Eastern' cultural wisdom.

Now I am home. The remnant sensations of opening and connection are fading. I try to recall the warmth of attentive touch and the lightness of the laughter that came along with learning how to save a mother and childs' lives, and feeling of warmth that seeped into my bones during the weeks spent amongst these women. I try to find words to articulate my experiences, but the feelings sit in my limbs and resist language. I can feel myself shrinking back to the cerebral as I try to make meaning of my weeks in the mountains and turn to the work of writing and analysis.

There is a knowing that seeps into the bones, emerges from the spread of the pelvis bones during a simulation of childbirth, or is perceived in the moment that worry-lines on the face smooth over and the unconscious anxiety that grips your shoulders falls away. Mitch Rose (2018) suggests to us that when something is brought into our consciousness, into the realm of the rational and articulable, what is enacted is an (imperfect) effort to lay claim to it, to possess it. For Rose, consciousness is very different to the non-cognitive engagements that dominate our entanglements with corporeal existence. In our work, however, we have proposed that the experience of labour and childbirth suggests there is something in between the consciousness-as-claiming that Rose describes, and the non-cognitive. Something important that is different to the debates about representational or non-representational that have interested human geographers in recent years (Thrift 2008). Terming this a 'maternal consciousness,' we suggest that during labour many women enter a terrain of 'labour land' during which:

> something that is neither just of the body, nor just of the speaking, decision-making self, comes into play. That altered state makes possible a "maternal consciousness" particular to the shared body-mind work of labour" (McKinnon 2020: 44).

Could these different forms of consciousness be a source for an alter-rationality?

Performing the embodied academic

For the last several years we have been thinking a lot about the maternal experience and what that opens up for how we understand the world, how we organise ourselves, and what we value (Dombroski et al. 2016; McKinnon, Healy, and Dombroski 2019). In the academy we are really good at analytical, critical thought. We value head-work. We perform the unemotional, rational thinker; we develop a craft of words and language and numbers; and among feminists we may speak about the messy fleshy stuff of life, but we do not often live it. We do not often perform it as scholars. We learn how *not* to display our vulnerability, our embodiedness, our leaky, frightened, loving, other-than-rational selves. And for so many of our colleagues, especially those senior to us, that performance goes along with an absolute unquestioning acceptance of, in fact a mastery of, an institutional form that is deeply masculinist, heteronormative, dis-embodied, and 'rational.' As experts, we learn how to make our arguments watertight, we learn how to perform mastery, we learn to speak with a voice of authority.

This type of performative academic subjectivity has been named as the 'super-ableist geographer' (Horton and Tucker 2014: 83), and ethnographers within geography will certainly feel pressure to conform to an academic culture in which self-confidence, productivity, stamina, ambition, and charisma are all anticipated and valorized (Conradson, 2016). Despite our best efforts, this habit seems to persist amongst ethnographers and feminist scholars in spite of a now rich tradition of displacing and decentering the masterful 'knowing subject': consider Robyn Longhurst's work to alert us to the vulnerable and unruly 'leaky' body (2004), or Eve Sedgwick, and subsequently J.K. Gibson-Graham's, explorations of the value of 'weak theory' in place of a paranoid diagnostic 'strong theory' (Sedgwick 2002; Gibson-Graham 2006), or Sara Ruddick's compelling case for the legitimacy and analytical power of maternal thinking (1989), or bell hooks who teaches us that teaching can be a liberatory and peace-building practice of transgressing boundaries in partnership with our students (2014). Tiffany Page's explorations of 'vulnerable methodologies' admits the unsettled disturbance of not knowing in the practice of reflexive ethnographic research, and the telling of other people's stories (Page 2017). These scholars, along with many others, offer compelling avenues for a feminist mode of decentred and unsettled academic scholarship. Yet it is rare to admit vulnerability in the delivery of these contributions, in writing, keynote talks, conference panels. The performance of professional academia belies the feeling, touching, vulnerable, messy, in-motion people we are.

The mask of professional mastery is undoubtedly a benefit at times, but we are also curious about the costs of not admitting that embodied, de-centred, vulnerable self to the *practice* of academic life. Our own experiences of becoming mothers has often involved struggling with the contrast between mothering-life and professional-life. This is not uncommon, as evidenced by discussions in online groups such as the 'women in academia' or 'fieldwork with kids' Facebook groups, or Twitter hashtags such as #academicmama, as well as in popular considerations of the pleasures and challenges of combining parenting and research (see for example Sohn 2019). It is not just us who are disturbed by the

daily transition between the intensive holding, touching, loving, empathising, and attunement to the non-verbal cues of infants or emotional tirades of toddlers, to a neat, ordered, intensively cerebral space in which emotions are usually kept tightly in check (Leonard & Malina 1994). And the issue is not limited to mothers – many academics struggle with the expectation to perform guarded professional subjectivities despite the intensely emotional realities of life as an academic, including rejection and personal investment in work (Paige et al. 2019).

For academics around the world, professional expectations appear to be increasingly difficult to meet within the 'neo-liberal' and the 'PR' university in an age of audit culture (see Cronin 2016; Dowling 2008; Sparkes 2007). Andrew Sparkes, in his paper entitled 'Embodiment, academics, and the audit culture,' tells the story of Jim, a composite character based on informal interviews and personal experiences in United Kingdom Universities. Jim is a 'Director of Research,' suffering through the deeply distressing, and very embodied experience of undergoing the British Research Assessment Exercise (RAE): he relates the bodily sensations panic, anger, helplessness, and despair as he is forced to submit himself and his staff to a process he finds both brutal and meaningless. While experiences of these kinds of auditing exercises are certainly diverse (Cupples & Pawson 2012), most commentators agree that the pressures on academics seem only to have intensified. The stories told in Julia Cupples and Eric Pawson's Christchurch workshop, for example, as well as those recorded in the Precarious Places Project (https://precariousplaces.net/) certainly testify to this.

Yet Sparkes offers Jim's story in the hope that 'the reader might think with the story and see where it takes them' (2007: 540), that it will resonate and be a story that readers will 'look after' and 'when it is needed, share it with others' (2007:540). Cupples and Pawson (2012) note the possibilities for subtle reconstruction and description of one's own research story, including community service, in the narrative based system of New Zealand's Performance Based Research Fund. Likewise, The Precarious Project provides an opportunity for academics to tell their own stories anonymously. Both these practices offer the telling of a story, the sharing of experience, as a response to the visceral distresses of life in academia, and the brittle vulnerability that goes with it. What more might we be able to do for each other?

Katharine, Castlemaine 2013

Encountering the rebozo in Laos took me back to my own experiences with it after the birth of my youngest child. When my third daughter was born I was 39, a 'geriatric pregnancy.' I woke on the morning of her birth knowing it was going to be soon. Labour began in earnest during breakfast, and by midday I was holding her in my arms. About a week later, when my midwife was visiting and asked how I was feeling, I found myself saying to her that I just felt kind of not-together, kind of vulnerable and brittle. I didn't feel strong. She explained that fast births are often like that – the body opens rapidly and afterwards struggles to draw itself together again. So she got out her rebozo and she did a postpartum wrap, a 'closing of the bones'. Wrapping me, and squeezing my body, starting with the

feet and working her way up. It was the most extraordinary experience, it felt like I was being knitted together.

The sensations of being comforted and cared for invoked by being wrapped in the rebozo are sensations we sometimes long for in our academic lives. That brittle vulnerable feeling following childbirth is akin to the difficult feelings that arise during academic work: the nervousness of delivering a lecture to 800 bored students, sending a paper off to a journal for review, presenting at a conference of critically-minded peers. We academics regularly deal with the terror of exposure, opening our intimate thinking to the scrutiny of others, and being torn down. All the while being expected to manage a widely varying array of duties across teaching, research and administration, with workloads that are rarely achievable within our contracted hours of work.

Are there equivalents to a rebozo wrap for academic work? The sharing of stories through forums such as the Precarious Project (or in conference sessions where participants are encouraged to read out their worst rejection letters) offer the catharsis of sharing and of recognition (see also the various stories in Paige et al. 2019). But is it possible to do more? To offer something with the healing and reconstitutive intention of the rebozo wrap? Is the feeling of being wrapped, knitted back together, with the attentive and attuned touch of another – being a recipient of that practice of care – something that can also happen in the academy? How could an attunement to the more-than-cognitive knowing of bodies, and accompanying vulnerability, expand the possibilities for how to comport ourselves as academics?

The performance of a different kind of scholarly self might be one way to admit a richer, fuller, more generous mode of humanity to enter the academy. Ethan Miller (2019) raises the question of how to enable ourselves to step into spaces of radical experimentation and becoming-otherwise without fear of losing the precious bit of stability we might already hold. In his reimagining of livelihoods, he describes the need for decomposing and recomposing the possibilities of life, and the shape of livelihoods, pointing out that a necessary step is to make ourselves vulnerable, to 'decompose,' so that we might reconstitute ourselves in new ways more fitting to the urgent demands of the Anthropocene.

Making ourselves vulnerable and reconstituting ourselves as whole persons might best be set aside for specific times of 'rebozo wrapping' where we can feel held and safe by like-minded colleagues rather than awkwardly out there alone. For example, participants at the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science 2019 conference reported on video and Twitter that for the first time, they felt their 'whole self' could be present professionally, in a conference focusing specifically on Indigenous peoples working in STEM.[3] It is a heartening prospect that there are ways to create spaces and places where our whole selves might, for a short while, be present in academia as complex, full, embodied ethnographers. We wonder how it could be made habitual to create spaces where it is safe to deliberately make ourselves vulnerable, expand the moments in which the rebozo is close at hand, and where, with others,

we might offer and receive the attentive care needed to knit our full selves back together. But we have not yet mastered this, and we do not have a tight, well-argued answer.

Conclusion

In the work of transformation, feminist economic geographer JK Gibson-Graham notes that we can start with what is at hand – to cook from what is present in the pantry rather than shop to cook (Gibson-Graham 2006). In the work of collaborating in ethnography, we too can start with what is there and foster collaboration. We all have bodies, different bodies, differently abled and differently marked. The body is what is at hand, the thing that we can never really escape no matter how intense the pressure of the disembodied academic performance measures might bring to bear. Recognising what we have here, honouring and collaborating with the body as always present, always relevant (even when absent in text). As Pākehā academics, mothers, women and ethnographers, our bodies bring particular knowledges to the academy, as do the bodies of every ethnographer. We also are not fixed in the knowledges of these bodies, but we live and work and learn in them. While positionality statements have become standard fare in the work of ethnographers, there is still something to be said for *really* examining what these bodies know – and don't know, and can perhaps come to know – in the work of knowledge production. We wonder what this could look like if it is more-than-rational, what the potential is for working with and through the body in the academy – and indeed have begun to explore ways of doing this (Dombroski & Do 2019; McKinnon 2017). The vulnerability is all too real, but so too is the possibility for different kinds of academies where different kinds of knowledges are acknowledged as already present.

There are so many stories we could tell, so many rationalisations we could make of the more-than-rational experiences and knowledges we have evoked here. To tie our reflections together around a theme or device, we have used the material object of the rebozo. The Mexican term rebozo is a name for a long piece of tightly-woven fabric, emerging as a necessary garment in the hybrid colonial cultures of early 19th Century Mexico. While a plethora of enterprises have attempted to commercialise it for baby carrying, in the end, what we refer to as a rebozo in the contexts above remains a long piece of fabric obtained from whatever is at hand, that can be repurposed in multiple ways as an extension of (mostly) women's bodies. It acts then, not just as a device connecting our stories, but a metaphor for the work of carrying, covering, comforting, and knitting together needed to survive and perhaps thrive in Academia. We can begin with what is at hand, and our vulnerable bodies can learn and adapt and come to know how to move, and indeed to care and collaborate with other bodies and objects. What is the thing, or who are the people that carry, cover, comfort and knit us together in Academia? What is at hand? What can we make from what we have already, as ethnographers and bodies? It is this question that we would like to end with, to evoke something of the possibilities we might yet discover.

Notes

1. Which is not to say they do not use it. I was in an urban area mostly. Likewise, I saw plenty of people in Bhutan use this carry and a rebozo when I visited pregnant with my 4th child in 2018.

2. To reference Latour and Woolgar, 1979.

3. See the SACNAS 2019 video at https://twitter.com/i/status/1190481559217815555

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Storytelling, Statistics, and the Ethics of Responsibility

Researching a Welfare Reform Experiment

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ABSTRACT | In this essay, I reflect on the process of conducting research into an Australian welfare reform experiment that targets Indigenous people: the trial of a cashless debit card. Selectively deployed statistical research has been key to making and contesting the political case regarding the cashless debit card's effectiveness. However, pursuing narrative research in contradistinction to this preponderance of statistical research does not necessarily salve ongoing questions about power and research ethics, which have been reinvigorated amid renewed calls for anthropology's decolonisation. I draw on Eve Tuck's (2009) analysis of 'pain narratives' and Sujatha Fernandes' (2017) critical account of storytelling to probe aspects of my research. When settler anthropologists elicit, listen to, collect, and then disseminate stories gifted by Indigenous interviewees, this demands we take serious 'responsibility for the decisions we make as writers' (Birch 2019: 26). Demystifying the particular relations and everyday processes that lie at the heart of our research practice is thus warranted.

Keywords: Cashless debit card; narrative; responsibility; decolonisation; ethics

What counts as 'thorough, robust research'?

Since mid-2017, I have been conducting ethnographic research into lived experiences of the cashless debit card trial in Ceduna, South Australia. Introduced into the Ceduna region in March 2016, the cashless debit card (hereafter 'the card') quarantines 80 per cent of income support benefits received by those of working age. Twenty per cent of payments are deposited into the recipient's bank account and the remainder is available on a debit card barred from operating at any alcohol or gambling outlet across the nation. According to the relevant legislation, the trial aims to reduce the amount of social security payments that can be spent on alcohol, gambling and illegal drugs; determine whether such a reduction decreases instances of violence or social harm in trial sites; and encourage 'socially responsible behaviour' more broadly.[1] The card can be understood as part of a shift towards more conditional welfare state arrangements across the Global North (see Wacquant 2009). Ceduna was the first trial site for the card in Australia, which has now been extended to a further three sites. Indigenous people comprise around 25 per cent of the Ceduna region's population, yet approximately 75 per cent of card holders in the Ceduna trial site are Indigenous.[2]

In spending time with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people affected by the card's introduction, and in undertaking narrative interviews with them, I sought to establish and then animate a distinction between statistical research and storytelling.[3] Selectively deployed statistical research has been key to making and contesting the political case regarding the card's necessity and effectiveness. This quantitative research is centrally concerned with behavioural change. It thus involves researchers being seen *as* the state, from the perspective of research participants, and of those researchers 'seeing like the state' (Scott 1998). How then to engage in research about the card on another basis? I emphasised that my research was different: I was interested in people's stories – about their whole lives, and about life on the card. However, listening to people's stories presents its own set of ethical questions regarding my complex imbrication with state effects, and the ways in which I might go on to write about difficult, sometimes desperate life circumstances. An introductory story helps set the scene.

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In February 2018, I travelled to the small rural town of Ceduna on the far west coast of South Australia to continue my research into lived experiences of the cashless debit card trial.

Also, in February 2018, Australia's ruling Coalition government introduced legislation into Federal Parliament with the goal of facilitating the card's expansion into other areas and extending two trials by then extant. On this summer trip, I rented accommodation near the deep-sea port, where salt is piled in steep pristine piles. I had withdrawn into the cool of my unit, out from the heat and away from the work of forging, sustaining, deepening and renewing relations that anthropological fieldwork involves. Here I listened to the replay of a February 7 radio interview with a South Australian parliamentarian, Rebekha Sharkie, in

which she outlined her reluctance to support the bill in its current form (ABC Radio National). Sharkie's equivocation was crucial: to pass the legislation, the government needed the support of the crossbench, a handful of representatives from minor parties including Sharkie. Sharkie told ABC journalist Sinead Mangan, 'We've said to the government – a further twelve months where you have your existing trials. Let's do some thorough, robust research on this.'[4]

Key card proponent and then mayor of Ceduna, Alan Suter, was interviewed after Sharkie. Mangan began by stating, 'We've heard from Rebekha Sharkie MP, who thinks there needs to be more statistics-based research....' Suter responded in his familiar gravelly voice, 'I think we've got enough statistics to float a ship.' He continued, 'I would strongly advise Ms Sharkie to come to Ceduna, come and have a look at what is happening in the real world. And then make a judgement.' As the interview drew to a close, Mangan asked Suter, 'Have you done any research of your own locally?' He replied, 'I do research pretty much every day. The amount of feedback I get from community members is quite amazing and very heartening.'

It is tempting to belittle Suter's description that by living and working in the local community affected by the card trial ('the real world'), he is in effect constantly 'doing' research. This seems to me what Ghassan Hage might classify as a 'phallic' mode of comparison, whereby I could boast that my research practice is bigger and better than his research practice: I 'have' ethnography (Hage 1998: 287). Or, to express it in an Australian vernacular rather than Euro-theoretical terms, I could channel that icon of masculinist frontier Australian whiteness, Crocodile Dundee, and grin: 'Call that research? ... THIS is research.' Instead, it struck me that the immersive method of participant observation so valued by ethnographers bore at least *some* resemblance to the place-based, experience-centred approach Suter valorised. Going about everyday life in Ceduna, I too sought to talk with community members, especially those people using cashless debit cards, about their perception of the trial – I call it amassing anthropological material rather than 'feedback'. The radio piece thus directed me to interrogate anew critical questions about the ethical and methodological implications of my research practice in this settler colonial context.

First, note that the journalist transmuted Sharkie's comment about *thorough, robust research* into the sentiment *there needs to be more statistics-based research*. Statistical research, synonymous with 'data' in the debates surrounding the trial's evaluation, is clearly regarded as interchangeable with rigour: statistical research into welfare reform experiments alone are accorded the capacity to attest to policy success or failure. My interlocutors well understand that it is numbers that have a 'privileged status in political decisions' (Rose 1991: 674). Where then does that leave my resolve to distance myself from quantitative data collection and the goal of policy evaluation, instead inviting those people I got to know to tell their life stories? Narratives best serve, I remain convinced, to denaturalise the category of 'welfare recipient.' That is, the participants in my research are essentially 'the unemployed,' a designation that captures the thing that people do *not* do at present: waged work. Life stories might reveal instead the centrality of unremunerated care labour in someone's life, for example, or the

ways in which the disappearance of certain forms of precarious rural work on pastoral stations and railways has affected the region's economy and the life courses of individuals. The task of denaturalisation is neglected in much of the critical literature of welfare reform which simultaneously reproduces a category that makes invisible the myriad of ways in which people live and labour (e.g. Mendes 2013).

However, in undertaking research into lived experiences of welfare reform policies I have used methods that both allow us to know these lives in different ways *and* frequently re-centre suffering. I have recorded narratives telling of the lot of the dispossessed and marginalised, listening to details of sickness, racism, violence, poverty, and the awful deaths of infants and cherished kin. These might be termed 'pain narratives' (Tuck 2009), which risk (re)defining people in terms of lack and loss. The notion of 'pain narratives' is drawn from Eve Tuck, an influential Indigenous (Unangax) scholar working across Indigenous Studies, education and critical race studies. This essay proceeds to reflect on the doing and writing of ethnographic research in these settler colonial conditions, grappling with Tuck's demand we move away from 'damage-centred research' and towards a 'desire-based framework,' which is concerned to understand 'the complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives' (Tuck 2009: 416).

More specifically, after establishing the context in which I sought to distance myself from statistical and evaluative approaches, I outline the ways in which I was received as a researcher: as both a proxy for the state and as a conduit, who might be entrusted to both take people's stories 'back to the government' and to put into public circulation 'another side' to the cashless debit card story. This focus leads me to clarify the agency of the researched, who engage in an exchange with the researcher for reasons that the researcher is then ethically bound to try and honour. Research of this kind comes with serious responsibilities to others *and* to the task of writing about others' lives. As such, an honest if necessarily partial reckoning with the dilemmas involved is warranted, in order to demystify anthropological research practice amid calls for its decolonisation.

'Those statistics are gathered up…': The implementation and evaluation of the cashless debit card trial

A vast literature draws on Foucault (2009) and Nikolas Rose (1990) to understand statistics as a biopolitical instrument, which make populations legible as an object of governance. Processes of quantification also make that which is hard to measure less visible (Espeland and Lom 2015). In the case of Indigenous Australia, the 'ongoing need to "measure, measure, measure"' (Lea 2005: 161) is a perennial feature of Indigenous policymaking, exemplified in current 'Close the Gap' targets and reporting practices (e.g. Altman and Russell 2012, see also Rowse 2012). More recent scholarship has emphasised the proliferation of practices of measuring and ranking, as 'audit culture' spreads to new realms 'both within and beyond the state' (Shore and Wright 2015: 22). Other theorists posit that it is algorithms rather than statistics that are fast emerging as the key numerical technique though which governmental power is exercised (Eubanks 2018).

What work have statistics been called upon to do in the particular scenario under consideration? First, there is the incantation of select statistics to justify the card's introduction to address complex local issues. Shocking statements such as 'Ceduna's hospitalisation rate for assault is 68 times the national average' appear across a range of media stories and in government statements prior to the card's introduction in early 2016 (e.g. Henderson 2015; Stewart 2016). As part of a fulsome analysis of the relationship between narratives and statistics, Akhil Gupta points out that numbers can be transformed into stories and vice versa (Gupta 2012: 153-158). The repetitive recitation of a group of statistics has here become an effective narrative device, crucial to establishing that an extraordinary and extreme backdrop led to the introduction of a bold and novel measure.

Second, there is the selective use of statistics to justify the card's retention. Evaluations of varying scope have consistently been undertaken of the income management initiatives that precede the cashless debit card. Rob Bray, involved in the largest of these evaluations, concludes that New Income Management (the largest Australian program that quarantines social security income to date) does not have 'significant systemic positive impact' (Bray et al. 2014:316).[5] Importantly Bray (2016) also summarises the way aspects of these evaluations circulate in public discourse, whereby positive findings are exaggerated by their selective use in public debates. So consistent is the pattern by which political figures rely on and emphasise favourable results that do not reflect the overall conclusion of evaluations, Bray (2016: 464) writes:

> While the motivation to justify the success of programs might just be political expediency, the persistence of this behaviour points towards a more concerning situation where the level of commitment to the program, within elements of government and bureaucracy, has resulted in a process of rejection of evaluation findings when contrary to their belief in the program.

In the case of the card's evaluation, private research company ORIMA was contracted to evaluate the first two trials, in Ceduna and the East Kimberley. The shortcomings of the resulting report have been highlighted by numerous authors, who point out that self-reported behaviour change may well be influenced by the interviewee's reluctance to admit to engaging in drinking or, especially, illicit drug use (a limitation acknowledged by ORIMA) (see Hunt 2017: 1). Ensuing public debate saw both the selective circulation of statistics pointing to positive outcomes and the emergence of a counter-story that drew heavily on those academic criticisms of the ORIMA report's shortcomings. Linda Burney, a federal Labor MP and Aboriginal woman, who was shadow Social Services minister at the time, addressed parliament thus, citing the work of Australian National University academic Janet Hunt:

> Hunt is critical of the methodology used in the ORIMA evaluation. She argues that people interviewed for the evaluation may have told interviewers that they drank less than when the trial began but that such

recall over a year is not likely to be very reliable. Furthermore, people had to give their identification to the interviewer. They may have said exactly what they thought the interviewer wanted to hear. They certainly would not have incriminated themselves. This is particularly true for the Aboriginal population, who, for historical reasons, are likely to view authority figures with deep suspicion (Parliamentary Hansard 2018: 5966).

Australian sociologist Eva Cox (2017: 8) took this further, positing that the ORIMA evaluation raised serious 'ethical questions' because it involved asking Aboriginal people about things they might find distressing. While her comment is well-meaning, it reconstitutes the very image of Indigenous incapacity that Tuck points to *and* on which basis the card's apparent necessity has been established. Indigenous people are again cast as primarily damaged, vulnerable and in need of protection. The card nominally offers protection from either the vociferous demands of kin and, more broadly, cultural values that inhibit individuation and success, as well as the demands an individual's addiction exerts. Cox implies that Aboriginal people need as well to be protected from research, which represents an unwelcome intrusion. As Kirsten Bell (2014: 518) observes of the doctrine of informed consent, which she argues has been embraced by anthropologists and ethics committees, 'in presuming this relationship of inequality, the doctrine actively reinscribes it.'

In July 2018, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) (2018) released a report highly critical of the data relied upon by ORIMA to evaluate the cashless debit card trial. The report outlined deficiencies in the data collecting method, pointing to key sets of statistics such as school attendance that were not available to evaluators. The ANAO concluded that it is difficult to ascertain 'whether or not there had been a reduction in social harm' as a result of the card's introduction (ANAO 2018: 8). What is significant for the purpose of this essay is this: the ORIMA and ANAO reports in fact have in common a marked disinclination to talk fulsomely with people on the card themselves. In both cases, community figures were called upon to narrate the impact of the card on local life. Card holders were surveyed but were not to be trusted as narrators, a point I will return to later in this article.

That which is summarised above is not just a scholarly and political concern but has permeated the setting in which I work. It manifests first in a cynicism about the use of statistics, research participants consistently raising doubts not just about their reliability but the ways in which they reduce contextual realities to numbers. A highly anxious and serious Aboriginal man, Dustin, told me:

> But when you think about it, all of these statistics that's gathered on to support this card, we're basically getting punished for out-of-towners. Like the locals, we don't use the Day Centre [(the Stepping Stones Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Day Centre)], we are not in the Sobering Up Centre 24/7 or the hospitals or Town Camp, and those statistics are gathered up to support this card. The people that are doing good by it, we was suckered

> into believing it was a trial. Now that those statistics are all gathered up, it's kept the trial going…

There is a lot to unpack in the above quote but in this essay my focus is on Dustin's understanding of an instrumental process by which statistics are 'gathered up' to execute political plans. The statistic cited earlier about assault rates, among others, points to a situation of acute social distress but does little to help us understand the rhythms and reasons for scenarios that have been reduced to grotesque statistical anomalies against an invoked norm. Local conjecture held that the high rate of admissions to the sobering up centre in Ceduna, which was also heavily reported, allegedly captures the habits of a core group of people who do not reside in Ceduna, drink intensively, and who present at the sobering up centre for a bed for the night: here they will find somewhere warm and dry to sleep and somewhere to wash their clothes the next morning before going about their day. This service has been repurposed by its users, locals suggest, in tones that vary from bemusement to frustration to begrudging respect. And so, my research participants effectively relayed that data does not in itself ever say anything straightforward: local knowledge is needed to make sense of numbers.

A second manifestation of local understanding of the numeritisation of politics was less a matter of explicit conversation than something I gradually became aware of as I spent more time in Ceduna. I worked closely with a small group of passionate local advocates against the card, both Aboriginal and whitefella. I came to realise they worried my research was unlikely to be credible because of my aversion to producing generalisable statistics. When I posted out and emailed through a copy of a summary of my research that centred around the presentation of verbatim quotes, I had these advocates in mind when I wrote: **It is methodologically unsound to turn deeply qualitative research of this kind into statistics** (emphasis duly applied to original.) My imagined audience for this very sentence carefully tallied the quoted material and happily relayed to me that the overall message of my report was 'against' the card. Again, as Gupta notes (2012: 153-158), stories can be turned into statistics.

A final dimension of local opinion about the ORIMA evaluation deserves mention. A number of people expressed their disgust that ORIMA had provided survey participants with a token remuneration for their time, a fact they wielded to delegitimise the ORIMA evaluation. This is interesting in light of the fact that Australian university ethics committees, to the best of my knowledge, generally view such small gestures of remuneration of research participants in interview-based studies favourably, as it is seen as less exploitative of 'vulnerable,' and 'over-researched' peoples. Local ethical sensibilities here proved at odds with more bureaucratic formulations of research as a transaction in which the researcher gains and the researched give. In exchange, the researcher is also expected to give back a token remuneration. This was refigured by my research participants as a matter of being induced to say what the government wanted to hear.

'Don't tell the government.' Stories and statecraft

In disavowing the task of 'gathering up' yet more statistics, I was endeavouring to take up a vantage point on the cashless debit card distinct from the state's. I asked that fundamentally anthropological question, 'Tell me about your life,' rather than the statistical yes/no possibility generator 'Is the card working?' However, I did not just endeavour to distance myself from evaluative and normative frames by moving *towards* anthropology but simultaneously wished to *distance* myself from aspects of my academic discipline's past.

I carried into this research a considered reluctance to trespass on people's intimate lives derived from decades of critique of anthropology's entanglements with colonialism and concerns about ethnography as extractive. An earlier generation of critique (i.e. Hymes 1972; Asad 1973; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Anderson 2003) has recently been reinvigorated in light of the fact that anthropology's self-reflexive turn did not prove transformative of anthropological practice, teaching and of the canon (see for example Simpson 2014; Todd 2018; Burman 2018). The inference that anthropology's ethical entailments are more suspect than those of other disciplines that produce knowledge about Indigenous people is not something I seek to perpetuate. Ethnographic research ideally involves a 'painful porosity' to others (Clark 2017: 12), whose objectives, insights, categories, experiences, and feelings serve to affect, teach, and change both the research and the researcher.[6] It's not this relational aspect of the method – the involvement with others – I sought to keep in abeyance. Rather, it was the disquieting reality that the line between observation and prying is not easily drawn. Recording narrative interviews seemed to represent a less intrusive possibility, in that the research space was more clearly demarcated.

Let me clarify further what I mean by a narrative-based method. Ground-breaking Indigenous Studies scholarship emphasises 'storywork' and 'yarning' as Indigenous-specific narrative modes, through which research with Indigenous people might productively be undertaken (Archibald et al. 2019). In my case, I was working with a cross-cultural understanding of life narratives, which rested on Jerome Brumer's analysis understanding that the 'self is a product of our telling' (2002: 85, see also Brumer 2004). To tell stories restores agency to the speaker, notes anthropologist Michael Jackson (2013: 186). However, inviting people to tell their life stories was not an uncomplicated methodological alternative to more obviously ethically fraught approaches.

Another tale

Maude agreed to talk to me, saying she thought that Aboriginal people too should 'put our yarn in'. I sat with this Pitjantjatjara woman aged in her 60s in her housing trust home in Ceduna. Two female relatives sat around the table too, chewing the grapes and sweet biscuits I had brought with me and listening to Maude tell of her childhood in the desert. Four other male relatives milled about between the kitchen and sunny front verandah: one sat on a milk crate listening intently to Maude's stories, the others came and went to help themselves to biscuits, and to ask for cigarettes. 'Get a job,' Maude barked after one as she handed over a smoke. At one point I paused, saying 'I gotta remember my questions,' to which Maude

prompted, 'But grey card, you was talking about, you were asking about…?'[7] Was I here to talk about the cashless debit card or not? Maude wondered if I had gotten 'side-tracked'? Or, 'Do you want to know a bit more about me?' At this juncture, I explained again my interest in people's whole lives, which I had tried to convey at the outset. 'I want to hear more about you!'

We continued, eventually arriving at the topic of the card. 'We really want to get back to the money, you know. Handling the money,' Maude emphasised. 'We've got no money. Got to depend on the grey card.' She did not think it stopped people from drinking, 'They're clever. Aboriginal ones are. Lie and sneak and know.' She told me, 'There is a way.' Maude's story about how people get around the card to buy their Tawny Port was hard to follow. In any case, she warned me, 'But don't tell the government.' She glanced at my phone, which was recording our conversation: 'Well they've got it recorded.' Again, she repeated, 'Don't tell the government...' 'Only you'll know,' Maude continued, 'even though you're working for them.'

Having explained a number of times my university affiliation and research focus, then, it was still assumed that if I was there about a policy then I was there at the behest of the government. 'Are you not the state?' I have been pressed when presenting early versions of this essay. To be sure, I am entirely educated within the government-funded school system, and now work to produce knowledge in a public institution putatively dependent on government funding.[8] Moreover, I readily acknowledge the Foucauldian thrust of this query: I am formed through state effects that ensure my daily conduct and comportment fall clearly within a normative horizon of acceptable possibilities. But to grasp the relationship between the state and subjectification (while not reducing one's selfhood to a state effect) does not negate the importance of my interviewees understanding that I am not, in fact, employed by the federal government, either directly or via contracted research. Maude's confusion on this point was concerning and I spent considerable time talking further with her about who I was and what I sought to do. It was not easy for people in the field to distinguish my persona, aims and intentions from those of other educated outsiders, the likes of which frequently travel to places like Ceduna to enact consultation and evaluation processes.[9]

Maude's assumption was so explicitly put to me I could counter it directly. What was more disconcerting was a subtle sense I carried away from many other interviews, feeling I had been treated as a proxy for state actors. Aboriginal people well understand that even those cast in seemingly benign helping roles are also scrutinising their lives: staff who assist with tenancy issues also check that houses are occupied by 'responsible' householders; education and youth social workers are mandatory reporters of any signs that child protection issues could see the state become involved in family life, and so on. And, as Tuck writes research 'functions as yet another layer of surveillance' (2009: 410) – in this case in the lives of welfare recipients who are already closely monitored and deemed to be in need of reform. My sympathetic ear, grapes and mega-pack of Arnotts family assorted biscuits did not mean I might not also be simultaneously an agent of either consultation and/or surveillance.

Unsurprisingly then many interviewees crafted what I came to understand as 'good citizen narratives'. When I interviewed June, for example, an Aboriginal grandmother and artist, she foregrounded details such as, 'I had 8 kids. I was a good role model for my kids. I had to be a mother and father to my kids.' I am not saying people pedalled in mistruths when they told me they were good parents or that they did not drink. Rather, I am drawing attention to the resolutely settler colonial conditions that shaped the research relationship, bringing about a situation in which – despite me never asking people whether or not they drink – interviewees consistently told me, '*I* don't drink' (as well as: 'they should pick on the drunks').

This uncomfortable merging of my story collecting practice and perceived state objectives is further illuminated by turning to recent literature on storytelling, neoliberal statecraft and social change. Theorists and writers such as Didier Fassin (2012), Sujatha Fernandes (2017), Tanya Serisier (2018) and Maria Tumarkin (2014) draw attention to the deep penetration of storytelling into contemporary public and political life. Fernandes (2017) provides the most detailed analysis of 'curated storytelling' pressed variously into the service of advocacy, organising, therapy, and statecraft. For example, literate women in Afghanistan have been invited to tell their story of gender oppression in narrative forms that built support for the American invasion via a creative writing project sponsored by the US State Department (Fernandes 2017: 38-68). Fernandes also critiques storytelling's role in advancing progressive political causes, analysing the stories migrant domestic workers told as they campaigned for a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in the US, as well as the kinds of stories they became unable to tell as part of the process. In response, Fernandes outlines (2017: 69-103), speakers might refuse the invitation to narrate or go off script.

It is entirely conceivable then that processes surrounding the cashless debit card's rollout and extension might have involved the elicitation and circulation of narratives of self-transformation, whereby the card itself precipitated a transition into a life of responsible citizenship.[10] Fernandes flags a genre of 'legal storytelling' where defendants before a US drug court might successfully employ certain tropes to convey that once subjected to punishment – or in the case of the card, punitive governmental intervention – they were able to turn their lives around (2017: 28). Maggie Hall and Kate Rossmanith (2016) further analyse this legal genre, pointing to 'constrained narratives,' which are co-constituted by the speaker and the representative of the listening law. Instead, welfare recipients have not been invited to speak. Recall that as part of the evaluation process, community 'leaders' were depended upon to narrate the broader impact of the card's introduction on to local life. Where community members who are on the card express their opposition to the policy to journalists, then their stories have been discredited as self-interested creations, motivated only by their desire to access cash for alcohol, drug habits and to play the pokies (see Holderhead 2018: 19). Former Human Services Minister Alan Tudge, for example, summarised opposition to the card in the following terms: 'Some people are unhappy – alcoholics, for example, are never going to be happy about reducing their intake' (Clancy 2017). It is worth noting that my research leads to a more nuanced

conclusion. Elsewhere, I have argued that 'the most articulate and passionate critics of the card were often those attuned to broader colonial, racial and social injustices' (Vincent 2019b: 18). Critics of the card are not then thinking narrowly about their own circumstances but broadly about social dynamics, history and power.

'Are they listening?' Stories and social change

If I was a kind of stand-in for the state in the exchanges like the ones analysed in the preceding section, I was also understood to have privileged access to information about this policy – which I did, by dint of my educational capital – and as a conduit, who might be entrusted to bring stories back to the state. These additional aspects of the research relationship are each considered in turn below.

Visiting Ceduna's Aboriginal arts centre one day in November 2017, a bunch of people clustered around me as I explained the purpose of my presence in town. They sought to have their say but also listened keenly when I explained the status of various federal government proposals regarding the cashless debit card's future. They were aware of a mooted proposal to drug test welfare recipients, and for those who failed to be placed on the cashless debit card.[11] This was welcome news: finally, my interlocutors conveyed, the card would target just those people with addiction problems, as it was putatively designed to do. Somewhat apprehensively I explained that it was not that the proposed drug testing was designed to see less people on the cashless debit card but more: the proposed trial sites for the drug testing were in two east coast locations, and the Ceduna trial would continue to apply to all welfare recipients 65 and under (including those on the Disability Pension and on the Carer Payment). My interlocutors' disappointment was palpable. So, the 'welfare card' was expanding then? Would it soon be everywhere in Australia? I told them about the then current plan to extend it to Kalgoorlie-Boulder in Western Australia and also to a region in Queensland (both plans have now been realised). I continued, explaining that in the Queensland trial site, only recipients of income support payments under the age of 35 would be affected. 'Bullshit,' a listening woman muttered furiously. The more narrowly targeted Queensland site would have a majority of non-Indigenous participants. In this exchange and others then, I was positioned as a mediator or even emissary, who possessed information about the workings of opaque state processes.

Nor did I just seem to my research participants abreast of fast-changing policy developments that would impact their lives, but it was hoped I had some capacity to influence the policy process. Tuck (2009) probes the assumption that research documenting hardship leads to policy change, which she sees social scientists as either sharing or perhaps fostering. Tuck points out that there is a de facto theory of change relied upon by many well-meaning researchers. She writes, 'In a damage-centred framework, pain and loss are documented in order to obtain particular political or material gains' (2009: 413). And so oppressed people consent to research that will attest to their oppression:

> Native communities, poor communities, communities of colour, and disenfranchised communities tolerate this kind of data gathering because there is an implicit and sometimes explicit assurance that stories of damage pay off in material, sovereign and political wins (Tuck 2009: 414).

Certainly, I had been embraced by a handful of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Ceduna who saw in me and seized an opportunity to 'get the story out there.' Robbie, a non-Indigenous person, or 'whitefella', I had interviewed in October 2017 and had since grown closer to, stopped me in the street in February 2018 and asked me intently: 'Are they listening? Or is it falling on deaf ears?' I had picked up this expression about 'getting the story out there,' and was using it as part of my justification for the value of this research. To this end, I published a free, magazine-style online article soon after concluding the intensive fieldwork phase of this research (Vincent 2019a). But as Tuck outlines, an underlying assumption that the research endeavour has inherent worth rests upon a powerful idea as the social scientist as 'litigator,' collecting evidence in order to put 'the world on trial' (2009:415). Tuck points out not only that this is a flawed theory of social change but also that there is a long-term effect for marginalised communities of 'thinking of ourselves as damaged.'

On closer examination, however, some aspects of my research project's unfolding complicate Tuck's characterisation: people sought to tell their stories for manifold reasons, and had a far more active role in shaping these intersubjective exchanges than is captured in an account of the researcher/researched relationship emphasising *only* the structural power imbalance. This seemed to me especially true of my interactions with people living in the remote community of Yalata, the second locality in my fieldwork, which I introduce below.

I was working in Ceduna because I had a long-term relationship with this town, having conducted fieldwork here since 2008 (Vincent 2017). However, Ceduna's suitability as a policy trial site was centrally about its proximity to the remote desert community of Yalata, which lies around 200 kilometres west of Ceduna. Yalata people, who are Pitjantjatjara speakers, as well as Indigenous people from further afield, flow through Ceduna to visit family, for appointments and also to 'party,' as one woman told me, miming drinking with her hands. In Ceduna, my network grew organically owing to the relations I already held. I was reluctant to 'impose' myself on Yalata, as I saw it: it was not a place that I already had a relationship to and I was not in a position to move there and get to know people slowly.

Compounding my ambivalence was the fact that Yalata is an extremely important place in settler colonial historical terms, and the community's 'story' circulates and holds significant value within a contemporary economy of narrative politics. Yalata community members hold memories of the British atomic testing program and have been called upon to tell their story before Royal Commissions, as well as authoring a collective account of their community's past (Yalata and Oak Valley Communities, 2012).

I was in contact with a whitefella who had a long-term relationship with Yalata and who thought it manifestly unfair that Yalata people would not have the opportunity to speak with me. When this person next travelled to Yalata they took information about my research with them, and I was soon invited to visit by then chairperson of the elected community council. This scenario, in which Aboriginal people assert their right to speak with a white anthropologist and an outsider, albeit under encouragement from my whitefella friend, is seriously at odds with current sensitivities surrounding the ethics of research in Indigenous communities (Cowlishaw 2015). Why would community members seek out this possibility?

My first visit to Yalata saw community members both ask me numerous questions about the card's future, as per my conversation at the arts centre, and to voice a set of concerns I was previously unaware of: people expressed to me that the cycle of losing cards, replacing cards, forgetting passwords, setting new passwords and using public computers had seen some lose control of their accounts, with more techno-savvy community members illicitly transferring funds between card-holders' accounts. I recorded material for many hours. Yalata residents made careful use of my presence, often switching into Pitjantjatjara to confer before returning their attention to me (as well as frequently dispatching me to the community store for 'cool drinks'). They asked me to take their 'stories back to government,' not so much naively trusting this would bring about change but evincing a weary determination to voice their perspective on policy developments many saw as imposed and unwelcome.

Importantly, any attempt of mine to collect *stories* on this occasion, to learn of people's whole lives, was waved away, and dismissed as irrelevant to the purpose of my visit. When I explained that I like to hear people's life stories, an influential and senior Yalata community member, Norma, frowned. 'Wiya' (no). The terms of my presence were clear and Norma directed me firmly. I should say, 'Hey, what do you think of that card?' And I should be sure to ask 'some who like it and some who don't' (which I did). I had been warned by another white person, a former teacher, that I would likely not be welcomed at Yalata for there is apparently nothing Aboriginal people 'hate more' than a white anthropologist getting out their pen and writing everything down – a familiar truism. Two younger Yalata women, however, were unimpressed with me sitting at an outdoor table in a public place, my phone casually lying on the table recording and me listening along. 'Take out your pen,' they stated carefully. 'And write everything down.' I complied, of course, and scribbled furiously, while the phone went on recording. Repeatedly Norma, who called out to people to come and sit with me, checked: 'I was going to take these stories 'back to government,' wasn't I?'

I 'put it through' to government, as June, introduced earlier, urged me to do. Tuck's thesis regarding the limitations of social research as a stimulus to social change proved instructive. I made both a written submission to a Senate inquiry and gave expert evidence before it; unsurprisingly, legislation extending the cashless debit card trial to mid-2020 easily passed both houses of parliament with little regard given to the voices of numerous academics and advocacy groups recommending against passage of the legislation.

'It's a good read'. Research, writing and responsibility

What next of this endeavour to listen to the voices of those affected by the cashless debit card trial, a seemingly naïve research objective but a meaningful one? First, there was the literal handing back of printed transcripts of my longer narrative interviews.[12] Returning these transcripts provided insights into the sense of value people might – or might not – derive from engaging with a researcher. I always took this opportunity to dutifully revisit the issue of consent, not in an overly formal way, but by reminding people that they could add or retract anything. A critical anthropological literature points to problems both with the doctrine of informed consent and the formalisation of intersubjective relations in the field via the ethics process (Bell 2014; Eickelkamp 2014; Wynn and Israel 2018). Indeed, my procedural preface was sometimes interpreted as an insult, leading one person to toss his envelope aside defiantly, 'I stand by what I said.'

I tracked down another friend who had started drinking heavily again since I had last seen them, and had recently been in a psychosis, relatives warned me. I found this person at a local social service where they had an appointment, 'charged up' (i.e. drunk), unkempt and seriously short on sleep. They put the envelope I gave them in a plastic bag, tying the handles together carefully before we parted ways. I held no illusions that my friend was about to go home, review the record of our interview and contact me with corrections. In fact, they headed down the street and got into a fight, I learned later that afternoon. The ritual of returning this story was clearly about my compliance to a practice that made little sense in this particular moment. At the same time, I wanted to see this friend, who I was worried about, and having something to hand over served as the pretext for us getting together: it was a happy enough meeting and we talked for some time, even if the circumstances were troubling.

In other cases, the printed pages gave material form to that which was exchanged: according the physical object of the transcript respect and treating it tenderly serves to communicate that these stories would be similarly treated. A non-Indigenous woman, Gina, carefully corrected her transcript: I had misspelt the name of her former partner, a woman who had died at their shared home in her 50s. At the outset of our interview Gina had described finding her partner's body, after I asked about a tattoo. In terms of what *I* would 'do' with this story, the deceased woman's name would of course be altered if I ever sought to include this particular detail. But in this moment Gina's relationship to the material was foregrounded: I made the corrections, printed it out again and Gina received it gratefully.

When I did re-return it, Andrea, a non-Indigenous friend of Gina's was visiting for a cuppa. 'It's a good read,' she commented, on seeing the envelope pass between us: I had also returned a transcript to Andrea earlier in the week. Was it really? Andrea was in the process of handwriting a list; atop it sat a simple word, badly misspelled. How confident a reader was she? After this chance encounter, I increased the font size and spacing on the transcripts I was returning and sought in many cases to suggest that I read the interview back, ('Maybe I should read this? Save you the hassle?'). I read Maude's story aloud. In this case I was not thinking about her literacy but the fact that her eyesight was failing,

affected by diabetes. 'That's true!' she kept exclaiming. She laughed hardest when our conversation took an abrupt turn. Realising that she would soon be 65 and exempt from the card, she commented breezily that she did not mind it really.

What to do when someone who told me mildly that 'he didn't like the card' suddenly swerved into fantastical tales? A family member was listening in and later sought me out to instruct me not to transcribe or return that part of the interview. The first part was 'great,' they enthused. The rest was a serious mental illness talking: it would be irresponsible to give that life on the page. I returned only the first part of the interview, again reading it aloud. This interviewee's kin shouldered the responsibility of caring for him and had enjoined me to also take care of him, on their terms. But what to do when an intelligent and intense person shared with me their story, detailing the shame produced by dealing with the mental health system and Centrelink (the card was nothing, compared to that)? Later, this person concluded that I was in the same structural position as many others that had humiliated them. I probably recorded their story only to 'sit back and laugh.' This person did not want their story returned and now occasionally sends me mildly abusive text messages. In the first case, the role of the family member was crucial in advising me how to act responsibility; in the case of a seriously isolated person looking after myself has had to take precedent over any effort to repair the relationship.

The responsibilities touched on above are of course not the only ones, and are all easily acquitted. An entirely different set of enduring dilemmas present themselves in the writing. How not to subordinate lived lives to theory; how to withhold details that might result in pain or shame, engaging in my own settler politics of refusal? I have already highlighted my acute sense of responsibility to write in an accessible genre and outlet. But a larger question haunts the more scholarly publishing: should I proceed to tell other people's stories? In Australia, acclaimed novelist Alexis Wright (2016) has powerfully outlined the disintegrative effects of a negative national narrative about Aboriginal community life:

> We do not get much of a chance to say what is right or wrong about the stories told on our behalf – which stories are told or how they are told. It just happens, and we try to deal with the fallout.

Scholar and fiction writer Tony Birch elaborates, noting that Wright's essay has been frequently misinterpreted as censorious. Birch argues both that Aboriginal 'stories need to be told – by those of us who live them' (Birch 2019: 32) and that, following Wright, 'we give deeper consideration to the act of telling stories and take greater responsibility for the decisions we make as writers' (Birch 2019: 26).

This essay is a tentative step towards wrestling with the nature of those responsibilities. In opening, I suggested that settler anthropologists elicit, listen to, collect and then disseminate stories 'gifted' to them by Indigenous interviewees. Why 'gifted' and not simply given? It might sound overblown, but I mean here to acknowledge that in some cases – by no means all – when a research participant narrates, and the researcher reciprocates with their interest and

attention, then this exchange propels the relationship into the future.[13] As I revise this essay, I find myself busy once again extricating myself from my responsibilities to my children and partner, and not quite able to explain why I am travelling to Ceduna yet again, even though I had led my family to believe I had 'finished' this field research. The relationships are of course never finished: simply showing up again, being around, and staying interested returns the gift. I hope then to remain accountable to the communities with which I work, a commitment of course shared by other anthropologists. My interpretation of what this means has been deeply influenced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work (1999). However, to overstate the transformative potential of research of this kind, branding it as 'decolonial', would constitute a simplistic and premature settler 'move to innocence' (see Tuck and Yang 2012).

Happy endings?

Some inclusion of personal reflections on the fieldwork process is now regarded as de rigueur. This sustained reflection might be pushing it. However, as Lily George writes:

> If we wish to decolonise or reclaim anthropology where we hold respect for the place between us [anthropologists and Indigenous people] as a space for negotiation of relationships, of creation and innovation, then we must have some difficult conversations or at the least, converse! We must be honest about the history that lies between us (2018: 111).

I take up George's challenge to write with honesty not just about anthropology's past but about present practice. The point of this essay is not to exculpate anthropology in the midst of urgent calls for its decolonisation. Neither is the objective to self-castigate, which would in many ways be easier than offering this partial but I hope honest exploration of the nagging and unfinished dilemmas that were my companions in the field as I undertook recent research.

'Enumeration,' summarises Gupta, is 'deeply entrenched as a technique of statecraft' (2012: 159): the mutually constitutive relationship between governmental power and numbers, be they statistics or algorithms, is well established. Recent theorising points to the crucial role that narrative too plays in political processes. Alert to this critique, I nonetheless defend here the overarching value of listening to people's stories of life on the cashless debit card. My specific research focus on the card saw me record both distressing stories and also elicit 'good citizen' narratives that told of my interviewees' innocence. The latter current, which ran through many interviews, highlighted the ways in which I was sometimes received as a proxy for the state. Another related but slightly different response to my presence was to ask me questions about a policy arena that was fast-shifting and confusing: I was perceived to have greater access to an understanding of what was really going on. Finally, and crucially, I was entrusted with messages to take back to 'government.'

The last time I visited Yalata, Norma approached me waving, 'Got any good news for us, Eve?' I told Norma about my failed efforts before the Senate

committee, outlined earlier. She then invited me and my travelling companion to 'keep her company' by a smoky fire in the scrub, where she was busily meeting with some linguists. I read the *Inside Story* piece aloud to another friend in the Lutheran Church that evening. His mother accompanied us, keenly showing me the decorative wire designs she had burned into the altar. And as committed as people were in following up the status of the card research, and dispirited and unsurprised with my news, they were far more interested in looking over a little book I had been working on as a side project, which documents one woman's life story.

The genre of the academic journal article does not involve happy endings as a rule. But the genre is tired, and this final story is at once profoundly sad and a good note on which to end.

I met Elsie through some volunteering I was doing in Ceduna. She was aware of my interest in the card but proposed we talk instead about something more interesting: her life. Elsie figured if I was interested in recording stories then I might also want to record— and publish – the story of her life, something she had long aspired to do. Hours of recorded material, conversations about the book, and searching through digitised archives together resulted in the publication of *Elsie Numitja Illi's* Tjukurpa*: Elsie's Story* (Illi 2019). The opening passages make clear Elsie's own sense of the significance of her story, and her determination for her narrative to circulate on her own terms. I will close by turning to her words.

'I want a little book about my life,' Elsie begins. 'Cause I can share a lot of things I've done, you know? Many positive things, you know? Real stories. … I want my story to be happy right through.' Elsie's stories also involve so much trauma: her book deals with the loss of two beloved brothers, a husband and two children in a single accident, and a recent partner. In the opening passage we felt it necessary to include a recorded clarification, placing my question in brackets, 'The sad things are included too?' I ask. Elsie responds: 'Of course, it's part of my life. I've been through that.'

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Social Security Legislation Amendment (Debit Card Trial) Bill 2015.

2. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, there were 752 people participating in the Ceduna trial, 565 of whom were Indigenous, as of September 2016 (Australian Human Rights Commission 2016: 91). According to the

Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Local Government Area of Ceduna had a population of 3, 549 in 2017. At the time of the 2016 Census, conducted in August 2016 (around 5 months after the commencement of the trial) 21.8% of people identified as Indigenous in the 2016 Census. The Local Government Area of Ceduna is distinct from the cashless debit card trial site, however, and does not include the remote Aboriginal community of Yalata, whose residents are included in the trial. According to the 2016 Census, Yalata had a population of 248 people, 87% of whom are Indigenous (ABS 2016).

3. The terms Aboriginal and Indigenous are used interchangeably in this setting: I follow local usage here.

4. Sharkie went on to support an amended bill, which extended the existing Ceduna and East Kimberley trials until mid-2019, and expanded the card to one more trial site, in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region of Western Australia.

5. This literature on the extended reach of quantification and audit culture points to the dominance of the 'Big 4' companies – Deloitte, KMPG, PricewaterhouseCoopers and Ernst and Young – that expanded on the basis of deregulated private and public sectors and the mandating of evaluation (Shore and Wright 2015: 25). Of these, Deloitte has successfully tendered for a series of evaluations of an Australian income management program called Place Based Income Management (see Bray 2016).

6. Painful porosity is a term adopted from poet and psychotherapist Alison Clark's (2017) exploration of why therapists and writers choose to do what they do. Her analysis might also be productively applied to the vocation of anthropology.

7. In Ceduna, the cashless debit card, which is lead pencil grey with a metallic sheen, is mostly referred to as the 'grey card' or the Indue Card, after the private company contracted by the Department of Human services to issue and effectively administer the cards' operation: the card costs around $10,000 per person, per year to administer. In the East Kimberley, the card is referred to as 'the white card' (Klein and Razi 2017: 13), so tagged because it was imposed by white people.

8. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the marketisation of the higher education sector in Australia, and the concomitant emphasis on private sources of income in an era of dwindling public funds (see Connell 2019).

9. Consultation has been a presence in Aboriginal settings since the self-determination policy era, beginning in the 1970s, and its purpose and legacy needs to be appreciated (see Peters-Little 1999). Self-determination saw 'consultation' integrated into Aboriginal policy-making processes, a key instrument that served to underline the distinction between an optimistic time oriented to Aboriginal autonomy and the previous assimilationist policy era which involved coercion, imposition and absorption However, Gillian Cowlishaw (1998), among others, shows how Aboriginal people's visions for a good life could be smothered under a raft of consultants, who imputed the state's desires into community articulations. While self-determination might be understood to have been supplanted by an era of more explicitly interventionist policy making (Hinkson and Vincent 2018**)** this emphasis on consultation sometimes lives on.

10. One such proposal was short-lived. A short news article in May 2018 suggested that members of the government were promoting the idea that 'families who have benefited from the cashless [debit] card should be enlisted to help sell the policy'. The plan went unrealised, as far as I am aware. See: sbs.com.au/news/families-could-promote-cashless-welfare

11. Scott Morrison, then Coalition treasurer, first canvassed this plan as part of the May 2017 budget announcement. The proposal has not progressed further at the time of writing.

12. All my interviews were first professionally transcribed, a service for which I pay $1USD per minute of recorded material, and then corrected by me. Correcting particularly partial transcripts I was acutely conscious of a strange three-way disembodied exchange unfolding between me, my interlocutor and a precarious worker somewhere, who puzzled their way through accounts made less intelligible by speech affected by strokes, interjections from kin, the use of Aboriginal English, Pitjantjatjara and Australian colloquialisms. The recording and returning of stories was thus a process enmeshed in an exploitative global economy, however much I reject any analysis of the researcher-researched relation framed only in terms of exploitation.

13. These notions of gift exchange, reciprocity, and the reproduction of relationships are of course foundational to the discipline (Mauss 2002 [1950]).

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The Order of the Magic Lantern Slides
Stories, Colonial Medicine, and Power

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ABSTRACT | Dr Sylvester Lambert, an American public health doctor who worked for the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, created a magic lantern slide presentation to retell the arrest of a sorcerer that he had witnessed in 1925 on the island of Malakula in Vanuatu. In this article, I use creative non-fiction to envision other audiences and narrators of this storied event to present an expanded picture of life for Pacific Islanders at that time. I also reflect on how particular events make for good stories because they are contests about belief and incredulity. Reimagining medical stories of sorcery reminds us that medicine is part of larger contests over the nature of reality. This is an imaginative ethnographic experiment with decolonizing intentions which combines archival research, ethnographic research, colonial images and creative non-fiction. It aspires to untie the images from a single fixed colonial narrative and to revisit the images in ways that are open to multiple interpretations, audiences, and narrators.

Keywords: colonialism; medicine; ethnographic experiments; Vanuatu; photo-essay

> "You'll never believe what happened", is always a great way to start.
> *The Truth about Stories*, Thomas King (2003: 1)

In the Geisel Library at the University of California at San Diego, I sat mesmerized by a box of glass magic lantern slides[1] that depict the arrests of two accused sorcerers in Malua Bay on the island of Malakula[2] in the southwestern Pacific. From photos taken and curated with captions by Sylvester Lambert, an American public health doctor who worked for the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, this series contains some uncommon photographic images of colonial encounters in 1920s New Hebrides[3] (now Vanuatu). Lambert was in the New Hebrides on a stop on the Rockefeller Foundation-funded campaign he led against hookworm, yaws, and other infectious diseases that spanned present day Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa, American Samoa, and the Cook Islands.[4] In the early 20th century, the New Hebrides was a newly formed polity and outpost of the British and French Empires with a small administrative capital town, Port Vila. The over 80-island archipelago was then the home of about 65,000 indigenous people (Speiser 1996: 33) speaking over 110 languages, and a destination of Presbyterian, Anglican, Catholic, and Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) missionaries, anthropologists like W.H.R. Rivers, a handful of European settlers, and Vietnamese labourers. Lambert's visit to Malakula took place at a moment that Bedford indicates 'marked a period of relative calm' (Bedford 2017) in relations between colonial authorities and Malakulans, that followed on the heels of more than four decades of punitive expeditions and indigenous retaliations. In my retelling of the arrest story twice here, I imagine other narrators, audiences, and uses of the story than Dr Lambert's intended American publics who might have gathered at his lectures to hear 'The Man with a Million Patients' and see his magic lantern slides. His lecture series were to be organized by W. Colston Leigh Inc., a speakers' bureau that is still around today, for the likes of Malcolm Gladwell and Paul Krugman to tell their stories. This medical doctor's images of people on Malakula would have have joined other visual narratives framed for Euro-American consumption at that time. For example, Martin and Osa Johnson produced adventure-travelogues (Lindstrom 2006) that represented Malakulans as exotic isolated people of the South Seas, while SDA missionary narratives showed Malakulans in relation to European Christian presence (Ramage 2015).

(Lambert n.d. A)

Dr Lambert was not alone in his recognition that sorcerers' arrests made for a good story. Stories about sorcery held a particularly charged place in colonial and missionary narrations of people living the New Hebrides, standing for beliefs that were at once exotic, sinister, and ignorant.[5] Sorcery was a threat to health for ni-Vanuatu, as illness was the result of relationships gone so awry that sorcery would be sent to cause harm. Physical retaliation could result. Sorcery was thus, from a colonial vantage point, a threat to law and order, and western medicine an antidote to not only ill health, but to violence and traditional beliefs. In ni-Vanuatu ontologies, sorcery is also a storied terrain, leading to speculations about conflicts and transgressions to be ameliorated. Sorcery stories, therefore, get to the nub of what constitutes subjectivity, materiality, and credulity. In short, they are contests about the nature of reality.

The 'order of the magic lantern slides' part of my title, calls attention to the power of stories and images in at least two dimensions. One is that the story told in the lantern slides is part of attempts to instill new political and cosmological orders associated with colonialism, Christianity, and biomedicine. A second dimension refers to the ordering of the lantern slides as the result of Lambert's story-telling craft. The images and events do not tell a story by themselves, for Lambert has to guide the reader through the order of the slides. The images of the lantern slides needed to have meanings attached to them, to have order placed on them.

In my first retelling, I imagine a young woman from Malua Bay on Malakula as a narrator; in the second, I imagine a man from the New Hebrides studying medicine watching the slides in a class with Dr Lambert at the Central Medical School in Suva, Fiji. During the 1920s, Lambert contributed to expanding this medical school into an important pan-Pacific institution where Pacific Islanders trained as physicians. He would work there from 1929 until his

retirement in 1939. These imagined narrator and audience members explore two aspects (among others) of how ni-Vanuatu[6] reacted to colonial knowledge and practice, also diverse and multifaceted, during this time. Some communities elected to refuse, while others chose to selectively engage or to take knowledge and make use of it for what they thought could benefit their communities or families. The written sources about life in Vanuatu from this time include anthropologists' texts which focused on salvaging cultures they thought to be dying, missionaries' texts about conversion work, the expansion of schools, and medical work, and colonial administrators' correspondence concerning law and order.

My retellings are informed by over seventeen years of fieldwork in archives of colonial officials, doctors, missionaries, and anthropologists who spent time in the New Hebrides, and ethnographic fieldwork in Vanuatu.[7] To imagine a young woman living in Northwest Malakula,[8] I draw particularly from Arthur Bernard Deacon's 1926 fieldwork published in his book, *Malekula: A Vanishing People in the New Hebrides* (1934). The book is itself an act of imaginative reconstruction by Camilla Wedgewood from Deacon's detailed field notes as the Cambridge graduate student died of black-water fever during his field work. This time, as the book's title indicates, marked a period of enormous mortality and low birth rates for people living on Malakula. The area where the arrest took place was the land of people referred to as 'Big Nambas,' who were known for strenuously resisting colonial presence, and about whom little anthropological detail was available. As Malakula was (and remains) a diverse place, specific details about Malua Bay and the arrest cannot necessarily be inferred from areas in southern Malakula where Deacon spent more time. The portion about a student at the Central Medical school in Fiji is informed by my archival research in the New Hebrides British Service files held in the Western Pacific Archives at the University of Auckland. In association with the images of the arrest, shown with my second retelling, I include Dr Lambert's words in italics, excerpted from his actual captions, and have my imaginings of how his student's reactions might interrupt them. Because *waetman* [plural = *ol waetman*] is a common word for European and *man ples* is a word for someone from Vanuatu in contemporary Bislama, the lingua franca in Vanuatu, I use these terms throughout.

This is an experiment with imaginative ethnography (Elliott and Culhane 2016) that explores various attempts at world making in encounters over medicine, sickness, and power. Imaginative methods are valuable because written sources about indigenous people living at this time and particular place are scarce.[9] Another reason to engage with the role of imagination is the place it held in the story Lambert was trying to tell. His combination of realist photos and captions themselves combine for a persuasive narrative that would have funneled his American audience's imagination about that which cannot be seen and their preconceived knowledge about far-off places.

How to handle the recirculation of colonial images is a vexed concern that postcolonial scholars, anthropologists of colonialism, and visual anthropologists have long discussed. My central concern here is to untie the images from a single fixed colonial narrative and to revisit the images in ways that are open to multiple

interpretations, audiences, and narrators. The images and narratives of Lambert's magic lantern slides are an example of the power of a compelling story about a remarkable event. Such stories and events had meanings and importance beyond their colonial narrator and colonial audience, and that is what I try to call attention to here through creative non-fiction. I imagined and wrote the stories to interrupt the colonial narrative of Lambert's story in an attempt to recirculate the colonial images in a decentred way.

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Malua Bay, Malakula, New Hebrides 1925

'I was at the water,' Nele said quietly to the other women gathered at the shelter. So many conversations began this way, by telling others where you had just been. This was not because there was really anywhere unusual to go, nor because there was actually a story to tell. She might have been at the gardens, the water, or at the women and children's house at one end of the village. No, conversations began this way so that stories could not be told about where one may or may not have been. And besides, if she did not give them that information, they would direct the conversation back again and again, until they found out where she was coming from.

Nele took some split and dried pandanus fronds and organized them on the ground to make a mat. She kneeled with the others who were also weaving. No one looked up. No one asked her more and the women were unusually quiet, showing just how curious they really were. Today she really did have a story to tell about what she had seen. She knew that these women who did not go down to the water had still heard the shouts and noises of struggle. Nele recognized that her kinswomen knew that much of the village had all been down at the water. Nele took a moment to appreciate the fact that she had a story that the women were keen to know. Then she launched in.

'The *waetman* came from Vila to talk. The SDA missionary was there and some other men from Vila, with the white hats. They brought four black police from Vila. And a brown man, and one *man ples*. The big white man from Vila had invited everyone to come to down and listen to their laws about leaving on ships and working on plantations. They came to the next village and waited.'

Nele paused, and then whispered the names of two men who were experts with magic for causing death or illness.[10] 'These men also eventually joined the group. They all went down to the beach, and, like all the others gathered to watch, I heard and saw a conversation between a Chief and *ol waetman* from Vila about the troubles with sickness. They all sat on the beach and talked.'.

Taking a breath, Nele continued. 'Soon, just as our Chiefs had hoped, the black police from Vila grabbed the two men. They dragged them along the sand. One cried. He cried like a baby. He wanted to stay, he begged the *waetman* to let him stay. The black policemen pulled him across the beach and pinned his arms behind his back. The launch they had come in from their bigger boat was weighed down. The black policeman rowed him and the big man from Vila.'

No one spoke for a while. Nele suspected she knew what the others were thinking. We have all been afraid of these men and their knowledge, especially since the most recent group of deaths. We had all been so careful. Cautious with *tabu* places, prudent not to make trouble, vigilant not to eat the coconuts or other foods when they had *tabus* laid on them. The men were wary not to cut the wild taro when the time was wrong. We had been careful to hide the things we did that could be talked about as trouble. Careful not to cause someone to go to one of these men and ask for help in using his private knowledge to make us weak with fevers or boils or cause sudden death.

'So, they are really gone?' someone asked, tentatively. Nele replied: 'For some time. *Ol waetman* told him they would bring him back before the yams are planted.' Then a rush of questions Nele could not answer. 'But bring them back? What would the two men do then? What would we do then?' *Ol waetman* had seldom punished men for this before.[11] We don't know. We do not know whether they would come back angry, or whether *ol waetman* could be trusted to bring them back at all. Or whether their departure would make life any more peaceful for us. Or whether the deaths would stop.

So many questions. The women returned their focus to their weaving for a while.

Nele cautiously resumed her story. 'The *man ples* who now lives with the missionary at Atchin was also talking between the Chiefs and *ol waetman* from Vila.' Though no one outwardly reacted, the women all knew that people would talk about this *man ples*. Indeed, the talk now turned to this man and what exactly he was doing at the mission station. Would he be coming back to try and convince the Chiefs that families needed fewer pigs and less money at the time of marriage? Would he be part of the new courts as on Pentecost Island? Nele had heard that on Pentecost, *ol waetman* held courts where husbands or wives could go to convince their families to end their marriage and return the pigs.[12] Why would they do this? She had seen more than one female relative being successful in convincing her family to return the pigs so she could start a new marriage.

And so now the talk was about the *man ples* from the mission station.[13] Nele could be silent. She was cautiously optimistic that her story about the men who knew magic being taken to Vila would stop them from talking about her. Her story might then indeed do its work.

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Central Medical School, Suva, Fiji 1938

(Lambert n.d. B)

After his course in human anatomy, Isaac[14] was quite sure he now could classify the bones and muscles of the human body. He knew what would make sores fester, he could identify the layout of a healthy village with brush cut back and latrines dug out at an acceptable distance. Now he sat listening again in Dr Sylvester Lambert's class, surrounded by other Pacific Islanders who had come to Suva, Fiji, to learn to be physicians. This was to be the lecture about sorcery, as Dr Lambert called it, and Isaac was anxious to hear about what Dr Lambert would have to say about magic and medicine. During his years working as a dresser[15] throughout the New Hebrides before coming here to Suva, Isaac had encountered many kinds of magic, some the same and also different ones than in his home village. There was magic for love, for fertility, for sickness. Isaac knew that when he treated people, his small mobile clinic was never people's first attempt to get well. He knew that first efforts would have been made by the *kleva* who could discern the social origin of the illness. The next steps to be taken would be according to the clear vision of the *kleva.*

Dr Lambert began: '*This is the lesson I devote to the foolishness of sorcery'* (1941: 149). *'In 1925, Malakai, Dr Buxton and I were in the New Hebrides, we witnessed the arrest of two rascally sorcerers, while on a patrol to the Northern islands*.' Isaac had heard about this arrest and a handful of others like it before leaving his island and coming to Suva but never thought he would see photographs with the story.
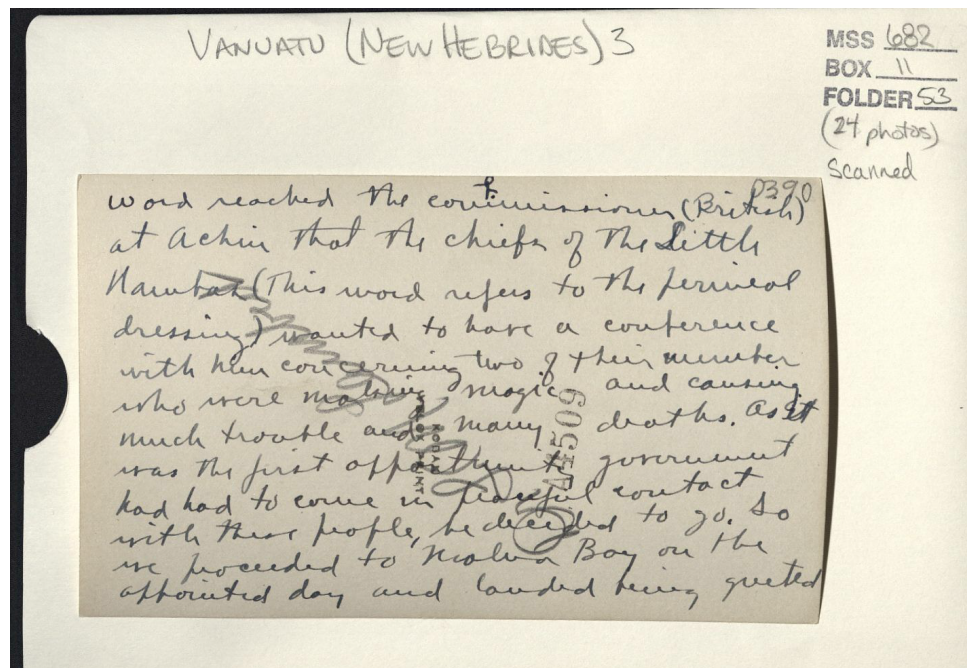
(Lambert 1925 A[16])

Word reached the commissioner (British) at Atchin that the chiefs of the Little Nambas (...) wanted to have a conference with him concerning two of their number who were making magic and causing much trouble and many deaths. As it was the first opportunity government had had to come in peaceful contact with these people, he decided to go. So we proceeded to Malua Bay on the appointed day and landed being greeted on the beach by some of the Nambas men and women. After some talk we learned that the meeting place was about one mile inland.

We crossed the narrow beach and climbed a precipitous cliff for three hundred feet then back to a small village shown here to wait for them. Meanwhile the commissioner was getting information from the people at hand. After a long wait we could see the chiefs coming over a ridge at a distance and each carrying a rifle and it gave one to think knowing their reputation as we were entirely unarmed save for walking sticks, the commissioner, a missionary, four police, my Fijian assistant and myself.

Gradually these chiefs sidled out of the bushes and slowly approached our group two or three at a time and showing by their nervous movements and the turning of their heads and rolling of their eyes how watchful they were for any sign of treachery on our part for the treatment of natives by whites in the New Hebrides has never been characterized by the highest motives. As the first three stood talking to the missionary I snapped them and one close up here

and he didn't enjoy it a bit (...).

Isaac looked intently at the image projected on the wall. He had heard this story from one of the policemen. They were from different villages on the same island and had spent time together in Vila when Isaac was first beginning to be a dresser for the New Hebrides British Service. As Isaac would be travelling throughout the group of islands and working with British, French, and people from many villages and islands, the policeman took Isaac aside and offered some advice. The policeman told him what Isaac would hear from islanders who worked for the British: 'Magic does not work on *waetman.*' This fact did not completely eliminate Isaac's fear of the experts he might encounter. He focused on Dr Lambert's story again:

Finally a few more came in.

I got a close up of two and they all exhibited the same reluctance to the camera as all these Malekula people who live in the interior and are unacquainted with whites except at gunshot. (...)

We were left waiting a long time because the two chiefs, the brothers, who were accused of being magicians did not appear.

This picture shows the group waiting for the two magicians including the British Resident, the missionary, and the Fijian assistant!

Seeing the Fijian, Malakai, in the photo made Isaac contemplate his own future. Isaac had heard about Malakai before. Dr Malakai became the first Pacific Islander assistant physician to work in the New Hebrides. When the opportunity came to train as a dresser, Isaac did not hesitate to leave his village and island. He was glad to leave the sweaty work of the gardens, for clean hands and for the chance to learn knowledge about human bodies that was in books, on charts, and could be demonstrated on plaster models. He loved the spotless lab tables with their cool counter tops. As a dresser he had seen that some people in the islands appreciated some of the work he had done, like bandaging their sores. Now that he would be able to do more, like give malaria tablets[17] and *stick meresin*, show people how to cut bush to keep the mosquitos away, perhaps they would value his new skills too.

Finally they came out and I got their picture. They were not supposed to know anything about the charges made against them but they must have from the way they acted.

Isaac scrutinized the two men who claimed to know how to use poison. It was poison that could sometimes be seen and poison that could sometimes be felt and not seen. Such men kept the remedies to the poison to themselves or traded them at a high price.

Finally after considerable talk the natives agreed to come down on the beach for the conference, and we started. (...) I think all three of the whites were under a nervous strain. I'm sure I was. On the beach we all squatted about on the sand, the commissioner sitting on a piece of stone as the throne of justice as seen in picture. He conversed directly with the natives in 'pidgin English' (...). The trial was a recital by these chiefs of the trouble caused by these men eliciting others to kill and keeping all the 'Small Nambas' tribes in an uproar, also they feared they would be embroiled by the magicians in trouble with the 'Big Nambas' who were a short way below. They were unanimous that the removal of these men for six months would work wonders. So finally the commissioner made up his mind, gave the signal to his four native police who can be seen standing at the rear of the picture and close to the two magicians who can be seen just in front and to the left of the three white men. The two magicians had looked anxiously from side to side during the procedure rolling their eyes and apparently seeking the best mode of escape if necessary. The commissioner said 'Well, these men had better go to Vila for six months.' And with that our policemen clamped on each wrist of a prisoner and they were

rushed down to the boat struggling as they went.

This picture shows the group near the boat. It was hurriedly taken and partly out of focus but one can see the horror in the older fellow's face as he realized that he had to go with us – and he begged and pleaded with his friends not to permit us to take him away and promised anything if he could only stay. It was moving to see his mental agony at the idea – not withstanding that one knew he was a treacherous rascal – according to savage ideas …

and had caused much needless suffering and death among his own people. (…)

Isaac had stopped listening to Dr Lambert and was instead fixated on the black policemen who would then travel all the way from Malakula to Vila in the same boat as the men. He contemplated the unpleasantness of being on a boat with these men that the policeman had endured.

The authorities in Vila sentenced him long enough to untwist his imagination. When I saw him in the jail yard he was very docile. He even allowed me to treat him for hookworm. That was something of a triumph for modern medicine.

Lambert's story ended, Isaac could not quite agree with Dr Lambert's certainty that medicine and incarceration would end sorcery. The prisoner might be docile for a while but this would not change people's beliefs about sorcery. He thought about the possibilities of microscopes such as the ones that Malakai had travelled with around the islands, working to show everyone the hookworms that caused illness and that blood could be tested to see the cause of malaria. These new objects and understandings certainly offered him new possibilities. When he sailed back to Port Vila, he would not be in steerage. Maybe now that he would be handling dangerous medications, he would be able to drink alcohol in Port Vila, or be allowed in town after dark unlike those he had grown up with. He would sleep in a house with a bed and concrete floor, and not sleep on a mat. Listening to Dr Lambert talk about sorcery gave Isaac another view of how sorcery could be perceived. Isaac was getting a new glimpse of what it was like to see sorcery at a distance. It reminded him of what his father and the white missionaries had taught him in school. Still, seeing it like this did not fully eliminate his fear. Nobody likes sorcery.

But now, what Isaac saw and what Dr Lambert did not, was that disliking something is not the same as choosing to believe it to be untrue. And now Isaac had more knowledge he knew to be true, but not necessarily more knowledge that was untrue.

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Conclusion

When I first saw Dr Lambert's photos presented above (and they are part of a large collection of more than one thousand from the south-western Pacific), I had already been writing about biomedicine in colonial Vanuatu for some years. Kathy Creely, then the librarian at the Tuzin Archive for Melanesian Anthropology, had acquired the collection of reports, letters and photos from Dr Lambert's daughter, Sara Davis, in 2007 and digitized some of the photos by 2010. Dr Lambert's photos were the first I had seen of the colonial medical practices that I had already written about from archival research. When I saw these photos, I realized how much I had relied on my experiences in Vanuatu and my imagination for the narratives and analyses I had generated from Lambert's books, reports, Malakai's handwritten colonial reports, and lists of equipment requests he sent to the British authorities. I had even written about Malakai's use of microscope as a tool through which he was attempting to inculcate social and medical change before I found this photo in the Lambert collection.[18]

(Lambert 1925b)

It was an odd feeling to see images of what I had imagined for so long. Having the reaction of 'so that's how it really looked when Malakai worked' was confirmation that my imagination had been both correct and lacking. What masqueraded as a spark of insight was also a 'truth effect'[19] of photography.

My imagination anticipated facts in another aspect of this creative experiment that further demonstrate the direct generational connections between Christianity and biomedicine as possible vectors of indigenous modernities. I began preparing this piece by imagining how the first ni-Vanuatu at medical school would view this arrest sequence. I later wrote about the ni-Vanuatu missionary teacher coming to Malua Bay in Nele's retelling because I knew there were ni-Vanuatu from other islands who worked as educators in non-Christian areas. While the missionary and ni-Vanuatu convert (whose village/island is not identified in Lambert's book) that cooperated with Lambert was SDA, I was also curious about Presbyterians who might have been nearby. When I went to fact check which Presbyterian mission station was closest to Malua Bay, I learned it was at Wala and was staffed from 1902-1948 (Miller 1989: 515) by a ni-Vanuatu Christian teacher from Ifira Island near Efate. As it turns out, he was the father of the first ni-Vanuatu to go to medical school in Suva (Miller 1989: 411), just as I had imagined that the medical student might have had a father who was a mission teacher.

Images and events such as this arrest of a sorcerer, make for good stories as they are contests about belief and incredulity. After all, as writer Thomas King tells us, '"You'll never believe what happened", is always a great way to start' (2003: 1). Lambert's narrative and series of images are saturated with familiar colonial themes of encounters between 'savage' and 'civilized' cultures. But that he would have to provide captions to influence their meaning conveys but one example of colonial attempts to enforce meanings on what might be easily misunderstood for lack of interpretation. To trouble further the truths of colonial narratives, I have imagined other narrators and audiences of this arrest story, people who were also struggling with belief, knowledge and uncertainty. I hope

that the imagined retellings point to a method for decolonizing readings of colonial narratives. To continually see those narratives as partial and to actively consider what voices and retellings are not present in colonial archival documents and narratives, allows us to revisit colonization and lay bare the logics it applied to achieve and reinforce hegemony.

And now I have told the stories to you, to believe and not to believe, but more importantly to imagine more retellings.

Author's Note

Why convey Lambert's images and narrative text in an experimental way rather than a conventional piece of scholarship?

Above all, this piece is intended as an experiment in imaginative historical ethnography. With standard scholarly tools, I have researched ni-Vanuatu presence in colonial archives, books, oral histories to write about processes of change in the 20th century. This approach has been in the footsteps of those scholars who have read against (e.g. Douglas 1998; Rodman 2003) and along the archival grain (e.g. Stoler 2009). As anyone who has done archival research knows, we find sources in the logic of their authors and filing practices of the archives (Stoler 2002). Sources do not allow us to ask direct questions to people whose stories we might most want to hear. Creative non-fiction is a way of presenting stories absent from the archives due to colonialism and the vicissitudes of history. My stories are intended to be, and not to the exclusion of others, ways of conveying material where the reader is not told exactly what to think, but rather to expected to engage in an interpretation process. My intent has been to use stories to, as Kaulingfreks and Marlous van den Akker argue, 'enable us to understand alterity or to empathize with others in unexpected ways' (2018: 10). As such, I have also been influenced by the creativity of Pacific scholars and writers who have long sidestepped and interrupted European narratives about the Pacific (e.g. Figiel 2016; Teaiwa 2010).

In imagining others who were watching the event, I aim to show multiple visions and versions of modernity. Imagining other ways that these stories might circulate and other individuals in the story (i.e. the ni-Vanuatu policeman, the Fijian doctor, the ni-Vanuatu SDA convert) who could have been more important to the imagined ni-Vanuatu narrator than the Europeans, is to decentre Lambert's representations of whiteness and to complicate the exotic blackness of Lambert's story and the meaning he attached to the event more broadly.

Including creative non-fiction was a means of situating Lambert's text and images as his effort of storytelling, rather than evaluating the facts about this colonial event or sorcery that may or may not be depicted. In presenting his colonial images in a piece that is both about story making, and my own act of crafting stories, I explicitly participate in narrative making. To use imagined narratives is to call attention to the fact that we, both myself and the people I am writing about and with, are all using narrative to construct reality albeit on politically uneven terrain and authority (e.g. Stoler 2018; Bruner 1991). Creative non-fiction can sidestep conventional critiques of colonial tropes, as important as

these critiques are, by using another communicative practice to flag that the colonial tropes themselves were contests over knowledge and power. This experiment thus takes up Stoller's challenge to anthropologists 'to take more representational risks…. That path is one that leads to personal and institutional change….' (2018: 111).

I see more conventional scholarly documentary and interpretive practices as central to producing this experimental piece of situated knowledge (Haraway 1988). To the extent I have successfully written imaginatively about this material, it comes from sustained engagement with ni-Vanuatu pasts and presents through ethnographic fieldwork and archival sources. Imaginative ethnography, as situated knowledge, presents worlds that are resolutely positioned and plural, but not infinitely so. The post-truth politics of this era rankle, and compel us to pay even more attention to Thomas King's insights about the truth of stories.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Magic lanterns could project images from glass slides from the 18th-mid 20th century.

2. This is the current spelling; in Deacon's day, the spelling was Malekula.

3. For fascinating accounts of exceptional images of Malakula by anthropologist John Layard and anthropologist Arthur Deacon's fieldwork drawings from the early 20th Century see (Geismar and Herle 2013 and Geismar 2010).

4. For more on Sylvester Lambert's work see Stuart (2002).

5. Cannibalism is another prominent narrative trope of people and practices in Malakula at this time. In the slides and in his book (1941: 237), Lambert mentions the fear of anthropophagy on both sides (the sorcerer was reportedly worried he would be eaten upon arrival in Port Vila). I deliberately did not include anthropophagy in my creative retellings, so as to interrupt this common exoticized framing of events.

6. Ni-Vanuatu are indigenous citizens of Vanuatu.

7. My ethnographic fieldwork has been in Port Vila and Pango village.

8. I use the current preferred spelling of Malakula except where the original historical text is quoted.

9. There are written sources about other parts of Malakula from the early 20th century, and these have important resonances in the present (Geismar 2009).

10. Privately held magic causing death or illness was called *nimesian* in a South Malakulan language. Deacon does not include Big Nambas' terms (1934: 221).

11. For more on colonial policing, see (Rodman 1998).

12. During the 1920s, the Condominium began touring courts as dispute mechanism fora which wound up mainly hearing cases of marriage disputes.

13. According to Lambert (1941: 237), this SDA convert, Harry, was shot nine days later by friends of the arrestees. Harry had gone to assure the women that the men would indeed come back.

14. The first ni-Vanuatu to attend medical school in Suva was Daniel Kalorib. Because this is a work of creative non-fiction, I have named this ni-Vanuatu man Isaac.

15. The term for a man who did similar labour to nurses except for assisting with labour and delivery.

16. All images from Lambert's story are from this reference.

17. NMP Malakai had requested 1,000 quinine tablets from the Condominium authorities in 1925. Quinine was also prescribed by W.J. Tully of the Western Pacific Health services from 1929-31. For more see Widmer (2007: 210-256). Undoubtedly, there was never enough quinine supplies, but it would have a goal of a medical student to distribute them.

18. The chapter was subsequently published as Widmer (2013).

19. There was a perception of a close relationship between photographic image and reality in the 19th century and most of the 20th century. This 'truth effect' was produced from 'accepted fit between the world of things and the signs used to represent them' (Murphie and Potts 2003: 75).

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COMMONING ETHNOGRAPHY

'Life of Lola'

A commentary on graphic anthropology

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ABSTRACT | In this paper I present an ethnographic comic that illustrates two points: the social life of diagnosis following newborn screening for the metabolic disorder MCADD, and the concept of 'shadow habitus' in relation to chronic illness. I then deconstruct and interrogate the process of creation behind the comic, asking what this reveals about knowledge creation and ethnographic practice. Using a three-part framework, I argue that a graphic narrative can show complex theoretical concepts in medical anthropology, that it is collaborative and relational, and that it is a tool for thinking critically through and about ethnography. I use this example to show how graphic anthropology opens and makes accessible new ways of thinking and framing illness, health and dis-ease – to ourselves, to our peers and to a non-academic audience.

Keywords: graphic anthropology; shadow habitus; comics; ethnography
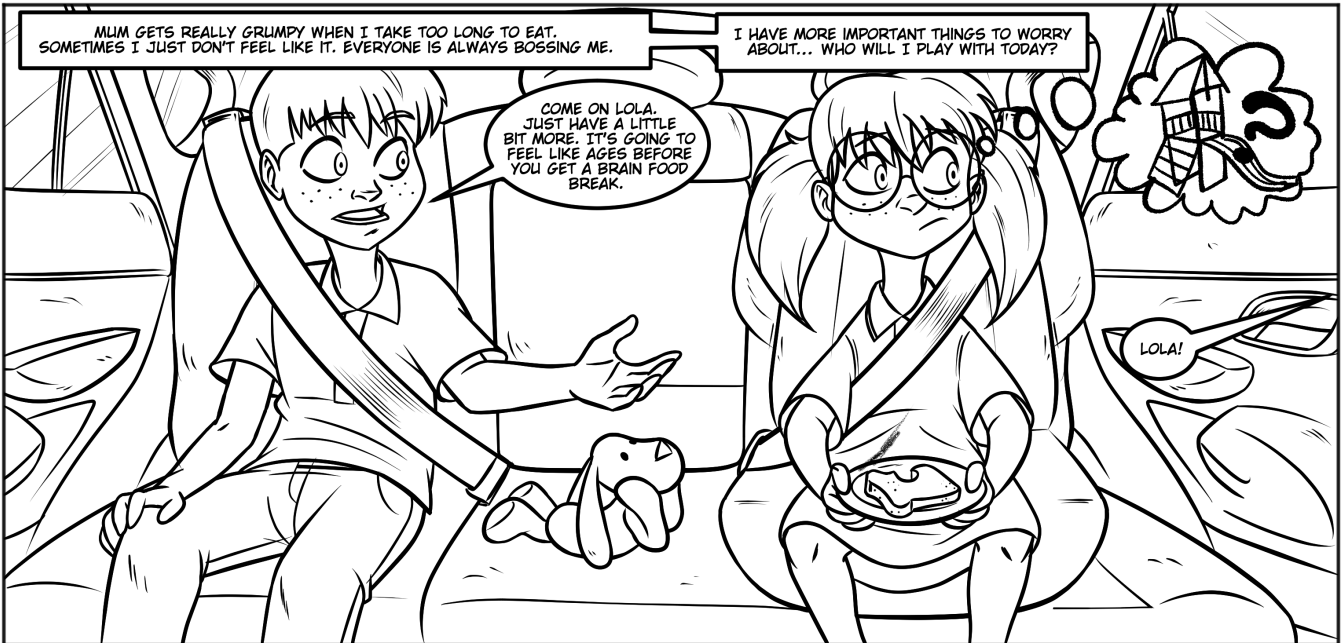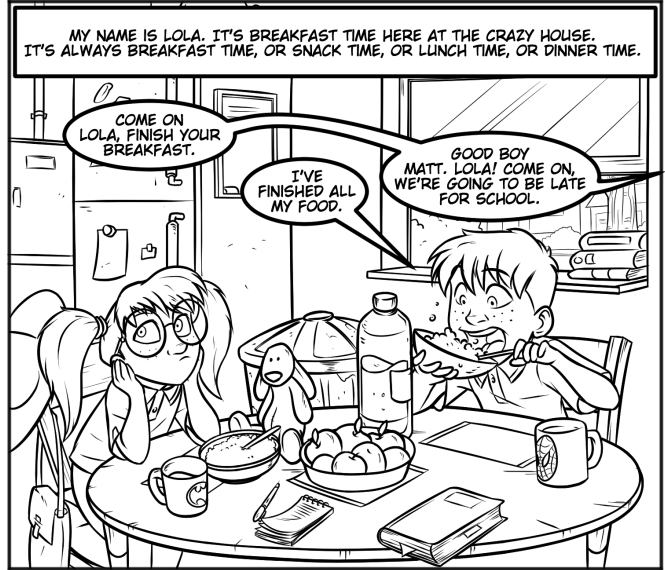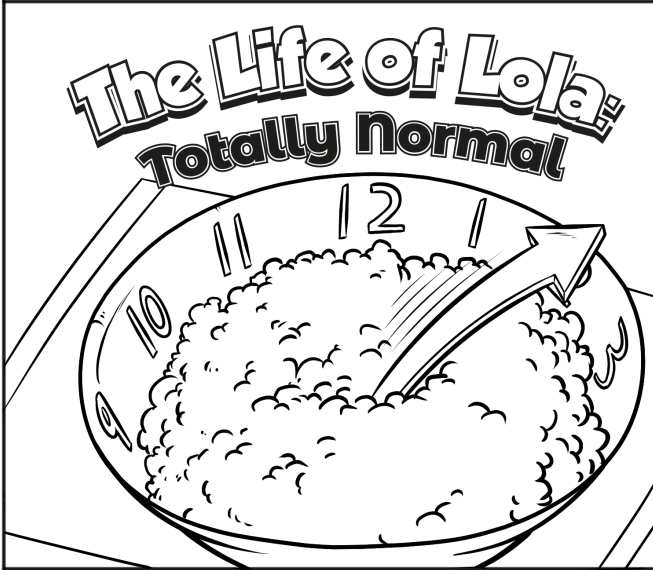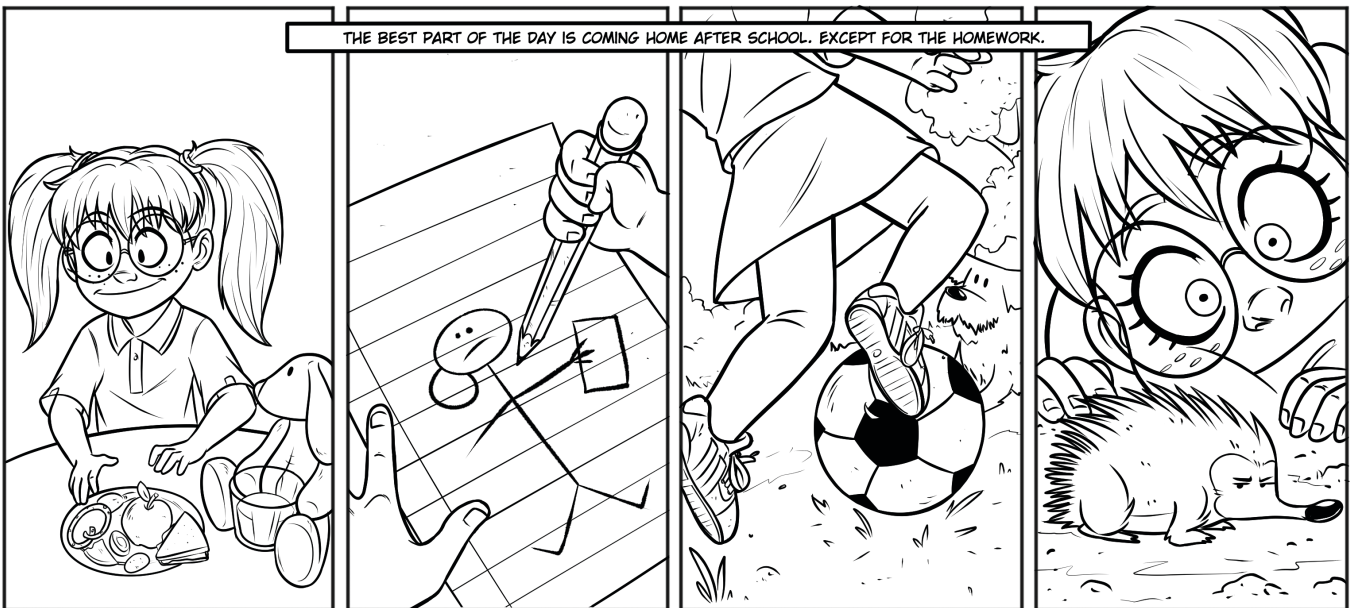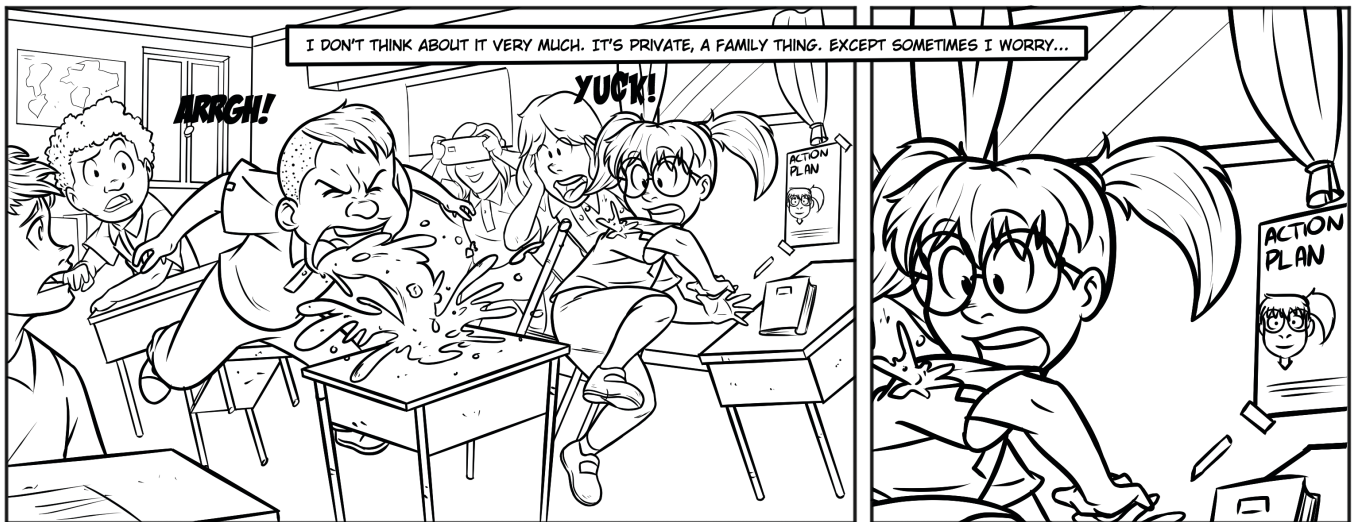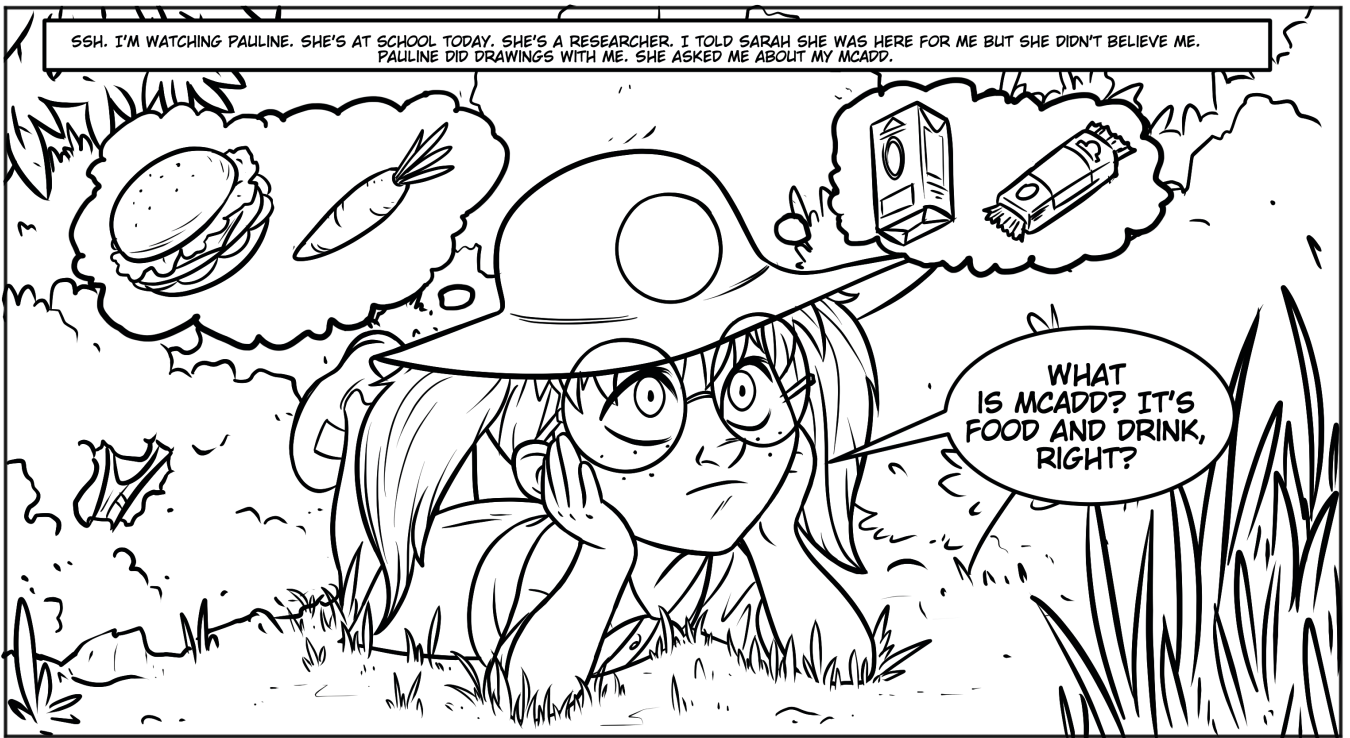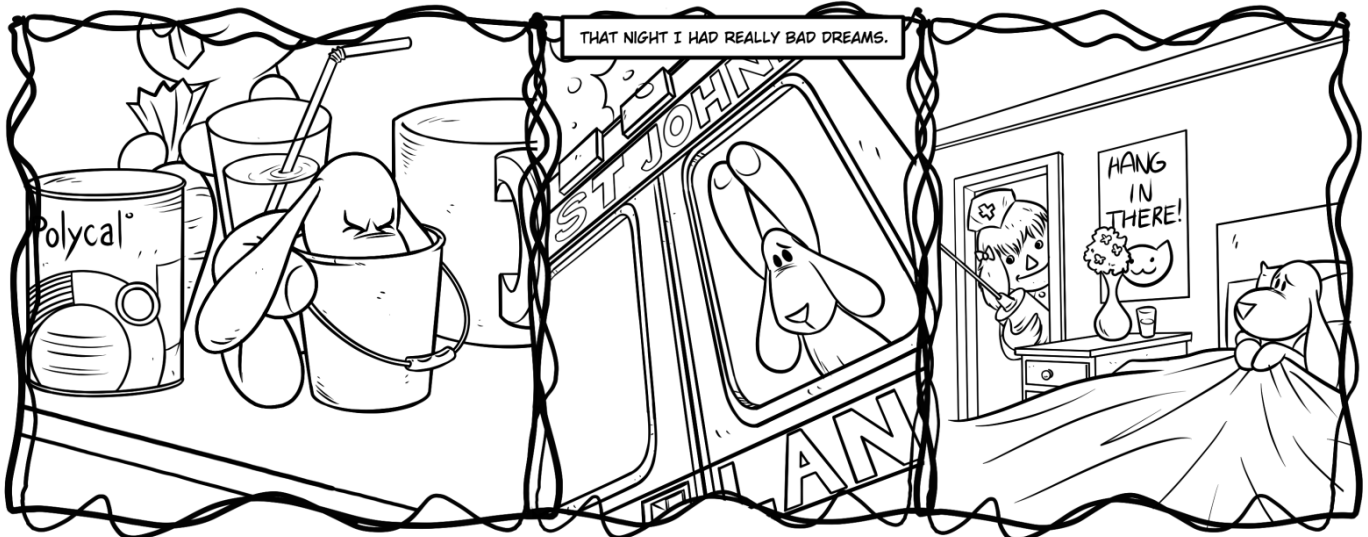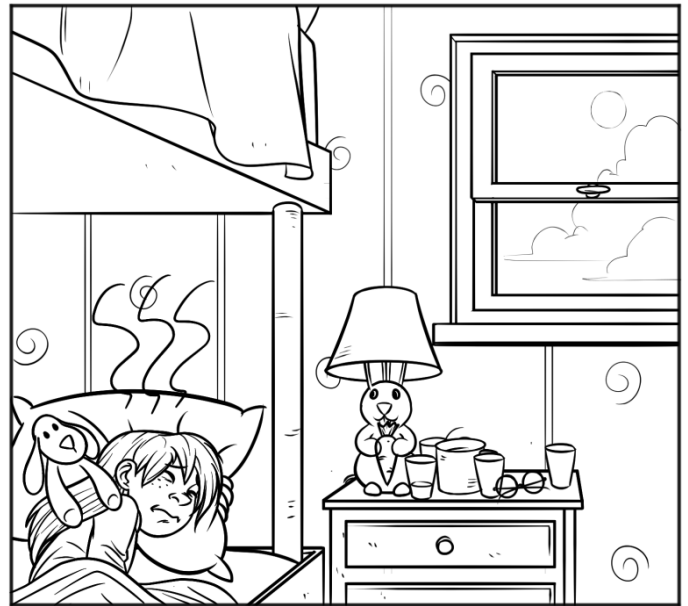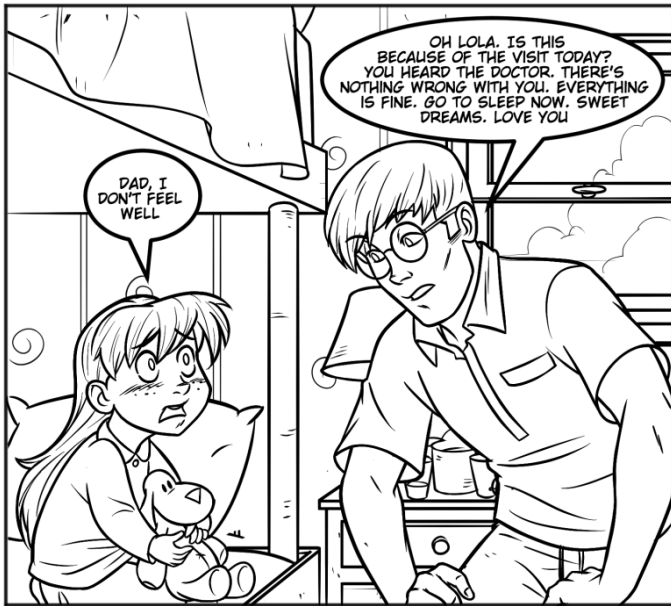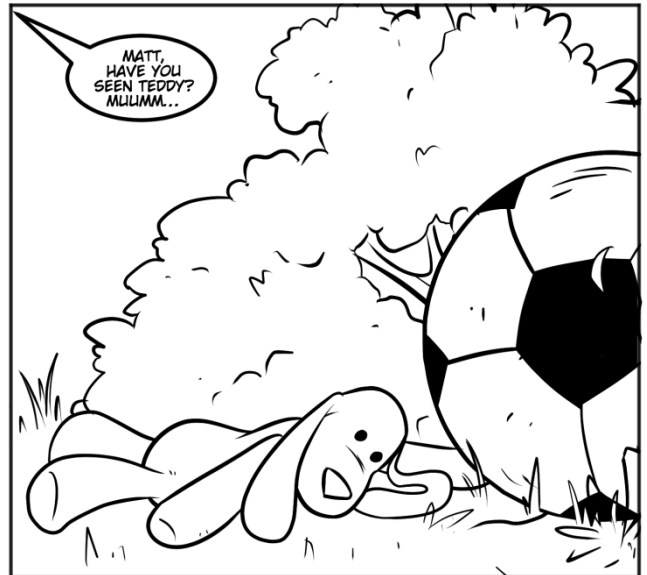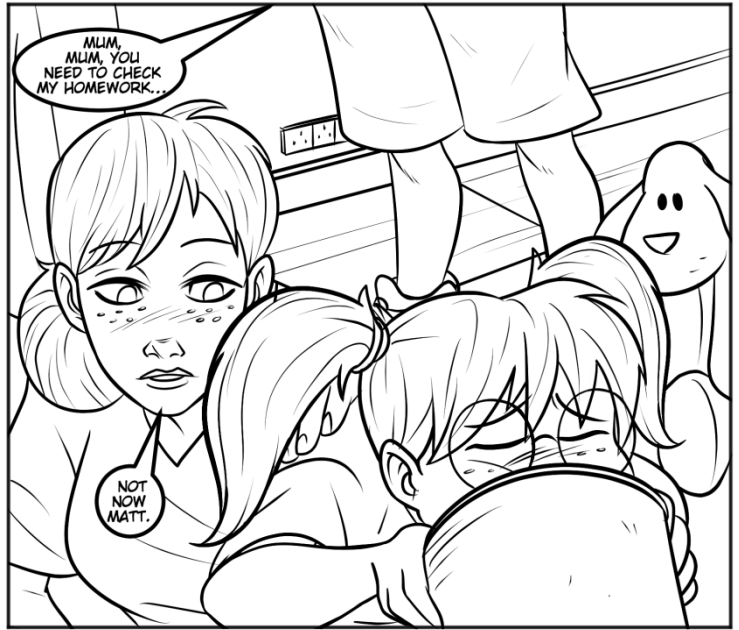
Part I. A Sensory Journey

'Life of Lola' is a four-page comic, an ethnographic work of creative non-fiction, a series of simple black and white line drawn characters, their words and thoughts floating in balloons above their heads, their expressions and bodily positions sometimes in sharp contrast with those words. However, within these four flat pages I have distilled two years of fieldwork, six field journals, two diaries, a 77,218 word manuscript and the daily lived experience of 31 children and young people diagnosed with Medium-Chain Acyl CoA Dehydrogenase Deficiency (MCADD). A picture can tell a thousand words. A series of these can show an entire life. Such is the power of the comic.

There is a small but growing body of multidisciplinary work around the genre of graphic anthropology and medicine (Hamdy and Nye 2017) and its ability to analyse and communicate issues in illness, medicine, and disability and add to our understanding of 'health.' Al-Jawad (2015: 372-373) argues (in graphic form) that comics can be used as a research method due to their ability to 'unlock emotional responses to data,' promote reflective practice and 'offer a resistance to the medical mainstream.' McMullin (2016: 150) situates these 'as part of a medical imaginary in the era of biomedicalization.' As she states, graphic narratives illustrate the everyday. Ambitiously, a forthcoming graphic novel by Alex Pavlotski outlines what this form does for anthropology.

What can we learn about the social life of diagnosis through a graphic narrative of MCADD? The comic above does not explicitly tell the reader that MCADD is an inherited metabolic disorder in which a child is either missing the enzyme to metabolise fat, or that it is not working properly. It does show that children have to eat whether they like it or not, that they cannot rely on their fat stores to give their bodies energy, and that periods of fasting can be extremely dangerous and life threatening. The comic was developed in combination with other creative narratives to support a larger body of work; a nationwide New Zealand ethnography that sought to discover whether the diagnosis of a life threatening condition affected a child's developing sense of personhood (Herbst 2019). In this work, I examined the daily lived experience of the first generation of children to be diagnosed with medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency (MCADD). MCADD is an inborn error of metabolism that was included in the expanded newborn screening programme in New Zealand in 2006. Without screening, one in four undiagnosed babies could die but once diagnosed, children may never become symptomatic due to ongoing treatment, which is as simple – and as complicated – as eating regularly. Childhood illnesses that cause vomiting, high fever or loss of appetite necessitate hospitalisation until the child is well again.

I had always planned some sort of graphic and creative component of the manuscript, to explore Sherine Hamdy's question: "Might there be a space for a 'graphic medical anthropology' that could bring medical anthropological and bioethical insights into more public engagement" (Dedios et al. 2014: 2). I wanted this work to embody the daily lived experience, the lifeworlds of these children I was working with. I discovered it was tricky and slippery. The models I initially created seemed flat and inconsequential. This was a condition that affected

everything about a child, and yet nothing. It was a ghost, an elusive bogeyman that crept out from under the bed when children were sick, little and vulnerable and then crept back under, leaving rationales of 'it's ok' and 'it is easily managed' and 'at least it's not something else' in its trail.

Language has limitations and so I turned to the graphic. I wanted the reader to climb inside the body and mind of these children, to feel what they are feeling. It was only after a period of sitting with the data that I realised I needed to short-circuit a path to the sensory. I wanted to show the complexity of the impact of this condition on young people's lives; the seething sibling rivalry, the discontent when one child feels their sibling is favoured and yet worried and guilty about that same sibling's health. Children showed me how their imagination created potential futures, based on what they had heard will happen and the phenomenological experience of being inhabited by that illness – so much so that they are scared of telling their parents when they feel nauseous. I also wanted to express the complete banality of living with the diagnosis, how for some children at certain times, the condition simply doesn't exist: it's an inconvenience, an interruption to the things that are important in their worlds; playing, friendships, exploring. That these clinics are just 'something that happens' but at the same time also mark a child as something other. How, then, to communicate this to a range of readers: academic, clinical, and families?

My aims in creating the comic were to take the themes that had emerged from rigorous analysis and render them visible – for the sensory to engage the reader and also for non-academics to be able to engage with the research. I wanted to make visible a slippery concept I had developed called 'shadow habitus' (Herbst 2019); a concept I use in relation to chronic illness. Shadow habitus describes an enduring habitus that shapes a primary set of dispositions based on the prevention of illness exacerbation. This shadow habitus is developed during times of increased risk but remains even during times of apparent health. The comic was an attempt to visualise the concept. But what value did this graphic narrative form hold and what did its creation teach me about knowledge creation and ethnographic practice?

Part II. The trial of obscurantism

The comics' main contribution is in terms of representation. I think and write with my senses; field journals include descriptions of fish decals in a hospital waiting room swimming towards a destination they'll never reach; soundscapes of sobbing and the silences that are never truly still. As Csordas (1993), Narayan (2012) and Pink (2009) have all observed, we experience the research locale with our bodies and senses and this must be brought to our analysis and imparted to readers. I make a case for the use of graphic anthropology, more than a 'one-to-one translation of ethnographic field notes [but] a method for seeing and communicating relationships in the field' (McMullin 2018); a way of illustrating the everyday. The comic furthered the anthropological endeavour, making sense of what makes us human. I intend this as a critique on anthropological ways of writing culture, a critique spearheaded by Clifford and Marcus' (1986) text that has been developed by writers such as Abu-Lughod (1993, 1999) and Behar

(1996). I draw on Stoller (2015), Wolf (1992) and Van Maanen (2011) to advocate for a more inclusive way of allowing our participants' voices to be heard, in particular those at risk of being muted through illness or age. Here I consider what Stoller refers to as:

> … a 'mutually influencing dynamic relationship between ethnography and fiction', acknowledging that literary modes of writing, including fiction, enable anthropological scholars to uncover evidence and explore ideas about the human condition that are, 'for the most part, inadequately expressed in the discipline' (Stoller 2015 in Wiles 2018: 10).

As Gottlieb has stated, increasingly anthropologists acknowledge that it does not make intellectual sense to divorce affective considerations from our analyses when they are a key component of the experiences that form the bedrock of our understanding (Gottlieb 2016: 101). Additionally, opening our work to further accessibility is important towards further attempts to decolonize anthropology and make a stand against what Ellen Hertz (2016) rails against as obscurantism in academic writing. In this work I have used a composite character, Lola, to illustrate the socially constructed nature of illness, representing her diagnosis and daily lived experience and encounters with 'her' MCADD through her own words and actions in comic form.

Much like others who advanced this discussion post-Wolf (1992), I argue that preserving the mood and sensory aspects of the ethnographic encounter is vital to presenting an authentic, self-reflexive picture, and that this can be used to enhance the nuances of analysis. As Pigg (2018) notes in her commentary on the illness narrative canon:

> They show important things about sickness and the quest for healing, but they don't ask the sorts of questions anthropologists ask about cultural common sense and structuring assumptions, let alone see the production of medical knowledge as a story in its own right.

It is the creation of this piece of graphic anthropology that illuminated sub-conscious and reflexive patterns of thinking valuable to the ethnographic endeavour.

Life of Lola illustrates a particular cultural and personal history through Lola, a composite character created from experiences observed and shared by the young participants in this study. It highlights how some of these children feel at specific points; frustrated by the power differentials at mealtimes yet using knowledge of their condition to test social parameters, concerned about their peer relations at school, ambiguous and agentive about and during their outpatient clinic appointments, and frightened when they do develop or contract a childhood illness as they believe this leads to hospitalisation. This is the end point, presented as an ethnographic work of creative non-fiction. In the following section I describe how this came about and what I learned about ethnography in the process.

Part III: 'Writing' graphic anthropology

The comic serves as a way of thinking with and through Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The comic illustrates what I have termed the *shadow habitus* – a concept I argue is particular to newborn screening for chronic genetic disorders. We see how Lola's diagnosis of MCADD has created a medicalised body in need of preventative treatment: she must eat, and eat well every day. The outpatient clinics and hospital admissions she has experienced help to construct the impression of a pathologised body. Despite being at primary school, the experiential, sensory knowledge she has of her preventative treatment in the first few years of life leads her to be fearful of hospitalisation, so that when she feels nauseous, she doesn't want to tell her parents in case she is hospitalised. The comic visually shows how the body of Lola, diagnosed with the potential for illness, has as much capacity to transform her young life as illness itself. A shadow habitus remains even after moving through this phase of early prevention.

When we write ethnography, we need to think about how we are writing it and what we are portraying. But often, this is taken for granted. After years of training and immersion in ethnographic practice, the act of writing becomes reflexive and habitual. Trying to visualise what I was trying to write and expressing these concepts in the form of a script for an artist revealed hidden layers that I found valuable: should 'Lola' be male or female and why? What age should she be? What should she look like? Cultural differences in the way we portray our teachers, doctors, clinics, schools and school children were revealed in early storyboards as the artists presented and queried representation. There is a panel where I insert myself after much reflexive thought, based on a teacher telling me: 'he is aware of your observation, he told me "she's here for me you know."' Another panel illustrates the knotty conundrums at the heart of ethnography and one that the biomedical specialists I work with wanted to know: how do you know that you aren't affecting these children, that they wouldn't even think about MCADD and its effect on them if you weren't there to prompt those questions? Children wanted me to provide answers to the questions I was asking them, while searching for their own solution to the query: 'what is MCADD?' They, of course, have their own answers. Parents thought I could provide a succinct answer but as my research uncovered (and anthropologists know) the answer is fluid and relational. The answer Lola gives in the comic was just one of the themes that came out of the ethnography: MCADD is, in many instances, 'food and drink.'

The script was thus developed after extensive analysis and coding of field notes and annotated with detailed art notes to enable an illustrator to draw the images:

Panel 4b: Inciting incident
CLOSE UP OF LOLA OR JUST PART OF HER FACE AND SHOULDER WITH A BIT OF VOMIT ON IT. BEHIND HER AN IMAGE OF AN 'ACTION PLAN' ABOUT LOLA'S CONDITION (SENT AS A SEPARATE FILE) AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.

STRIP 3: [Home environment – happy. A series of interconnected panels]
Caption: The best part of the day is coming home after school. Except for the homework.

Panel 5a:
LOLA AT THE TABLE WITH A PLATE OF SNACKS, FRUIT (SOMETHING EASILY IDENTIFIABLE LIKE BANANA, APPLE, MANDARIN SEGMENTS), A BISCUIT, SOME PRETZELS OR TINY TRIANGLE SANDWICH OR TWO…

Panel 7:
AERIAL VIEW OF A CRAMPED ROOM WITH A DOCTOR AT THE TABLE, 4 NURSES, A BED, 2 CHAIRS WITH PARENTS. [I'll send you a sketch of room object placement from my field notes].

This comic was a collaborative rather than a linear process. The artists and I worked with the material back and forth, enmeshing the visual storyboard and the developing script with my explanations of anthropological concepts, the lived experience of the condition and what I was trying to portray in each panel with their skills and experience of working in the comic form. The creation of the comic became a tool for thinking critically about what this ethnography was doing and why, and how it could be read in relation to other works of graphic anthropology. It touches on the key themes that the children brought up in discussions about MCADD and highlights the ambiguities inherent in discussing an invisible condition that even clinicians do not fully understand.

To conclude, the comic revealed the shifting and elusive nature of the porous boundaries between illness, health and dis-ease, circling through a variety of situated perspectives and spaces crucial to understanding the lived experience of MCADD. Comics have much to offer medical anthropology including complex theoretical concepts simplified in visual form for non-specialist readers and the lived experience of those diagnosed with a chronic condition illustrated for clinicians and others who are used to a particular way of encasing and seeing patients.

What do comics then do for ethnography? They are a tool, a final product and a method. If writing is a way of thinking, then laying out a storyboard is a visual way of filtering what you are seeing and doing during participant observation. What does this do for the discipline broadly? It makes it accessible. It protects it. It opens rather than closes it. It opens new ways of thinking to ourselves, the ethnographers. I used this short comic to illustrate how what I have called the 'shadow habitus' can develop and endure well after a child has grown enough to be out of a clinically defined dangerous period. A picture can tell a thousand words. A series of these can show an entire life. When a reader engages with the work and entangles their own lives with the other – that is the power of graphic anthropology.

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Special Section
Introduction: Labours of Collaboration

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Lorena Gibson

Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington

Notes on Collaboration: Nayantara

This is for real! I guess I'm going to have to share these spaces.

Then a bit further down on the page, a name and few details hastily scribbled:

Gabriela, PhD Student, Med Anthro, Geneva, Swiss, English only!

There were no other fieldnotes on that page for that day. Looking back on that page in my diary, I still distinctly remember the conversation in mid-2014, when I was told by my primary investigator (PI) that I would have a PhD student join me in 'my' clinics and she would do research alongside me for her dissertation. I was not too excited at this prospect; I felt incredibly uncomfortable and vulnerable. I had known that this was going to happen at some point. I was well aware that I was being territorial and insecure, because, even when I had accepted

my role as a post-doctoral research fellow on the large European Research Council (ERC) grant, Dr Aditya Bharadwaj (PI on the project) had explained that different people would be joining the team – including other researchers doing their Masters, PhDs, or even a post-doctoral research project.

As the reality of this new graduate student, who would shadow me in the various clinics where I had been building relationships and collecting data over the past year, drew near, I became progressively uncomfortable. My time in these clinics had been hard negotiated. It had taken considerable labour to get access to certain spaces, and now I had to prepare to share it. What if this student made my participants uncomfortable? What if she said or did something that could jeopardize the research project? What if she saw things differently, *very differently*, from the way I saw them in these clinics? Would my analysis then be invalid? She did not speak Hindi or Marathi – would I have to act as a translator and also cultural interlocuter? I was being asked to collaborate with another researcher, something I had never done before and had read very little about.

While there is a rich history of anthropologists studying people and *their* collaborations in science labs (Rabinow 1996; Rajan 2006; Traweek 1988), or collaborating with research participants (Mintz 1960, 1989; Rappaport 2008), I had not read enough about the changing nature of ethnographic research in which two researchers shared the same space. The one example I was aware of, and worried about, was Margaret Mead's field sites being visited by Derek Freeman and how he (re)analysed what she saw, heard, and experienced (Jarvie 2013; Rappaport 1986). I worried that what I had worked to understand over the past year about stem cell research and therapies would be scrutinized and my own ethnographic practice put to the test.

My fears were unfounded.

A day into our 'collaborative research,' we became friends. A week into our research together, we discovered the joy of sipping coconut water and chatting about the day during long taxi rides back to our hotel. Three years since our time together in the field, Gabriela and I are now close: we talk often, or as often as possible with time zones and writing commitments, and are writing a piece together on ethnographic collaborations.

My fears about potentially ruined field relationships were unfounded, but my ethnographic practice was definitely impacted – for the better, I think. Sharing this space forced me to not be complacent in my participant observations, encouraged me to work on days when I felt lazy, allowed me to feel less lonely in the clinics, and, above all, it created an opportunity for a friendship that will last a long time. Once you share a field site full of so much grief, hope, loss, and love, as we had in the stem cell clinics and research facilities in India, you are connected not only for the duration of the project or the writing, but for much longer, beyond a static project end date. Since then, I have had a chance to write collaboratively with my PI (Appleton and Bharadwaj 2017a; 2017b) on this research project and am working with Gabriela on a piece about the changing nature of ethnographic

collaboration. In learning to collaborate in the field site *differently*, my ethnography has been shaped for the better.

That initial anxiety around sharing the ethnographic space also directed my reading to focus on collaboration and ethnography. Around that time, I had read Himika Bhattacharya's review and engagement on 'New Critical Collaborative Ethnography' (2008). It is a rich review of her own Indian immigrant researcher positionality, engaging with and grounded in the understanding of collaborative ethnography as a practice emerging when researchers work with (not on) communities. I read her work as a site for starting a conversation on collaboration that is more than between researcher and non-researcher – rather, a commentary on people working together towards a common goal. She writes:

> […] I would like to reiterate that the new critical collaborative ethnography stands out as a particularly useful method for ethnographers who are invested in grounding their scholarship in processes of social change through collaboration with the *people whom they work with* (Bhattacharya 2008: 319).

The idea of how ethnographic practice is shaped by co-researching (same site, topic, space, and with the same people) has been little explored. As ethnographic research under the umbrella of 'qualitative data' gains traction, the idea of 'teams' of ethnographers collaborating is something we cannot continue to ignore. This was one of the motivations for starting a conversation in *Commoning Ethnography* about the changing nature(s) and sites of ethnographic practice.

The form of collaboration that I experienced with Gabriela, as a co-researcher in shared medical spaces, but with a different positionality and subjective bearing on what we saw, read, heard, felt, and wrote about, has emerged in relation to the demands placed on researchers to manage large, multi-researcher grants. Sometimes these teams are necessitated as part of the process of anthropologists working in collaboration with scholars in the hard sciences. In other instances, teams of local and non-local scholars are working together. Essentially, in this other form of ethnographic collaboration, two or more ethnographers work in the same space, co-creating (on multiple levels) ethnographic data and ethnographies. In many ways, I saw that it can change the nature of ethnography itself, but what I still struggle through is whether that change is good, bad, essential, or important to common the ethnographic practice and imagine it anew.

Notes on Collaboration: Lorena

I have just finished teaching my undergraduate course, 'Anthropology for Liberation', for the second time. One of the assignment options was for a small group of students to participate in a collaborative, service-learning style, ethnographic research project with me and representatives from Victoria University of Wellington's Student Association (VUWSA). This assignment replaced the 'Indigenous View of Wellington' assignment that some students struggled with

when I first taught this course (see Gibson 2017). I designed this new project in collaboration with Tamatha Paul, 2019 VUWSA President, before the course commenced, and obtained ethics approval from Victoria University of Wellington's Human Ethics Committee for the ethnographic fieldwork involved. Pedagogically, my goals were: 1) to give students the opportunity to learn by undertaking a practical research project that would benefit VUWSA as well as the students; and 2) to create a 'community that commons' (Gibson-Graham et al. 2016: 202) through collaborative ethnographic research inspired by Harrison (2010), Lassiter (2005a), and Smith (2012).

Five students applied to join me on this project, none of whom knew each other at the outset. Throughout the trimester we experienced many of the frustrations and joys that accompany collaborative ethnographic research, from figuring out how we would work together (and how to resolve conflict), to navigating the inevitable change in research focus, and negotiating the form and content of the final research project. The students presented a paper based on this research, entitled 'Salient Relationships: Addressing Barriers to Kaupapa Māori within Victoria University's Student Magazine', at the November 2019 conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ASAA/NZ). We are also planning a co-authored journal article drawing on this research.

This collaborative project has been a highlight of my teaching career thus far. It has also reminded me that I have always been drawn to collaborative ethnographic research and writing. Group meetings with my students invoked vivid memories of my own experiences as an undergraduate anthropology student taking part in collaborative research projects in the late 1990s, and as a team member at a research consulting firm in the late 2000s. Watching my students speak so confidently at the ASAA/NZ conference reminded me of my first conference paper: a presentation about Hip-Hop in Aotearoa, designed and delivered in collaboration with a fellow graduate student and two members of Palmerston North's Hip-Hop community. Figuring out how to co-author the final report for VUWSA brought to mind similar conversations I have had in other writing collaborations (e.g. Farrelly et al. 2017; Gibson and Fabish 2017; Ramaswamy, Gibson, and Venkateswar 2010), as well as how difficult it can be to collaborate with research participants in the writing stage for various reasons.

Most ethnographers work collaboratively in the field, and some extend the collaborative ethos into all aspects of knowledge production, including authorship (see Alonso Bejarano et al. 2019). Ethnographic collaboration is not easy, and one of our goals in this special section is to draw attention to the labour that it requires – sometimes fruitful, sometimes frustrating, but always generative.

On Collaboration

Both of us draw on our experiences of labours of collaboration above. While these are just two examples of the different collaborations we have undertaken over the years – as anthropologists, academics, parents, friends, musicians, community gardeners, yoga practitioners, and as people in complex multiple everyday entanglements between self and community – we use the above examples to bring

focus to the work that collaboration and collaborative labours enable and dissuade, in light of our own ethnographic practice. Although different in character, ethics, and political aims, these forms of ethnographic collaboration raise important questions about processes of knowledge production. For this special section, we sought papers that critically engage with what contemporary ethnographic collaborations look like and how they alter, or have the potential to alter, the inherent power dynamics of ethnographic research.

The four pieces in this section are innovative collaborations at various levels, ranging from anthropologists collaborating with communities to collaborative presentations as a way to subvert hierarchies and Euro-centric modes of being with/in academia. These papers engage with the relationship between collaboration and commoning, some explicitly and others implicitly, as ways to shape knowledge production and practice for a much more egalitarian ethnographic engagement within and beyond the academy. In this special section of Volume 2 of *Commoning Ethnography*, we share four papers that engage with the changing nature of ethnographic collaboration on multiple levels.

In the first article, 'NGO-Research Collaborations and Conflicts', legal anthropologist Amanda Reinke takes us inside the potentials and pitfalls of doing collaborative work with/for NGOs. She highlights how NGOs' expectations have to be negotiated through the entire process of a collaborative enterprise. Reinke crafts a vivid image of the advantages and problems inherent in being involved in different capacities in the same space – as a researcher studying the NGO space, as a pro bono worker helping with *their* projects – and touches on a different sort of ethnographic refusal where the researcher themselves says no to an expectation placed on them because of their own position as academic and researcher working with/in the NGO space.

Jennifer Lanterman and Sarah Blithe, in a similar vein, highlight the immense benefits of doing collaborative work within academia but across disciplinary boundaries. In the fourth article in this special section, 'The Benefits, Challenges, and Disincentives of Interdisciplinary Collaboration', they discuss how the deeply entrenched systems do not recognize or support this form of working together for better scholarship. However, they also identify collaborative labour as a way to push back against the neoliberal university and governance by metrics.

It is this pushback that is taken up by a collective of scholars – Beaudelaine Pierre, Naimah Petigny, and Richa Nagar – in 'Embodied Translations: Decolonizing Methodologies of Knowing and Being', where they upend the academic expectation around knowledge production and sharing. Sima Shakhsari, in introducing their performance piece, writes:

> The collaborators skilfully embody a form of politics grounded in social justice and solidarity through affective, corporeal, and epistemic refusal, while being aware of the risks of appropriation and complicity as scholar/activists in U.S. academia (this volume).

Through this performance we see that collaborations at different stages of the intellectual project are inherently valuable in shaping how we participate in

knowledge production within the academy. In interesting and perhaps difficult ways, collaborative performances allow us to refuse singular expectations of the academic spaces and presentations most of us are asked to occupy. Collaborative work offers freedom in a sense from one limiting framework, and opens up potentials for new engagements, learnings, giving(s), and sharing(s).

Indeed, this learning, giving, and sharing of power and control in the research process is made visible so beautifully in Rachael Fabish's article, 'Pākehā working with Māori – Activists and Academics'. Fabish draws on research in Wellington's (Aotearoa New Zealand) anarchist community to complicate and unsettle how collaborative work between Pākehā and Māori is understood. In this very delicate writing she takes us on a journey and holds the door open for us to continue traveling and discovering beyond her research project. She draws attention to the tensions involved in working across difference, and also to the potential ways that non-Indigenous researchers and ethnographers can listen to and learn from Indigenous people. This includes learning to sit with discomfort and relinquishing power as an important way of being in Indigenous spaces.

Overall, these four contributions offer insights into the work involved in collaboration. They are simultaneously humble and generous. They are stories we need to know about and think with if we are serious about collaborative ethnography. We thank our authors for their time, commitment, and labour.

These pieces have also been improved by feedback from a generous review by Professor Joanne Rappaport, who we would also like to thank. While many good points were made for each of the pieces, she was very clear about asking for more stories from each of the authors. She wrote:

> *I think that, in the end, what I want out of these papers is more of a narrative: how they came together, under what conditions, how they negotiated what they would do, how it worked out, how they changed as researchers and as human beings. If we have the stories, as readers we can begin to make some of the connections ourselves, we can begin to think through how all of these varied examples of collaboration are speaking to common concerns* (Rappaport 2019. Feedback for Authors in Personal Correspondence).

We asked our authors for more stories. We asked ourselves for more stories. We understand the value of stories for our readers, as important locations from where collaborative ethnographic labours can be understood, appreciated, and critiqued. To know collaborative work, then, is to know how to *listen*, attentively and with an ear to the nuance of how daily practices are shaped through various negotiations. Collaborative ethnography takes a lot of work, but it creates stories for potential ways to shape a new ethnography.

In this Introduction, we have foregrounded the potential inherent in collaborative practices in commoning within the human sphere. There is, of course, a particular erasure undertaken in talking about collaborative practices without engaging with multispecies collaboration. Within and beyond anthropology, there is a rich emerging literature that draws on, and propels further,

multispecies ethnographic engagements, opening the door for future collaborations and projects of commoning between human and non-human actors (see Appleton 2018; Dow 2016; Govindrajan 2018; Parreñas 2018; Tsing 2015; Weston 2017). A truly collaborative multispecies engagement would require us to take seriously the call to uncommon as a way to forward the progressive hopes hinged on commoning. We welcome conversations that extend these entanglements in more-than-human directions.

Notes on *Our* Collaboration: Nayantara and Lorena

In conversations within our collective, we see and experience the ways that an explicitly collaborative ethnography has gained significant purchase within the field over the past few decades (Lassiter 2005a, 2005b, 2008). For different sorts of scholars, this project has taken different forms and has had different kinds of politics. It foregrounds relationships in the field and new kinds of ethnographic production: films, artworks, exhibitions, and, often, traditional written texts. Although ethnography has long been a collaborative research method (J. Rappaport 2008), the inherent collaborations within ethnographic work were not always acknowledged as such, nor given the central billing that new collaborative projects often emphasise. In this way, such new projects often aim to undo (or at least unpack) the kinds of uneven knowledge hierarchies that have been foundational to ethnographic research since its outset. They also appear to offer new grounds for activist research (Hale 2008) and opportunities for decolonizing ethnography (Alonso Bejarano et al. 2019).

While we both have experienced and participated in various collaborative projects over the years, this journal and special section are a result of our most recent collaborative labours. It has been a pleasure to work closely with one another over emails and also in person over many a cuppa. Our sense and commitment to working collaboratively took extra time and energy sometimes, as we did not make any decisions unilaterally – be it accepting an article, deciding on reviewers, or the final design and layout of issues. To check-in constantly, to make sure each decision was supported, and also wait patiently while one of us could not work or respond in the same time frame, encouraged us to learn patience and to slow down for unplanned breaks.

Collaborative labour for us has been slow and deliberate, and sometimes did seem cumbersome. Individually we could *do* things in our own timeframes and without needing consultations. Yet, in our attempt to create slow scholarship, to build community, and upend academic individualist achievement-based hierarchies, we have found that it is collaborative work that serves as an anathema to the anxieties of contemporary academic space. In this project, we have lived our politics and not just written about them.

We see collaborative labour, in and beyond the various stages of ethnographic practice, as precisely what academia and its well-placed academics need in order to check their privilege and egos. To common their ideas, knowledge, practices, and collectively build beyond the individual may be the way forward for a truly progressive academia and ethnography. Or so is our collective hope.

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NGO-Research Collaborations and Conflicts
A view from the field

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ABSTRACT | Ethnographers collaborating with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profits while simultaneously researching their organizational structure, practices, and beliefs about service, advocacy, and activism face myriad challenges. However, collaboration – as it exists in a dialectical relationship between stakeholders working towards common goals – may also generate ethnographic insights that add to anthropological knowledge of NGOs. According to Lassiter (2005a, 2005b), researchers undertaking collaborative ethnography have four commitments: (1) ethical responsibilities to stakeholders; (2) honesty/transparency about research; (3) accessible writing; and (4) collaborative reading, writing, and interpretation. Collaborations may be interrupted at various points, but especially where bureaucratic structures and operations intervene. For example, agreements and documentation (e.g., memoranda of understanding, or MOUs) often challenge the interests and affect of collaborative work. In this article I draw on five years of collaborative NGOgraphy, Lassiter's conceptualization of collaborative ethnography, and respond to Hymes' (1972) call for a personal ethnography, in order to discuss the challenges and opportunities of NGO-researcher collaboration.

Keywords: nonprofits; non-governmental organizations; bureaucracy; collaborative ethnography

Introduction

From graduate training to practice, anthropology across its sub-disciplines is, in scope and process, still predominantly concerned with researching, analysing, and writing about others, not the self. In 1908 Franz Boas posited that 'with the increase of our knowledge of the peoples of the world, specialization must increase, and anthropology will become more and more *a method* that may be applied' (10; original emphasis). According to Hymes, the creation of 'a bureaucratic general anthropology, whose latent function is the protection of academic comfort and privilege' resultant of increasingly specialized training is at odds with recent historic and contemporary calls to cultivate 'a personal general anthropology, whose function is the advancement of knowledge and the welfare of [hu]mankind' (1972: 47; gender-neutral added). Although the roots of ethnographic collaboration between researcher and researched are deep, these relationships are sporadic, produce variable results, and the extent to which there is true collaborative enterprise in ways that mitigate power asymmetries is debatable (see Bernard and Pedraza 1989; Boas and Hunt 1895; Morgan 1851; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934) and debated (Mintz 1989). Collaboration, variously defined, in contemporary anthropological practice has sought to remedy these failures by emphasising active participation and research that warrants vested interest from participants, particularly where the ethnographer is working with disenfranchised groups or studying topics in which there are social problems and power asymmetries, such as human rights, development projects, and social justice movements (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Field 2008; Fluehr-Lobban 1991, 2008; Marcus 1999; Rappaport 2008; Ridington and Hastings 1997; Stacey 1988; Wolf 1992).

Such calls for increased participation are a result of recognizing that the knowledge gleaned by anthropologists often imply ethical and political responsibilities, and today the 'others' that anthropologists have studied fortunately make those responsibilities explicit and unavoidable. As anthropologists, we must consider the consequences for those among whom we work by simply being there, by learning about them, and of what becomes of what is learned (Hymes 1972: 48).

Anthropological knowledge is 'inherently personal and situational' (Hymes 1975: 869) and requires an examination of the ways in which ethnographic inquiry, methods, and questions more generally are a very human responsibility, rather than a strictly professional ethical responsibility. As anthropological foci and process has shifted as a result of feminist movements, post-colonial scholarship, decolonizing pushbacks, and changes in ethical standards, the calls for truly collaborative work have increased (see Fluehr-Lobban 2008; Lassiter 2005a).

In keeping with anthropological calls for and interests in considering ethnographic planning, processes, and outcomes as a human endeavour requiring thoughtful reflection and consideration, this article draws on five years of ethnographic research with/in non-profit organisations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to analyse collaborative enterprises in research. This work falls within the realm of 'NGOgraphy' – ethnographic anthropological research

with/in NGO and nonprofit settings. Following the NGOgraphic tradition (see Lashaw et al. 2017), the application of ethnographic inquiry, historically considered a 'lone-wolf' enterprise, is subject to scrutiny within collaborative efforts with NGOs and nonprofits. The additional pressures and constraints created by both academic and NGO bureaucratic regimes compound the challenges of collaborative ethnographic endeavour. Framed in NGOgraphic inquiry and collaborative and reciprocal ethnographic work, I leverage my research with alternative justice organizations to examine the possibilities of collaboration as a way to subvert asymmetries in access to knowledge production, as well as address the challenges of collaborating with/in the bureaucratic contexts of NGOs and nonprofits.

NGOgraphy

Since the neoliberal turn, states have discarded much of their social welfare obligations to their citizens (Harvey 2005). As responsibility for provisioning for human rights to housing, healthcare, and education has been abdicated by the state as part of neoliberal strategies, they are often taken up by NGOs and nonprofits (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; see McGuirk 2019). Anthropological inquiry with/in/on NGOs thus initially began with interest in development studies, human rights, and democratic transformation in states. NGOs were studied as part of a global civil society with unique language (e.g., capacity-building), funding and donor processes, and the associated rituals and practices of their work (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Hann and Dunn 1996; Lewis 2017; Sampson 2017; Schuller 2017).

'NGOgraphy' has emerged as a methodological and conceptual framework for imagining and implementing collaborative relationships and research between anthropologists and NGOs and nonprofits. NGOs are now a common part of the socio-political and economic landscape. These organizations are mundane entities in our communities that require analytical engagement because the mundane provides deep insights into the socio-political everyday (Lewis and Schuller 2017; Sampson 2017). Anthropologists continue to study NGOs from various perspectives. 'NGO-ization' or the appropriation of social movements by NGOs (Alvarez 1999; Choudry and Kapoor 2013; Hodžić 2014; Lang 2004), the political economy and neoliberalisation of NGOs (Bernal and Grewal 2014), and the ways in which these organizations can perpetuate and further entrench the state and its violence have been subjects of critique (Reinke 2016). Recent anthropological scholarship on NGOs recognizes the multifaceted and dynamic challenges of defining these organizations, their complex relationships to the state, and our own analytical and methodological power and reflexivity as we work collaboratively in these spaces (Bernal and Grewal 2014; Fisher 1997; Lewis and Schuller 2017; Mertz and Timmer 2010). Other work examines NGO workers and volunteers as part of an often precarious and contingent workforce (Vannier and Lashaw 2017).

The dynamic and diverse field of NGOgraphy requires researchers to grapple with methodological challenges, such as power dynamics between researcher and NGO, access to participate in and observe daily activities, and

collaborations within what may be, whether informally or formally, a hierarchical organizational structure (see Lashaw 2013; Sampson 2017). NGOgraphic inquiry often blurs the boundaries between the 'field' and 'home,' making ethnography personal in process and outcome (Sampson 2017). The messiness of blurred boundaries requires a reciprocal ethnographic approach that examines the researcher-researched relationship as a participatory and collaborative endeavour that is mutually beneficial throughout planning, process, and outcome (see Lawless 2000; Vannier and Lashaw 2017).

From a methodological perspective, many NGOgraphies and NGO-graphers can be conceived of within Lassiter's collaborative ethnographic framework (2005a, 2005b). According to Lassiter (2005a, 2005b), collaborative ethnography requires the active partnership of researchers and participants in the co-production of ethnographic research and texts. Collaborative ethnography is founded upon four commitments: (1) an ethical and moral responsibility to participants and students; (2) honesty and transparency about the research process; (3) accessible writing that engages the community and can be understood by the public (however defined); and (4) collaboration in the writing, reading, and interpretation of ethnographic texts with the community and students (Lassiter 2005a, 2005b). In many ways Lassiter's framework also subsumes reciprocal ethnographic frames (Lawless 2000), which rely on a reciprocal and equitable (inasmuch as this is possible) relationship between the researcher, community, and students or assistants. In both frames, there are co-commitments between the ethnographer and participants. The research topic, scope, methods, process, and outcomes are subject to negotiation and those negotiations must be made on equitable terms that are amenable to all and will produce usable information or outcomes. Thus, while collaboration requires co-commitments, it is also a co-production of knowledge and materials. In essence, this perspective requires the anthropologist to be aware of the socio-politics and economics of ethnographic work, to deconstruct otherwise 'bounded topographies of 'the field' and subsequently create space for new possibilities of collaboration and production (see Elinoff 2018).

My own work emerges from the NGOgraphic and collaborative ethno-graphic traditions. For me, 'community' is rooted in a particular location and with a particular group of people, while a research 'collaboration' is the deliberate and explicit engagement between all those involved in the project or research lifecycle. As an academic and applied ethnographer who analyses justice processes and frameworks in my own nation-state, my fieldwork is often multi-sited and the boundaries between 'researcher' and 'the researched' are frequently blurred. My role with/in the NGOs and nonprofits is negotiated on equitable terms. As a result of these negotiations and my own training as a mediator and conflict coach, I typically have the requisite research and practical experience to volunteer or do *pro bono* work for the organizations I study. In this capacity I work closely with paid and unpaid laborers, donors, and the communities they ostensibly serve.

While conducting fourteen months of ethnographic research in the San Francisco Bay Area, I worked as a volunteer on case intake and management, as well as volunteering as a mediator. This put me in everyday contact with paid

staff, such as directors and managers, but also with the volunteers who perform the bulk of case intake and conflict resolution processes. Although my own perspective does not always align with the organizations with whom I work, my approach to collaboration requires that I work side-by-side with non-profit and NGO employees and volunteers to better understand their perspective, process, and desired outcomes. Taking this NGOgraphic approach illuminates both emic and etic perspectives but also generates new frictions as me and my collaborators continually negotiate our roles, positionalities, and expectations (see Lashaw et al. 2017). Following Charles Hale (2001), research *participants* are an active component of the research topic, questions, process, and outcomes as a collective endeavour, rather than utilizing key *informants.*

Collaborative ethnographic inquiry is particularly well suited to NGOgraphy, where research participants need data-driven approaches to evidence the successes and failures of their work, and yet have no time and often a lack of expertise to fulfil that need. The NGO contexts I have worked in, for example, have limited financial resources for part- and full-time staff. These staff positions are dedicated to the necessary tasks of running an organization, such as fundraising and financial management, executive director, and case management. They do not have the training to do their own data collection and analysis, or if they did have the expertise, they did not have the time needed for this work. The ability to generate knowledge academically, while providing outcomes that meet organizational interests (even if that knowledge is not as flattering as the NGO might like) also overlaps academic and applied anthropological spheres.

As an anthropologist, my training and theoretical groundings do not necessarily align with the practitioners' philosophical ideologies or practical methods. We often disagree on fundamentals, even as I agree with their social justice goals and endeavours. It was not uncommon, for example, to hear practitioners claim that community-based justice methods that emphasize harmony and healing are the 'original,' 'natural,' or 'innate' form of justice for all human beings, especially Indigenous peoples. This ideology of sameness, of homogeneity, in the beliefs that undergird justice processes is something that is decidedly against my anthropological training, as is the notion that all Indigenous peoples universally value nonviolence, harmony, and healing over and above other justice frameworks and ideologies. The NGOgraphy framework, grounded in collaborative ethnographic inquiry, allows the potential for the researcher and participants to understand our differences and similarities as we construct a project that will be fulfilling for all participants in conceptual, procedural, and outcome-oriented ways. However, collaboration poses as many challenges as opportunities.

Challenges of Collaborating in the Juridical Grey Space

I have conducted NGOgraphic work with alternative justice nonprofits and NGOs since 2014. Defined by advocates in opposition to the state's formal legal system, alternative justice practitioners seek to provide a socially just form of conflict resolution that avoids the legal system's deleterious effects on marginalized communities. Alternative justice is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of practices and processes. Generally, these diverse forms share

philosophical roots in principles and values of healing, active participation, redressing harm, and community. Alternative justice mechanisms, such as community mediation and restorative justice, gained popularity in the US during the 1970s amid powerful social critiques of tough on crime policies. Such policies undermine communities, are financially and temporally inaccessible, overly professionalized and abstruse, and disproportionately harm particular social groups, such as racial minorities, LGBTQ members, non-native English speakers, and the working class (Alexander 2010; Calkins 2010; Enslen 1988; Galanter 1985). Thus, practitioners are typically working to subvert state violence, tackling pervasive problems such as mass incarceration, reintegration post-incarceration, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

In practice, many alternative justice NGOs have close connections with the state. These groups, while simultaneously seeking to subvert the state and the violence it enacts in communities, seek political and economic legitimacy from the state (Reinke 2018). This complex relationship is constructed by choice (as variously understood), but entails significant trade-offs as the NGO loses flexibility in defining success and goals. In exchange, they enter otherwise closed arenas, such as juvenile judicial processes, and economic support. These connections between alternative justice NGOs and practitioners and the state make research collaboration tricky. The juridical grey space is fraught with bureaucratic requirements, including background checks, memoranda of understanding, and extensive paper and digital files. However, the most significant challenge posed to collaborations comes from the process of navigating relationships within the juncture between formal and informal legal processes and entities.

In 2018, an alternative justice NGO where I had conducted *pro bono* research and writing with from 2016-2017 as part of my professional service in an academic institution, reached out and asked me to conduct a project that would 'provide evidence' demonstrating that their services are best practices in their field. As part of findings reports for the non-profits with whom I collaborate, I provide an analysis of 'areas of improvement' with associated 'actionable recommendations' for improving those areas. In this sense, the non-profit was aware that I may discover that their practices were not, in fact, the best. However, making those claims is challenging and puts stress on the already somewhat difficult and tenuous relationship between the researcher/collaborator and non-profit organization. Examined differently and framed in a positive light, this request is indicative of a great deal of trust and respect on the part of the requestor. However, this single request could be unpacked in many different ways, from their definition of research and evidence to how they delimit best practices and expect research to prove they are already achieving 'best,' however defined. Upon further probing, the requestor was unable to produce a list of variables or measures they would like to use for the research. The best they could derive was to track recidivism; however, this can only be tracked by the Department of Corrections and is typically done rather poorly at that. Furthermore, they were unable to guarantee that there would be regular access to the correctional institutions for study; nor were they able to state that an adequate control group could be identified and included in the research. This is a larger issue that all researchers

working in state institutions face but is particularly frustrating for collaborative ethnographers who rely upon a few select gatekeepers for long-term access to participants. Even though my relationship with this NGO was positive and ongoing throughout the couple of years prior to their request, internal organizational changes and shifting relationships with the DOC and other legal groups meant that collaboration could be jeopardized by external or internal factors at any time.

In many ways my situation parallels that of Lashaw (2013), whose work necessitated 'adopting a discomforting, possibly duplicitous position' (518). Lashaw details a request from her NGO's research director to conduct a literature review of critical theory education. Although initially envisioned as a 'precious opportunity' for her research, it quickly became evident to Lashaw that the director was uncertain about where to begin, how to articulate the specific categories of interest, or how to define their substance (2013). Confusion and an inability to clearly define relationships, goals, and analytical work is often central to the challenging process and sometimes elusive outcomes of collaborative ethnographic work with/in NGOs. Furthermore, NGOgraphy scholarship that is applied often collapses the relationships between researcher and the researched and blurs even the most bureaucratically-defined boundaries. Despite communication between myself and the NGO about my role as an academic and positionality in regard to their framework and organizational mission, and their clarity about their positionality and needs, we still experienced friction in trying to develop clear research goals, parameters, and outcomes.

The nexus between informal and formal law is a frustrating space for NGOs, practitioners, and legal actors associated with the state. While memoranda of understanding might formalize the relationships between NGOs and state entities, these are not legally binding agreements. During fieldwork, an alternative justice NGO's MOU with the Department of Corrections (DOC) was struck down by the incoming DOC director. All of the NGO's activities within facilities under purview of the MOU were immediately halted with no indication of when, if ever, they might resume. This certainly has implications for the practitioners and their clients, but also for ethnographic inquiry and collaboration. If I agreed to take on the requestor's project outlined in the first paragraph of this section, would *they* even have access to the institution for the duration of the research? What will happen when the next staff turnover occurs?

The unspoken assumption underpinning their request is that I believe that they are using best practices. My identity as a collaborator in the field is interpreted by practitioners as an advocate of their paradigm. This is compounded by the fact that, in the process of participant observation, I typically have the credentials to resolve conflict at a similar level to some of their own volunteers and paid staff. Even where there are understandings of what research is and the specific methods that might be used in the course of data collection, it is still often unclear to NGO and non-profit practitioners that credentials do not equal advocacy. The misunderstanding of positionality is difficult to undo once entrenched and, in my experience, often becomes entrenched unbeknownst to me. In the context of the 2018 request to 'provide evidence' of their best practices, our

collaborative work from 2016-2017 that entailed *pro bono* research, report writing, grant writing, and even constructing a toolkit for best practices for another organization was interpreted by the non-profit leadership as my whole-hearted belief in their efforts as unilaterally 'best' in the field – an interpretation I was blissfully unaware of until that time. Under these conditions, the lack of clarity in our positionality as collaborators, and their lack of clarity about the measures that should be used for the research project, meant that we were unable to continue constructing a project that would meet all of our needs and could be done effectively within their unstable relationships with the DOC.

Opportunities from Collaborating in the Juridical Grey Space

Although there are many overlapping challenges for collaboration, there are also many opportunities for both the researcher and other stakeholders. The most salient, and one which has been detailed elsewhere (Hymes 1972; Lassiter 2005a, 2005b), is the reduction of power asymmetries between the researcher and the researched. Although we cannot make a unilateral claim to better research findings or results, we could likely claim that collaboration cultivates higher quality information among participants and that our findings are more enriching for the practitioners who will utilize that information (see Hale 2001). Collaborative approaches require the active participation of the researched, historically termed 'subjects' or 'informants.' At a fundamental level, collaboration is a social justice endeavour reflected in the transition from 'subject' to 'participant,' 'collaborator' or even 'co-investigator.' Using collaboration as a foundation, ethnographers are pushed to consider and challenge dominant power structures that privilege our education, voice, and capabilities. Our access to and attainment of higher education constructs real or imagined 'expertise' that can be leveraged in particular ways. In my own research contexts, NGOs are often pleased to say that a researcher with a doctorate has collected data evidencing their programs; this is taken seriously by their donors, policymakers, and stakeholders in the legal system with whom they seek to work. When I attended Board of Directors' meetings as part of research projects in 2016-2017, I was often be introduced as 'Dr Reinke' and asked to provide a summary of my work and experience. I have also been able to co-produce knowledge by publishing annual reports and toolkits for best practice with a non-profit executive director, as well as providing independent reports of my research findings back to non-profit leadership to assist in program evaluation. For NGOgraphers, especially those researching social justice topics, working directly with practitioners to develop research scope, questions, methods, and outcomes that are tangible in their benefits and uses to the participants is ideal.

Beginning fieldwork with the range of collaborative ethnographic possibilities in mind, as opposed to tacking on collaboration somewhere midway through, is the key in my experience to the successful collaborative project. Since 2014 I have conducted collaborative ethnographic work with/in NGO contexts. This has only been successful because I begin with a conversation that lays out my own experience and training and ask the question 'Is there anything I can do for you?' Yes, I want to conduct research with them as part of my own academic interest, but I also want that research to be a topic, scope, and methodology that is

appropriate and valued by participants, in addition to producing outcomes that are meaningful.

In my research context this makes perfect sense to potential collaborators. Their own justice philosophies demand full and active participation of all parties in conflict and emphasize meaningful dialogue that manages relationships in effective ways. My calls for collaboration that necessitate active participation from all of us, the inclusion of diverse voices throughout their hierarchical institutions, and willingness to renegotiate relationships as issues arose fit into their worldview. The ability of research participants to understand the foundations of the collaborative research process is a privilege in my own work that makes creating and developing projects easier than it might be in other contexts.

Research outcomes are many and highly variable based upon negotiations with the NGO or nonprofit that the NGOgrapher is working with. With regards to my collaborations, research outcomes have taken the form of oral or written findings presentations, grant-writing support, toolkits for best practice, program evaluation, and assistance in writing annual reports. These may be single-authored but are often co-authored with participants. The co-authoring process is perhaps the most difficult for me as an academic – writing often moves slowly and is pitted with the technical yet empty discourse of NGOs (e.g., capacity-building; empowerment). There are many negotiations that occur just in the process of writing a single short piece.

However, in follow-ups with NGOs it is clear that some of these outcomes have been used to inform strategic planning meetings and to change internal policies and procedures. Although the outcomes may not always flatter the NGO, the firm foundation of respect and understanding from the beginning negotiations and throughout the subsequent relationship allows me the freedom to pursue evidence that may critique but also provides substantive information upon which to build. The fact that these are negotiations means that scope of evidence gathered is of interest to the NGO and is generally given serious consideration.

Conclusions

Collaborative ethnographic work has a long and storied history in the discipline, a history which has been recounted elsewhere (Lassiter 2005b). Collaborative ethnographic work with NGOs in particular reaches across academic and applied foci and asks us to construct a research process and set of outcomes *with* research participants, not simply for them. In the process of chopping down the ordinarily hierarchical modelling of relationships between the ethnographer and participants, collaboration becomes the point of success and 'not simply a fortuitous by-product of work with communities' (Fluehr-Lobban 2008: 174).

For NGOgraphers the opportunities and possibilities afforded by taking a collaborative ethnographic approach like that outlined by Lassiter is also fraught with challenges. Negotiating formal relationships between ethnographer and the NGO often requires documents, such as MOUs, letters of support, and background checks. The precarious position occupied by NGOs and their workers adds a level of instability to the research as well; high turnover rates and unstable relationships between NGOs, the state, and the communities they seek to serve may make for

an uncertain field experience. This is compounded by shifting relationships between various stakeholders and power plays within and between organizations that may jeopardize the negotiations initially agreed upon. The consistent conversations required in order to manage these relationships may also be intellectually, if not emotionally, draining.

In my own work, this manifests as processes of negotiating positionality, responsibilities, methods, and outcomes with an eye towards carefully considering destabilizing the normatively hierarchical relationships between researcher and researched. As an academic, my work is intrinsically shaped by these collaborations. I generally begin a research project by finding collaborators and then proceeding to define collectively the research questions, frameworks, and methods. My writing tends to be more accessible and less theoretically abstruse, and I typically write as many public pieces or NGO reports as I do peer-reviewed academic articles in any given year. I also have more respect for practitioners and the constraints in which they work than I might otherwise if I did not get 'in the trenches' with my participants in every stage and step of their work.

In NGOgraphy writ broad, this endeavour can be difficult as others have elaborated elsewhere (see Lashaw 2013; Lewis 2017; Sampson 2017). Moving forward will require continuing to examine how we can articulate our own position in relation to the NGO, and effectively navigating those relationships in a dynamic and ongoing way. While this may seem daunting, NGOgraphers have been working through this individually and relatively informally amongst one another in casual conversations at conferences. What is needed now are collective conversations, such as that herein, that further explore the potentialities and pitfalls of collaborative ethnographic work in NGO spaces.

Acknowledgements

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COMMONING ETHNOGRAPHY

Performing Embodied Translations
Decolonizing Methodologies of Knowing and Being

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Introduction by Sima Shakhsari
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ABSTRACT | This performance and transcript emerge from a collaborative journey that grapples with what it might mean to agitate dominant pedagogical and methodological conventions of Eurocentric Anglophone academia. Together, we perform an argument and a search: for multiple entry points into decolonizing feminisms; for multiple modes of knowing and being that can interrupt and challenge the epistemes that are rooted in thoughts and practices of colonialism and coloniality; for interrogating the dominant politics of citation that often operate in academic practices in disembodied ways. We search for a politics of knowing that is firmly rooted in relationalities where power and authority can be shared across uneven and unequal locations and languages. We invite you to step into the spaces that we have started imagining here and push all of our collective conversations and imaginations further, beyond the silos that cage us in our disciplined modes of thinking, writing, arguing, and dreaming.

Keywords: embodying knowledges; decolonizing epistemologies; radical vulnerability; refusing translation; collaborative praxis

AUTHOR/PERFORMER BIOS | **Beaudelaine Pierre** is a published writer and doctoral candidate in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Minnesota. She is also co-editor of *How to Write an Earthquake*, a trilingual volume in response to the catastrophe Haiti suffered on January 12, 2010.

Naimah Petigny is a Black Feminist scholar and social justice educator. Her research and teaching center questions of blackness, embodiment, memory, and performance. She grew up organizing amongst youth of color in Western Massachusetts and dancing in West African and Afro-Caribbean performance ensembles. Naimah graduated with a B.A in Sociology and Women's Studies from Vassar College in 2014. Currently, Naimah is a doctoral candidate in Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies at the University of Minnesota. Working at the intersections of Black Feminist Theory and Performance Studies, her dissertation-in-progress *The Hold is also an Embrace: Haunting and Contemporary Black Feminist Performance* theorizes choreography and improvisation as experimental, epistemological practices of Black women's performance that communicate the influence of coloniality, transatlantic slavery, mass incarceration and state violence on contemporary Black life. Naimah's writing blends critical theory and poetics while her pedagogy works to carve out spaces of abundance, honesty, and collective transformation in the classroom and beyond.

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Introduction by Sima Shakhsari

'Performing Embodied Translations: Decolonizing Methodologies of Knowing and Being' is a collaborative project that seeks to agitate and decolonize pedagogical and methodological conventions that dominate U.S. academia. Whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary, most academic fields privilege individualism over collaboration and normalize Eurocentric epistemologies through colonial and neoliberal practices. Beautifully performed and executed, Richa Nagar, Naimah Zulmadelle Petigny, and Beaudelaine Pierre challenge these epistemological and pedagogical norms, and put into practice what Geeta Patel and Anjali Arondekar (2016) have described as 'telling stories in fabular form' – a form of epistemic displacement that decenters Euroamerican epistemologies while engaging with the messiness and the excess that translation inevitably fails to convey. Their words, movements, and gestures go beyond a simple translation of theoretical concepts, inviting the audience to take part in pushing back against the erasure of landscapes, pasts, and presents that are often forgotten in pedagogies, research, and citational practices.

In a way, they ask us to challenge what Minoo Moallem has aptly called the 'emplacement of dismembering' – the dual process of making certain texts canonical, and 'forgetting the social and historical conditions that lead to this form of memorizing' (2002: 370). Stringing together seemingly disparate landscapes and events, the authors/performers embody a transnational feminist practice that Ella Habiba Shohat (2002) has called a 'relational approach.' They go beyond a theoretical rehearsal of this concept through unsettling the borders of authorship, academic rank, and disciplines, while highlighting the overwhelming presence of these borders, as well as the material effects of geopolitical borders that include and exclude them in and out of academia. They challenge the common split that is reproduced in academic settings between the U.S. women of color scholarship and transnational feminist scholarship, by interrogating the neoliberal logic of competition and 'modes of knowledge that place past-present-future, mind-body-spirit, being-doing-knowing into neat compartments' (Pierre, Petigny, Nagar, this piece).

The collaborators skilfully embody a form of politics grounded in social justice and solidarity through affective, corporeal, and epistemic refusal, while being aware of the risks of appropriation and complicity as scholar/activists in U.S. academia. This is a difficult task, not least because of the disciplinary ghosts, citational practices, and desires for canonization that haunt any interdisciplinary scholarship that is produced in the U.S. academy (and in the English language). This is precisely why this collaborative project is a practice in 'radical vulnerability' (Nagar, in journeys with Sangtin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan and Parakh Theatre, 2019), given that black and brown female bodies are often recolonized in neoliberal multicultural academic settings that turn them into spectacle, or expect them to 'speak from experience.'

Yet, rather than reproducing the Euroamerican epistemological traditions or succumbing to the norms of the neoliberal university, the authors call for a transformative politics of refusal and solidarity that challenges recolonization and confronts the patronizing dismissal of the masculinist postcolonial canon.

Producing brilliant scholarship such as this piece is the first step in the massive (and almost impossible) task that is ahead of us. Translating it into hiring practices, changing the culture of competition and grant-chasing, disrupting publishing for the sake of tenure, collaborating and co-writing in this manner prior to tenure, and training students who are not overburdened by 'professionalization' is the monstrous task that we (and those who came before us) face.

Embodied Translations: Decolonizing Methodologies of Knowing and Being

Video permalink:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xa9ZRfsO1EjSuUF8hg-32Jz1sfI7qCSD/view

Performance Transcript

BEAUDELAINE: Thank you for coming and for inviting us to share our work in the Geography, Environment and Society Coffee Hour. Today, we share with you some collectively authored musings and meditations. We draw these musings from a short chapter titled: 'Embodied Translations: Decolonizing Methodologies of Knowing and Being.' This chapter contains some entry-points into a journey that will remain in progress for each one of us for a long time to come. The fragments from this chapter that we are about to share today emerged from an invitation that Richa received last year to contribute a piece on 'decolonizing methods' to the *Routledge International Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies.*

Rather than approaching it merely from the perspective of her own intellectual and political journeys and locations, Richa asked Naimah and me – with whom she had been working and learning in multiple capacities – if we would like to join her in responding to this invitation.

Naimah and I accepted this invitation and together the three of us began engaging this topic in ways that are often foreclosed to us, even in the

transdisciplinary field of feminist studies. In a large measure, this foreclosing is due to our chosen audiences in such sub-fields as Black Studies, critical development studies, performance studies, literary studies, and Caribbean studies, to name a few.

NAIMAH: So we three came together to try to wrap our heads around how to approach this invitation, and specifically the editors' framing and call to talk about decolonizing methods, something that each one of us were both excited but also wary about.

On the one hand, a critical engagement with questions of colonization and decolonization ought to be present within all scholarly work that seeks to analyze or theorize: power, oppression, and shifting contexts – and landscapes – of resistance to dominant epistemologies and ontologies. On the other hand, decolonization has become a buzz word in the academy, where almost every field (including Sociology, Geography, Education, Anthropology) is holding conferences to decolonize itself. Yet, the dominant hierarchies and practices of inclusion and exclusion through which knowledges are legitimated or illegitimated in these fields remain intact for the most part.

The humanities and social sciences on our campus have been truly privileged to have many creative theorists, researchers, and writers who have been engaging seriously with questions of decoloniality and decolonization in relation to settler colonial contexts, especially in North America. Their engagements have taken to task the settler state's investments in: (1) maintaining not only violent, extractive, relationships with lands and marginalized bodies, but also (2) its continuing disavowal of ontologies and epistemologies that embody a radical break from those structures of capture. In this short piece, we begin to center other streams of thought and writing that often remain uncited in relation to decolonizing methods and methodologies.

Our co-authored beginnings emanate from a commitment to:

(a) acknowledge and engage the multiplicity of ways in which coloniality has imprisoned our creative imaginations, and
(b) invite all of us to imagine non-canonical modes of knowing, re-telling, and performing that grapple with what it might mean to decolonize methodologies of being in the dominant academy in which we breathe.

RICHA: So what we tried to do in these beginnings is to offer an argument and a search: for multiple entry points into decolonizing feminisms; for multiple modes of knowing and being that can interrupt and challenge the epistemes that are rooted in thoughts and practices of colonialism and coloniality; for interrogating the dominant politics of citation, that often operate in academic practices in disembodied ways.

And last but not least, these beginnings are an argument and a search for a politics of knowing that is firmly rooted in relationships and in relationalities where power and authority can be shared across uneven and unequal locations and languages.

What we share here are mere beginnings that are waiting to be stretched, deepened, twisted, questioned, interrogated, and rerouted. We invite you to step into the spaces that we have started imagining here and push all of our collective conversations and imaginations further, beyond the silos that we are so accustomed to in our disciplined modes of thinking, writing, arguing, and dreaming.

We'd like to begin by **Entangling Our Voices and Feeling Our Grounds Through Three Points of Departure...**

BEAUDELAINE: **One: H(a)unting/Hunting** [29 May 2017]
This writing begins as Donald Trump's administration hunts for evidence of crimes committed by Haitian immigrants in order to justify the non-renewal of Temporary Protection Status or TPS, an immigration status that has allowed more than 50,000 Haitians to stay in the U.S. after the earthquake of 2010. How can the U.S. government justify the ways in which it arbitrarily authorizes itself to decide the fate of lives within its geographical borders? Calling this removal violence does not make it such in the eyes of the U.S. government, nor is it an adequate intervention on my part. As someone very close to the 2010 earthquake and its aftermath, the question that haunts me is not only how to make sense of my own and my children's situation as TPS holders, but more importantly, how to ethically account for injustices that happen within and beyond the reach of my arms? It demands that I look at the Haitian TPS issue not only through the ways that people of both Haiti and the United States theorize each other, but also the resonances and entwining of individual stories of oppression that are often starkly separated, such as that of Philando Castile, who was gunned down by a police officer in July 2016 in Saint Paul, Minnesota; or Trump's Muslim travel ban during the first months of his presidency; or the killing in May 2017 in Portland Oregon of two men on a train who tried to intervene against a man yelling racial slurs at two women who appeared to be Muslim.

NAIMAH: **Two: Reinvesting** [November 9, 2016, the day after the US elections]

As Naimah speaks, Beaudelaine and Richa begin to encircle each other in a slow, gestural dance.

trace your lines of intention
slow and steady, yet with fervor
push your fingers into the divots of your borderless body
feel your body push back
follow the winding stretches of bone, muscle, sinew
this wholeness that is actually a continuous scattering of material
identify where the cuts have been made
split them open – wide – once again
recall all those sites of injury
the broken backs, sullen cheeks, severed fingers of our great grandmothers

the scatterings of self across the break
coherence is a fallacy
the brokenness of being is what we must own
reinvest in the aliveness of your breath
the deep resonances of heel, ball, toe
heel, ball, toe
heel, ball, toe
on wet earth
know that in this treading – the hips, ankles, spine are grounded once again,
anchored in the flesh
the overflows, the spills, the uncontained agents of our bodies
are hard at work, like they always have been
squirreling away, burrowing in deep, preparing for this break
in this break, lies our expansion
in this tension lies our liberation
Reinvest in this aliveness of your breath,
the weight of flesh on your bones,
the curve of your back,
the articulation of your hips.
Reinvest. Reinvest. Reinvest.

RICHA: **Three: War-Recording** [June 18, 2017, two days after Philando Castile verdict was announced]
As the world prepares to celebrate Eid-ul-fitr in June 2017, fifteen-year-old Hafiz Junaid Khan boards a train with his brothers to return home to his village after buying new clothes in Delhi. An argument over a seat turns into slurs against Muslims for wearing skull-caps, for eating cow meat, and for being 'anti-national.' The men pull Junaid's beard, fling the brothers' skull caps, and slap them. The teenagers tell the mob that cow meat was not even eaten in their village, but the men pull out their knives and one stabs Junaid until he dies. Junaid's injured brother Hashim recalls in shock, 'Instead of saving us the crowd was egging the attackers on. They held us by our arms, while the men pierced our bodies with their knives.' A few days after this incident, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi wraps his arms around Donald Trump in the White House, and India purchases drones worth $2 billion from the United States of America. Twelve years ago, the same Modi was denied a visa to enter the USA for his role in the 2002 pogrom that killed more than 1,000 Muslims when he was the Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat. Even as these events unfold, the National Public Radio announces in the same hour that the world's forcibly displaced people now number approximately 65.6 million, making such people the 21st largest country in the world. AND that the USA's longest war – on Afghanistan – is expected to continue for years. And I just learned that the jury investigating the murder of Philando Castile acquitted the police officer who gunned him down seven blocks away from where I live, in St. Paul, dashing the hopes of his family and thousands of protesters who were somehow confident that justice could not be denied this time; especially in the face of the damning evidence against the cop.

BEAUDELAINE: Recording each war.

NAIMAH: Enunciating each displacement.

RICHA: Gesturing towards every haunting. Naming every lynching….

BEAUDELAINE: So that we can gain the strength to reinvest, to fight, to overcome, to breathe, to dance… without identifying that which has already happened as belonging to the 'past.'

NAIMAH: As Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995: 15) puts it, 'The past – or, more accurately, pastness – is a position. Thus, in no way can we identify the past as past.' We must push back on the temptation to forget – the sweet drawl of clean, confined pasts. Instead, we claim pasts that spill over into present futures, and conjure the buried agents beneath.

RICHA: We demand 'discontinuous, contradictory, multifarious' legacies without requirement of resolution (Hong 2015: 3) so that our translations or retellings (Merrill 2008) can try to do justice to landscapes like the ones we describe above. We cannot let these landscapes slip away – because within them – rooted deep – are lessons about how to be in community again, and again. We begin here because – like others who have written, danced, rallied, and performed before us – this is where decolonial praxis must begin.

BEAUDELAINE: We must interrogate modes of knowledge that place past-present-future, mind-body-spirit, being-doing-knowing into neat compartments (see also, Keating 2016; Anzaldúa 1987). We must interrogate and challenge the systems of power that remove specific streams of thought from the spheres of knowledge that are pronounced to be valid or superior. We must insist on feeling, embodying, and relearning the knowledges that have been erased or foreclosed due to ongoing projects of colonization, displacement, and ethnic cleansing.

NAIMAH: Armed with such commitments, our praxis must insist on unearthing a set of maps that chart a different movement of bodies – of our multiple selves, of our ancestors, and of multiple others – through times and spaces that both acknowledge and refuse borders.

RICHA: These are only some of the many possible starting points for co-authoring and stringing together a movement – an agitation of words, passions, and commitments – that seeks to articulate what it might mean to decolonize methods of knowing and being. We embed our reflections in not only a world of wars, displacements, and lynchings but also in a landscape of neo-colonial and neo-liberal institutions of formal learning, activism, within and despite which we grow, struggle, and build dreams and solidarities for justice.

BEAUDELAINE: Neoliberalism is only interested in the selective protection of life; it offers up remembrance as a form of containment, and it disallows knowledges that hold multiple and overlapping 'modes of being, affects, memories, temporalities' in suspension (Hong 2015: 16). These institutionalized landscapes show us the limits of the knowledges imprisoned in them, even as they give us the reasons for imagining past them.

NAIMAH: To decolonize the methods of knowing and being requires us to reform, even revolutionize, the relationships among multiply-situated knowledges and knowers in incommensurable worlds and journeys. One way to begin embracing such labor is by recognizing the epistemic agency of those whose bodies and beings are relegated to the 'margins' or declared to be 'past' (Smith 1999). Making this choice means learning to learn from doing and dreaming, being and moving, remembering and relating in deeply embodied ways.

RICHA: It also implies intervening in the dominant academic politics of knowledge production by learning when and how to refuse citational practices that fragment the bodies (including bodies of knowledge) that constitute our consciousness and conscience and that reduce modes of creating knowledges to recognizable and nameable individual sources, while at the same time erasing the necessarily complex collective processes from which we all come to know and be known. The questions, then, are: how to co-imagine and co-create alternative citational practices where knowledge can also be imagined as a political-spiritual-activist force that flows out of fragmentation, reduction, and uprooting, a force that is ever partial, ever irreducible, and ever embracing of the tensions and frustrations that emerge between and across incongruent and vastly unequal sites, epistemes, and bodies?

BEAUDELAINE: Grappling with the possibility and impossibility of accounting for all that goes on in knowledge making is a commitment and a process that cannot be formalized or mastered. By its very nature, this labor must be political, spiritual, and invisible and indivisible (Keating 2016; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983). It demands that we meditate from a place of knowing and unknowing, a place of inexplicability and love, that is forever open to embracing new co-travellers in the journey, so that we can continue to yearn for justice: for bodies, histories, places, and rhythms that often remain hidden, uncounted, unacknowledged, or dismissed in our worlds. It is such a commitment that informs what we offer here.

Beaudelaine begins to sing, Richa chimes in a few seconds later with a new song, sung over Beaudelaine's melody. Both stop singing after 35 seconds.

NAIMAH: We dwell in the entanglements of spaces, identities, and languages that search for ethics, justice and solidarities in at least two ways. First, we center as a site of knowledge and struggle bodies that have been multiply marked, violated, and erased, including along the axes of race, religion, caste, gender, sexuality,

place, and citizenship. Second, we consider how feminists' searches for decolonizing methods have inspired dynamic engagements with translations or retellings that fully engage our embodied beings. We underscore the need for embodied translations that fight geographies that keep the so-called 'margins' partitioned, and that reclaim the stories, places, paradigms, and methodologies of knowing, being, protesting, and (re)creating that have been repeatedly erased by institutionalized systems.

RICHA: In addressing these themes, we also collapse, blur, and stitch the borders among brown/black/indigenous/china@x/transnational/women of color/anti-caste feminisms without reifying the boundaries that have created these as disciplined 'fields' or 'subfields.' As well, disagreements and disruptions are essential ingredients of this full-bodied agitation so that even as we invoke situated solidarities across multiple borders, we are aware of the ever present need to attend to the faults and fractures that inevitably shape the collectivities we forge (Nagar 2006; Nagar 2014).

BEAUDELAINE: We provide glimpses of instances where embodied engagement through dance, theater, and writing have animated our efforts to decolonize dominant methods of knowing and being in academic, activist, and artistic spaces. By bringing these instances into a conversation, we embrace a praxis of translation – or retelling – that can enliven flattened renderings of space into lived geographies. Our intimate rendering of home, historical memory, and landscapes inserts certain bodies into the very spaces that have attempted to erase their existence. It insists that landscapes are never closed off from the energies – dead and alive, animate and inanimate – that circulate within them.

NAIMAH: Decolonizing Bodies.

After a pause.

NAIMAH: In September of 2017, I spent a week moving with Moroccan dancer and choreographer Bouchra Ouizguen and her contemporary dance company based in Marrakech, Morocco. The discussion in this section draws upon my writing about this experience. The 'I' here refers to me, Naimah, even as all three of us co-own the ways in which we sew, stitch, and knot my individual reflections with our collective churnings.

NAIMAH: Joined by performance artists across the Twin Cities, I participated in workshopping Ouizquen's new piece *Corbeaux*. *Corbeaux*, which translates to 'crows' in English, is both a living sculpture and rapturous performance.

Naimah plays a short clip from Corbeaux *performance, 2017.*

NAIMAH: Marked by its uninhibited and serendipitous nature, *Corbeaux* enlivens difference amidst universality, all the while contesting partitions which divide performers from audience, movement from knowledge, and bodies from landscapes.

Naimah shows slides with pictures from the performance of Corbeaux *in September 2017 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.*

NAIMAH: Since premiering in 2014, *Corbeaux* has toured the world with an intergenerational company made up of professional dancers from Marrakech and local women from each city in which the piece is performed. A singular gesture inspired *Corbeaux*'s score

Naimah performs the gesture three times, then Richa and Beaudelaine join in and they all do the gesture three times, then stop at staggered intervals.

NAIMAH: The sharp backwards thrusting of the head, tilting toward the sky with a broad open chest, accompanied by a guttural outcry – deep and resounding *[Naimah does the gesture with sound]*. From Marrakech to the Cour Carrée at the Louvre to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, *Corbeaux* has offered an intimate engagement for dancers and audience-cum-witnesses alike.

RICHA: Although the piece does not draw upon 'traditional' Moroccan movement forms, it integrates Mediterranean styles of dress and Moroccan-Senegalese ritual gestures into varying city landscapes across the globe.

Naimah continues to show slides from the performance.

NAIMAH: As one grounding within which to understand gesture, Black Performance Theory attends to ways of knowing and movements of being that engender fluid, and dissident practices of social life. Such embodied modes of engagement conjure histories, hauntings, and possibilities of resistance across multiply violated geopolitical sites as they hunger for justice. How, then, can we understand performance as that which subverts cultural norms… blurring the lines between action, performance, and works of art – further engendering practices and pedagogies of everyday life?

BEAUDELAINE: Even though *Corbeaux* arises from a particular set of impulses that were birthed from a Moroccan context, it necessitates a co-constitutive enlivening of individual life and collective (after)life. In this co-constitutive enlivening, the dancers encounter new terrains of self, contoured by the affects, passions, and complicities that structure who we are and how our bodies show up in the world. We expand approaches to contemporary performance that allow individual dancers to harness the elasticity of choreography while still working from within the same movement repertoire.

NAIMAH: We enliven the bodies, breath, and terrain in concert with the discursive – referents, utterances, and other communicative practices – as a means of intervening in and re-imagining the world (Taylor 2003: 15). No two of us execute the movement in the same way, and our collective virtuosity curated a rich, multiplicitous performance. A week spent together in rehearsal and performance became a week full of creative and political lessons – it allowed us to teach one another new ways of moving, new methods of breathing, and new ways of being fully in our bodies.

RICHA: Artistic exchanges, like this one, hinge upon remembrance, vulnerability, and release of expectations that affix to bodies and mark them as incommensurable across disparate geopolitical locations. And yet, the challenge is to collaboratively string our movement together across moments of both agitation and collective embrace. This collective agitation and embrace must reject simplistic narratives of multicultural alliance and instead take up the much more difficult task of committing one's desire for freedom to movement – in all the senses of that term.

BEAUDELAINE: The method, then, is in the practice – in the opportunity to create something afresh while rearticulating and re-energizing new ways of collapsing the 'I's,' eyes, and the many provisional 'we's' that make us at (in) any given time, place, and struggle. In decolonizing our bodies in this manner, corporal and aesthetic risk co-constitutes more than just artistic vision. This risk embraces radical vulnerability as a collective mode of unlearning and relearning (Nagar in journeys with Sangtin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan and Parakh Theatre, 2019). It dares to leave things undone, and to allow the body to be an engine of that undoing.

NAIMAH: If decolonized bodies are to exist across fragmented sites, splintered histories, and embodied memories, then our methods must also resist concretizing or systematizing movement. It is precisely because we are entangled with those who live while also being inhabited by our dead, that we do not seek neat resolutions. We cannot seek neat resolutions. We look to what survives abjection, exclusions, and ontological negation.

RICHA: A decolonizing mode of studying and being demands that we surrender to movement and collective action through a mode of radical vulnerability that defines a non-individualistic ethic of engaging one another and being together – so that we can plot and map; so that we can recollect our souls and beings in order to reimagine the meanings of accountability and justice.

Naimah performs the gesture once, then Richa and Beaudelaine join in and they all do the gesture three more times.

BEAUDELAINE: Decoloniality and Politics of Living

BEAUDELAINE: That the world's displaced people approximate 65.6 million; that the growing mobility of people carrying multiple citizenships erodes the boundaries of the nation state; that some refuse passports and shun symbols of freedom and mobility; that more than one third of Haiti's population lives outside of its territory. These are only a few resonances of struggles, projects, and worlds that demand that we turn away from reading these struggles as commensurable with modern praxis of political democracy, or as stifled by imposed states of backwardness in need of civilizing. Through our interbraiding of multiple sites of embodied translations, our readings deploy an understanding of the broader and deeper political charges these struggles carry – struggles that refuse to be read within frameworks that are contained and worded through ongoing practices and processes of slavery and colonization.

RICHA: As one of the many possible ways of extending the search for decolonizing methods, we ask: what might a just and ethical story of Haiti within our present local, national, and transnational contexts look like?

NAIMAH: This question summons us to place ourselves in the faults between lived experiences and the stories made possible within them. The dominant ways of knowing sometimes make us feel as if stories and bodies exist outside of the languages that narrate them and bring them into being. An alternative way of knowing is by learning to feel how one's being is tied to others – both human and non-human – in ways that engage both the story and the body as conditions of possibilities.

BEAUDELAINE: There are stories the body writes as an open-ended sphere of entangled cultural-natural phenomenon, as a site of articulation that enables a coiling up of everything – languages, signs, logics, histories, myths, and thoughts – without precise intentions or genealogies; only the pretense to a bliss, a dream, a vision that tends towards knowing.

Beaudelaine pauses for two seconds.

BEAUDELAINE: Let's pay attention to the Haitian American poet, Valerie Deus. She writes in her poem, *Haiti Unfinished*:

I want to write you another note about
feeling like a jack-o'- lantern hollow
with the seeds and threads missing
with the soup and the guts gone
there's no independence day long enough
or revolution deep enough to save me
from writing a poem about watching novelas with your mother
while drinking tea
or picking hazelnuts in her backyard

RICHA: The poem offers a space of contemplation and inquiry from which both the poet and the narration co-emerge. Such contemplation suggests that the awareness of one's experience within the collective, and of the telling of that experience, contribute to the movements and possibilities of history/ies. It troubles the question of how Haiti, or any location or place for that matter, should be thought. The poem crafts a poetics of retelling that exposes the intensities of living between forces and energies of all sorts: the moving back and forth across times, the crossing of geographic boundaries and of protagonists; the intimate and confessional tone in and through which the narrator makes an entrance within webs of beings.

NAIMAH: For Deus, her location within the project called Haiti is one that is constantly in the making – open, 'unfinished,' and marked by playful shifts between interpellating and being interpellated. In offering a poetic narrative that exposes how one's body engages painfully, purposefully, as well as creatively within complex webs of relationality, Deus emphasizes the kind of labor most people undertake in the face of embedded multilayered violence. She retells the coming into one's own identity. Aimé Césaire terms this impulse 'poetic knowledge,' the sole force capable of effecting a 'co-naissance,' a knowledge from which emerges both the self and the narration altogether.

BEAUDELAINE: Mimerose Beaubrun in her book *Nan dòmi* (2013) deploys a similar approach to the body that is creative, aesthetic, and spiritual. She conceptualizes the body as site/s of open-ended systems in interaction and in differentiation with the material discursive environment. Beaubrun begins her journey with the goal of learning about the Lakou project and its importance in Haitian political struggles.

Beaudelaine points to the slides and narrates the photos.

BEAUDELAINE: Let me stop a little bit here to explain a little bit about the Lakou. The Lakou in Haitian traditions refers to clusters of dwellings in which Haitian families reside. It's an extended, multigenerational family that is from Haitian culture. Members of the Lakou, or this form of arrangement living – they work cooperatively and support each other with financial and multiple other forms of engagement. The Lakou also brings together extended family farms property, cemetery, and a washing area. This living arrangement, which is of African origins, considers that the individuals' well-being is a collective project that relies upon a wide circle of people. The Lakou, in that sense, deploys an understanding of personhood which is fundamentally relational, and grounded in the dynamic balance of spiritual, economic, cultural, energies, and worlds. Drawing from this conceptualization, we see the Lakou as an epistemology that causes us to acknowledge competing and entangled political struggles that cohabit within multiple hegemonic forms of living. We ask: how does the Lakou as an epistemic location provide a broader cannon of thought that advances alternative terrains

from which Haiti can be thought of – creatively, theoretically, imaginatively, and materially?

RICHA: So, what does Beaubrun say?

BEAUDELAINE: Yes, Beaubrun ends up engaging with the Lakou through her own body and that of others as a kind of vital space and a place of multidimensional life. The author's journey, then, is an ongoing process of being and becoming at the level of the body as a site of knowledge.

RICHA: The body in *Nan dòmi* is an ontological condition that depicts a means of being and a means of knowing (Beaubrun 2013). This intervention is reminiscent of Maria Lugones's work (2007), where she draws from Quijano (2000) to propose a reading of how lived experiences negotiate the arrangements of colonial relations, and in so doing, make possible elaborate responses to oppression. Both Lugones and Beaubrun *[Richa's tongue intentionally stumbles as she utters Beaubrun's name and she checks with Beaudelaine whether her pronunciation of Beaudrun's name is correct]* rethink the possibilities of the self and selves by emphasizing the logic of difference and multiplicity. Lugones, in particular, insists on a mode of theorizing that demands a body-to-body engagement and that attends to the ways in which colonial relations cut across everyday practices, ecology, economics, government relations, and spirituality to evolve modes of being and knowing that stand in their own right as struggles that enact refusals. Such refusals make possible worlds, visions, and movements with transformative and political consequences.

NAIMAH: The body in this sense is inseparable from the complexities of the everyday through which power relations of all sorts are forged and articulated. A turn to the body propels us to ask what kinds of embodied knowledges emerge within the dynamic balance of diverse spiritual, economic, cultural energies and worlds within which a person and their personhood are rooted. Our search for decolonizing methods and ethics of retelling is a similarly unsettling inquiry accompanied by a basic demand – the demand to remove the focus from dominant epistemes, rooted in coloniality and colonization, and to direct it towards alternative epistemic forms of being through which new politics can be imagined to nourish the lives of all of us who have been colonized.

Beaudelaine and Naimah sit down, facing each other, and begin to sing to each other. Their singing get softer and softer as Richa begins to speak.

RICHA: Continuing Co-tellings.

RICHA: To decolonize methodology is to insist on the necessarily entangled and inseparable nature of embodied pedagogy, research, artistry, and movements that strive for connection and justice across communities, worlds, and struggles. For those of us creating knowledge from a location of such power and privilege as a

U.S. research university, such methodology must necessarily involve agitating against the ways in which the academy's rhetoric of interdisciplinarity often allows for a coming together of disciplined fragments, albeit without requiring a transformation of those fragments.

BEAUDELAINE: The co-authored retellings or translations we offer here are part of an anti-definitional agitational praxis through which unplanned freedoms and serendipitous movements for justice can be imagined and enacted (Nagar, in journeys with Sangtin Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan and Parakh Theatre, 2019). In embracing the idea of spiritual activism as an undefinable and non-reductive mode of co-traveling and co-making knowledges across worlds and struggles, we join many other feminist scholars and activists who simultaneously remain grounded in the structures, processes, languages, and feelings that constitute those worlds and struggles.

NAIMAH: We embrace our responsibility as bearers and co-creators of knowledge in ways that appreciate knowledge as an unfixable living and throbbing force, without an easily identifiable beginning or end, yet always partially within the reach of our hearts and minds. This possibility of reaching and feeling knowledge inspires us to reclaim and reword, to remember and retrace, to redo points of reference and bring them into tension – so that we can dodge and dismantle the traps that choke the truths that have been violated.

Beaudelaine and Naimah begin to sing again. Their voices overlap and keep going as Richa begins to speak.

RICHA: Knowledges emerge from different voyages that involve singing, naming, and mourning; playing and laughing, and dancing. These journeys ask that we linger with the possible meanings of not only that which is utterable but also of that which is silent.

All singing stops.

RICHA: For us being silent is a state in which one might silence all thought; it is also a refusal of predetermined frameworks that enables us to more responsibly witness those modes of living, being, fighting, and knowing that are consistently rendered invisible or invalid.

BEAUDELAINE: Whether our attention is turned towards the Haitian TPS in the era of Trump, or the ways in which black bodies navigate deathly terrains with the softness of 'heel-ball-toe,' or the threats leveled against Muslims for being 'anti-national' in Modi's India, a commitment to decolonize knowledges involves a shared thirst to know the multiple geographies, bodies, and scars of these hauntings so that our movements may work through varied levels of intimacy and so that we may realign commitments and practices with all co-living bodies that summon us.

NAIMAH: We, then, continue to search for such practices of discontent that will push us to patiently and steadily unearth the modes of dwelling in and linking all those traumas and scars that the prevailing maps present before us in isolated forms.

RICHA: It is from here what we reopen ourselves to each other so that we may continue traversing known and unknown terrains in our collective search to re-imagine, to undo, and to redo the ways in which we come to know and be.

Audience claps loudly.

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RICHA: So instead of a traditional Q & A what we would like to do is to invite you to share how you might step into this search, this argument – well, you can disagree with the argument – from the locations you occupy. We invite you to build upon this conversation we have just begun.

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Pākehā Working With Māori – Activists and Academics

Rachael Fabish

ABSTRACT | How do we work together across difference? How can Pākehā work better with Māori? These were the questions at the heart of my PhD thesis, which examined how colonisation impacts the interpersonal relationships of Māori and Pākehā activists in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. These questions also became central to the collaborative methodology employed as I grappled with moving from simply talking about power sharing, to meaningfully attempting to relinquish control within my research. This article discusses the collaborative methods I drew on, like anti-oppressive methodology, participatory action research, interactive interviewing and auto ethnography, in order to meet that challenge. This approach resulted in the formation of the 'Black Rainbow' collective, a small group of Māori and Pākehā activists (including myself) who undertook a collaborative research journey. This article shares part of that 'Black Rainbow story'.

Keywords: Kaupapa Māori; Pākehā; anti-oppressive; action research; auto-ethnography

30ᵗʰ of August, 2008

Sitting on a couch in the 'yellow room' of 128 Community Centre after the global 'Day of Action' demonstration, I find myself out of touch and drifting away from the debrief meeting happening around me. The other members of the group (October 15ᵗʰ Solidarity crew) seem happy, talking about what a success the day has been – well organised, good media presence, no trouble with the police. This summarising at the meeting made me feel like I was at another protest. What I saw was one of the few Māori women at the demonstration handed a big tino rangatiratanga flag[1] to wave, while white anarchists on mega phones chanted things like: 'This is Māori land, this is Tūhoe land![2] Āke, ake, ake![3] and 'One solution: Revolution'. These were settler folks speaking on behalf of the indigenous people of the land. I feel awkward and embarrassed and don't know how to say that I think it was actually a pretty weird protest, especially to these people who are so pleased with the results of their hard work.

I'm a newbie to this group, to this community; I don't really get how it works. During the months I've been working with October 15ᵗʰ Solidarity, in the lead-up to this demo calling for the state to 'Drop the Charges' for the 18 defendants of the Operation 8 case, there has been a lot of talk about supporting tino rangatiratanga[4] and Mana Motuhake o Tūhoe.[5] Operation 8 saw hundreds of police raid the small Tūhoe community of Rūātoki, as well as several other homes around the North Island, including the 128 Community Centre, arresting activists under the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 (see Keenan 2008; Devadas 2008; Morse 2010). With these issues cutting to the heart of Māori struggles, I've been a little confused about why there weren't more Māori involved in this organising. But the more experienced members of October 15ᵗʰ Solidarity crew seemed so confident, I assumed they had the necessary relationships with Māori leaders, thinkers, activists and that these communities would connect up with ours on the day of the demo. Instead, the turn out for the protest had been a hundred-odd, mostly Pākehā, anarchist types. All I can think is: 'If we're supposed to be supporting Māori, why didn't Māori support this demo? Surely this means we are doing something wrong?'

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Looking back, this thinking seems naïve, but at the time it sparked an important change in the way I thought about relationships between Māori and Pākehā. What disturbed me most in the weeks that followed was that I did not know how to support Māori any better. This confusion and disappointment in my own Pākehā ignorance lead me back to university to undertake a PhD project about how Māori and Pākehā work together in anarchist activism in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand (Fabish 2014). My central question – 'How can Pākehā work better with Māori?' – also became important for the methodology of this project. I realised that I had to ask this question of myself every step of the way throughout this research. That meant first and foremost responding to the concerns about research presented by Māori academics, particularly those developing Kaupapa Māori frameworks for research (see Smith 1999). In this article, I briefly outline how I

attempted to rise to the challenge presented by Kaupapa Māori researchers through a collaborative project within my own activist community, and share a few 'stories' from that project, which became known as the 'Black Rainbow' collective.

Answering the challenge presented by Kaupapa Māori research

When I first went to see Associate Professor Maria Bargh in Te Kawa a Māui – School of Māori Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, about the possibility of working with her as a supervisor, she suggested I read Linda Tuhiwai Smith's Kaupapa Māori classic *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999). 'In fact,' Maria said, 'you may want to *purchase* it.' She also suggested I take Dr Ocean Mercier's 4th year Māori Studies course, 'Ta Te Māori Rangahau/Methodology of Māori Research.' I did both those things and found myself suddenly in a world of new ideas – both challenging and inviting. Kaupapa Māori is often defined as 'Māori research by, with and for Māori' (Cram 2001: 37). It responds to several issues Māori have raised about research, including whose concerns and world-view are advanced by the research and who the researchers are accountable to (Bishop 1998). Kaupapa Māori research beings with an acknowledgment that Māori systems of knowledge are as valid as their western counterparts. This creates a scholarship that 'starts from *te ao Māori* [the Māori world] and extends outwards to *te ao Pākehā* [the Pākehā world], rather than the other way around' (Irwin 1994: 28). The use of Māori norms and relational ethics (*tikanga*) in research also validates 'taken for granted' ways of being for Māori communities and provides strategies for research practice (see for example Cram 2001).

The challenge presented by Kaupapa Māori has led to a great number of non-Māori researchers and activists experiencing what Martin Tolich has termed 'Pākehā Paralysis' (2002). This 'paralysis' leaves non-Māori researchers unable to engage with Māori in research, because they cannot work through the challenges and complexities of identity politics in contemporary Aotearoa. Tolich named the sense of a 'political minefield' that has led to a general situation where students are being *taught to avoid* working with Māori participants, both in Māori-centred research and general population studies. I had personally deeply internalised that message and used fears of overstepping as a reason to avoid engagement with Māori issues. Once I tentatively started trying to engage, I was told I was 'brave' and warned by a number of friends and colleagues about the dangers of such research. And the 'paralysing' sting of Kaupapa Māori can be especially felt reading works such as *Decolonizing Methodologies* (Smith 1999). Yet, a challenge of this nature also invites a response, not only a retreat. There are many places where Kaupapa Māori researchers and theorists invite non-Māori to 'step up' to their challenge. Smith notes that a 'strategy of avoidance may not be helpful to anyone' (1999: 177). Inspired by Fiona Cram's comment that 'what is good for Māori is often good for people in general' (2001: 38), I approach Kaupapa Māori as an invitation to radically rethink the way we do research. Or as Kristin Jerram puts it, to pick up the 'wero [challenge], laid down as a part of the pōhiri [ritual of encounter]…' (2012: 28).

While attempting to rise to this challenge, I developed much of my collaborative methodology for my PhD within the fourth year Māori Studies course *Tā Te Māori Rangahau*. On my final essay Mercier wrote 'I look forward to seeing you develop a Kaupapa Pākehā way of doing research in the Treaty house!' (see Fabish 2009).[6] This kind and thoughtful feedback made me acknowledge that I was not entirely sure what a 'Kaupapa Pākehā way' would look like, or if it is something I would claim, however this phrase positions and grounds my work as non-Māori but in partnership with Māori. It opens up the exciting possibility to try to imagine an ethnography of this place, Aotearoa, we collectively call home. Joan Metge makes an argument in *Korero Tahi: Talking Together* (2001) that instead of finding new ways to organise group meetings, we should recognise and draw on the indigenous practices of this place. The same argument can be made for finding methods of engaged ethnography (see Bargh 2009 and Butt 2004).

A friend, Mara[7] (who later became a research participant), offered a possible 'Kaupapa Pākehā way' when she suggested I read *Research as Resistance: Critical, indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (Brown and Strega 2005). Anti-oppressive research developed out of various oppositional social movements around racial, queer, indigenous and ability/disability identities (Moosa-Mitha 2005). Kaupapa Māori theorists are visibly part of the intellectual genealogy of the proponents of anti-oppressive theory and research. 'Anti-oppressive research', as a catch-all term, is useful for my research because it relates to social identity movements I am 'inside' of – such as queer and feminist – as well as those I am 'outside' of – such as disability and indigeneity. It allowed me a place to stand.

Collaborative research with Black Rainbow

Mercier, my former lecturer and advisor (now Head of School at Te Kawa a Māui), also suggested that I follow the lead of Miki Seifert's collaborative work (Seifert and Gildea 2011) and centre my research on my own anarchist community. This allowed me to respond to the Kaupapa Māori research emphasis on collaborative, insider research (see Bishop 1998). Moreover, it resonated with the desire expressed by many of my friends in the anarchist scene to work in a collective that was uplifting and supportive, rather than exhausting and painful. This offered to not only create a focused situation within which to study cross-cultural interactions, but also provided the greatly needed opportunity for us to reflect on and transform alienating organising practices existing within our activist community.

The participants in this research are all people I already had established relationships with, either from working together in other collectives or just hanging out in anarchist spaces. Some of them I count among my closest friends. These relationships meant that participants influenced the research design at every stage, as this short story about how the Black Rainbow collective was formed illustrates:

In July 2010, once I thought I had a fairly solid plan for collaborative research, I sent out invites for an initial discussion about setting up a collective. At that time I was hoping for a small group of about five or six, and so I sent invites for a potluck dinner to ten people I thought would be interested. Imagining a fairly evenly mixed group, I invited five Māori, four Pākehā and an Indian woman. I got many enthusiastic replies. However, two things pushed me quickly in a new direction.

First, I received an email from a white women (who is very active within the anarchist scene) expressing her disappointment that she was not invited to join the project. In my reply I had to delicately explain that one of the aims was to centre Māori – most especially those who have become marginalised from and within the anarchist community – and that since she has unresolved issues with some of these people, I wanted to prioritise their involvement over hers.

Secondly, Mara (who was one of those particularly 'burnt out' Māori women) didn't reply to my invite and I started to worry that there were people in that initial set of invites that she would rather not work with. I ran into her at the university library and muttered embarrassedly that maybe if my aim was to centre Māori, I shouldn't have invited the people I thought would work well together. I should've found out who Māori were excited about working with. Mara just said, 'Yep'. I went home and sheepishly retracted my initial invitation. Then I started speaking one-on-one with the five Māori colleagues and friends I had initially invited. These conversations reshaped the way I imagined this project.

A couple of people named mostly other Māori as the folks they were most interested in working with. Kura said outright that what she wanted most was to work with more Māori. She was used to it being just her, or her and Te Awanui in collectives with a bunch of Pākehā and she was keen to be in a space where she wasn't expected to represent all of Māori opinion and where she could learn from other Māori activists. I came to wonder if a Māori majority group would be better for everyone involved – a supportive, refreshing and stimulating change for Māori members and a chance for non-Māori to practice 'learning to be affected'[8] in a Māori-centred group. This shift in thinking also solved another problem: the fact that after talking with everyone, Hayley was the only non-Māori anarchist that everyone was really enthusiastic about working with. Since I wanted to keep the collective fairly small and intimate, and there were already five Māori people, it seemed as though the seven of us would make up a good group. After some discussion at our first meeting, it was decided to keep the group as it was and make it a closed collective of five Māori and two Pākehā. Thus Black Rainbow was formed.

After establishing the collective in July 2010, we met roughly monthly until September 2011. We met at people's homes, always beginning with a shared meal, and we organised according to the anarchist practices we are familiar with, including consensus decision making. During our initial meetings we set ground

rules for how we would treat each other and decided by consensus to audio record the meetings. We spoke about what we would like to get out of this group and brainstormed ideas we could address. Here is that initial list of ideas:

- Things that happen in activist groups that are seen as neutral, but are actually cultural
- 'Neutral' spaces and earnest, superficial 'biculturalism'
- Why do we have these discussions?
- Strategies for dealing with Pākehā taking up space being 'bicultural'
- Where are people coming from?
- Intimate relationships between Māori and Pākehā
- Insecurity about Māori identity
- When you first noticed your ethnicity
- Activist ideology and supporting *tino rangatiratanga*
- Crossovers between class and identity politics
- Identity and essentialism
- Trauma of colonisation
- Why were there so few Pākehā that Māori wanted to work with in this group?

Many of those who joined Black Rainbow were the same people I had been speaking with about these issues since I first experienced that moment of disjuncture within the October 15th Solidarity crew, so the questioning we did within this collective largely continued those earlier discussions. Drawing on Participatory Action Research (PAR henceforth), I was able to argue that all of the members of Black Rainbow were 'participant-researchers', including myself. I find the core idea of PAR – that people are better at solving their own problems than outside researchers – especially useful (see Kemmis and McTaggart 2005). Arama Rata (a fellow graduate student at the time) suggested members take turns, in pairs, leading meetings – by proposing a topic for discussion or activities and facilitating discussions – as a way of shifting ownership of the project towards all the members of the group. This approach was enthusiastically taken up by Black Rainbow. The focus of such a participatory approach to research then becomes the understandings that are constructed among the group through interaction. Black Rainbow became a site for 'co-theorising' (see Huygens, 2007). In writing up this research, I developed two questions that encompassed our collective exploration:

How do Māori and Pākehā work together across difference?
How can Pākehā work better with Māori?

My primary supervisor, Professor Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich (now Head of the School of Social and Cultural Studies at Victoria University of Wellington), pointed out early on that if I was going to be working with my own anarchist community I would also be carrying out autoethnography, and the writing of auto-ethnographers came to have a large impact on my work, particularly Carolyn Ellis

(2004, 2009), Kimberly Nettles (2008) and Laurel Richardson (2007) (see also Bönisch-Brednich 2018). What I find most useful about the work of auto-ethnographers is their willingness to turn towards their own emotional responses as a source of information about society. I tried to expose my own struggles within the thesis, as a way of balancing the power with other participants. Ellis and Berger's work also lent me the idea of 'interactive interviews' (Ellis and Berger 2003). This helped me develop data collection methods to suit the collaborative context, by emphasising reciprocal discussion. Ellis and Berger use this term to describe interviews where researchers share elements of themselves during the interview process, giving space for different voices and reflecting life as lived. Extending this idea to group meetings among Black Rainbow supported my assertion that all members are participant-researchers.

Black Rainbow stories

Following Ellis and Berger's (2003) lead, I wrote these group discussions up as 'stories' of events (see also Trinh T. Minh-ha 1989 and Abu-Lughod 1993 for the power of stories to resist generalisations). These discussions became the heart of the meaning making in the thesis, with the final discussion chapter devoted to how the experience of collaborating with Black Rainbow worked a 'process of Pākehā change' in me (see Huygens, 2007).

In this article, I have tried to keep the outline of my attempts to find a collaborative methodology in keeping with Kaupapa Māori research fairly brief in order to leave room to *show* this power sharing on the page through stories. The story that follows offers an example of how Black Rainbow members negotiated what direction to take the discussions and how they might be useful.

28th of May, 2011

'Do you wanna feedback?' Hayley asks the group as we settle into our seats in her and Francis' home.

After spending the first half of the meeting discussing our frustrations with the group (especially lack of direction), and what we hoped to get out of Black Rainbow, we split into small groups to talk about potential projects. Now we have come back together to share our ideas.

'We thought we could make a list,' Te Awanui says. 'Like: "Here are some stupid things that people often say or do that are crappy for Māori people in an activist group". Maybe we could all share a story of a situation we've been in that was like: "Oh my god, I can't believe this shit happened", and make a little thing with those in it. Then we could be like: "If you're a Māori person who is in an activist group and this stuff is happening, that's not ok and it's alright to feel crap about it and want to change it". Or: "This has happened to all of us". And we could be like: "If you are in that position and you are thinking: "Ah! There are all these crazy Pākehās around me!" Email us and we can talk".'

'That's cool,' Amiria says.

'It would be good to put the challenge to Pākehā activists to step up when they notice stuff is happening as well,' says Francis. 'Because I think we've all been around those times when someone afterwards will say something, like: "I thought that was really stink". But instead of talking to whoever Māori person, why don't you talk to whoever Pākehā person? Work out what you are going to do?'

Kura says, 'I just also thought it would be good on a personal level, to be able to share those experiences. Because I gather we've all had similar ones. And that will just keep perpetuating itself. There will be new people coming in, having the same experiences. So I think it would be a really good experience to be able to talk about that stuff and be able to take it and put it somewhere that makes it feel like we are doing something with it. Because it can be really hard to be like: "Well, they do all this shit stuff, but…" Yeah.'

There is a lot of agreement with this.

Hayley asks, 'Do one of you want to feedback from ours?'

'We were talking a little bit along those lines,' Amiria says, 'like maybe creating a resource for activist groups and looking at different ways of organising and meeting. And also, we talked a little bit about being radical Māori (not just Māori) and all those kind of things that come into it, like being vegan or queer or whatever. So exploring that a bit more would be quite cool.'
'Well,' says Mara, 'just to move things on a little bit, it looks like there is one clear common thing – the production of something surrounding groups and how they operate. In general and with a Māori thing to it.'

'Yeah, we can totally smash those two things together, and make a really awesome 'zine-y, pamphlet-y, paper-y thing,' Te Awanui says. 'Something on a paper!'

'Yeah!' Amiria laughs.

'Maybe at our next meeting we could use it as a chance to brainstorm that whole list of things of what to do and not do,' Hayley says. 'And people could think between then and now about a particular instance that stands out for them. We could share them and ask each other questions and then that might make it easier to go back and write about it.'

'Yeah, totally,' Kura says. But after a while she adds, 'Maybe if we are talking about "What not to do" we are focusing heaps on Pākehā, so we could also have something that re-affirms Māori in that group as well. Something that's actually positive to read. Because one thing about working with lots of Pākehā for me is that it makes me more insecure in being Māori, because I'm being asked what Māori think and I don't know. Are there ways of exploring…'

'The positive things that Māori bring to the group, or something?' I ask. 'As individuals, rather than being the token Māori?'

'Well, we were talking more about groups in general,' Mara says, 'how they operate, issues to look at when setting up groups. Lots of stuff that's already out there in the world, but maybe we could collate that and make it more applicable.'

'And there's probably stuff that is really healthy for a group, that is not specifically about being Māori or not being Māori, that would be good,' says Hayley. 'Like: "What are the various things that group members bring to the group?" It's about valuing people.'

'Yeah,' Kura says.

'Cultural safety,' Francis adds.

Te Awanui says, 'I feel like I've had conversations where it's like: "When people are doing or saying this thing, it makes me feel really uncomfortable" and I'm real like: "Oh yeah! Me too! Oh, right". And I think it was quite a cool idea – maybe not so much: "This is what you shouldn't say if you're Pākehā" – but: "It's ok to be upset or angry when people are saying these kinds of things. And here are some things that you might say." It was awesome for me at the A-fem hui[9]*, when it was ok to say: "Hey! I don't like the way everyone's talking, I don't know why, but I feel real like this isn't ok". And it gave me a little bit more room to feel, and to be like: "Maybe this is what is wrong with it?" Or for other people to say it. So I think the idea of: "These are some stupid things that might happen in groups" might be real validating and useful.'*

'Can we make a note of what Kura said though,' Hayley says, 'so we can think about it more at the next meeting?'

Te Awanui writes down a few of Kura's points and I say, 'It sounded like you were saying something about affirming Māori in the group, eh? So it's not just like: "Here's all the ways it's going to suck".' We laugh.

'Yeah, exactly,' says Kura.

'"It's easier to have a whites-only group",' Francis jokes. After the laughter, she adds, 'I really like the way you all first started talking about it – like experiences that we had, and how it made us feel. And then, potentially, this is how it could have been different. Not phrasing it like: "Necessarily, all Māori are going to feel this way" and: "This is necessarily a bad way of talking about stuff", but…'

'Yep,' Amiria says, and Kura also agrees.

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Clearly, we in the group did not have a pure research focus – we were all hoping to effect change in the activist culture surrounding us. Taking my lead from the group, I tried to model the PhD thesis on some of the intentions expressed in this discussion, including: validating Māori experience, challenging Pākehā to respond more actively as allies and sharing stories of things that happen – rather than essentialising those experiences.

This also extended to how the Black Rainbow stories were connected to the academic literature. In order to acknowledge the participants ownership of their knowledge and stories, I have shown drafts to the members of Black Rainbow throughout the writing of the thesis and subsequent publications. While this practice slowed down my writing progress, the value of this kind of checking became plain when I received critique. Notably, one of the participants, Frances, challenged me over an early chapter draft that presented my argument and the academic literature at the end of their stories: 'The way it is written at the moment often implied to me that the people you cite understand the real meaning behind our stories better than we do. I guess I felt silenced and not respected' (personal correspondence September 27, 2012). This criticism was painful to hear, but I took it as a gift and it pushed me to explore alternative ways of relating the supporting literature to the stories of participants. Sharing power meant conscientiously sharing the page. I chose to do this through extended footnotes, which hang directly from the comments members of Black Rainbow made in our discussions (see Nettles 2008 use of endnotes). Around the stories, I gave my comments showing why I had chosen each story and the meanings I believed participants were making. You can see an example of this writing style in the final story I share here, from that *'Oh my god, I can't believe this shit happened'* discussion at our following meeting.

25th of June, 2011

'I find it really difficult,' Kura says, 'when groups start talking about tino rangatiratanga *because quite often I don't want to be part of those discussions.' We are all sitting around Hayley and Francis' pretty living room again, in the middle of a long rambling session of shared storytelling.*

'Or I feel really reluctant to. It is also really odd to be in a group talking about tino rangatiratanga *and to be Māori, you automatically get that sense of responsibility. Like if they are doing something really stupid that is going to have an effect, it's going to fall on you.'*[1]

There is a lot of support for this statement from others in the group.

'Yeah, and you feel like you have to be the person who sorts it all out,' says Te Awanui.

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[1] Uma Narayan notes that one of the burdens that may fall on insiders to oppression is a responsibility to use their epistemic privilege to educate outsiders (1988: 37).

'Yeah!' Kura says. 'And if someone says something really fucked or stupid, it's always uncomfortable. I haven't experienced it yet where I haven't felt either really tokenistic or really just not Māori enough, like just ignored a bit.'

'I think one of the things that's really hard with tino rangatiratanga,' Mara says, 'which I didn't get for ages, is that it's connected to and it can't be separated from tikanga.[2] But the problem with tikanga is how much of that is actually relevant? And how much of it is just being held onto for ceremonial purposes? Or as resistance to losing knowledge? Because there are some weird situations when it's like: "Why are we doing this, when it's not relevant at all whatsoever?"'

'Are you talking about in Māori spaces?' I ask.

'Yeah, sorry. Māori spaces,' Mara says.

'Because I think that's really true in the anarchist scene as well,' I say. 'It seems so often when you're talking about tikanga, you're talking about stuff you do, eh? You're not talking about values and why you do them.'[3]

'Yeah, we'll be talking about tea towels on the floor or something,' Kura says.

'Yeah,' Mara says. 'That's just dirty!'

We all crack up and Francis says, 'It's also not the reason more Māori aren't involved.'

'Yeah, totally. Not at all,' Kura says.

'If Māori said it was ok to have tea towels on the floor,' Mara says, 'would 128 [Community Centre] be saying: "Let's have tea towels on the floor"?'

This sets us off laughing again.[4]

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[2] Ani Mikaere stresses that *tino rangatiratanga* and *tikanga* are inseparable, arguing that when *rangatiratanga* was reaffirmed in both He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni (the Māori text of the Declaration of Independence) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Māori text of the Treaty of Waitangi), *tikanga* was recognised as the paramount law of the land (2011: 257, 264).

[3] Mikaere writes that:

> Tikanga is based upon a set of underlying principles that have withstood the test of time: principles such as whakapapa, whanaungatanga [relationships], mana, manaakitanga, aroha [affection], wairua [spirit] and utu [reciprocity]. While the practice of tikanga has adapted over time to meet new contexts and needs, it has nevertheless remained true to those foundational concepts, which some have called 'conceptual regulators', others 'kaupapa' (ibid: 254-255).

[4] Elizabeth A. Povinelli writes about the 'limits of recognition' (2002), where indigenous people are expected to be culturally different, but not in ways considered 'repugnant' by the dominant culture.

'There was one Māori guy who came,' Kura says, 'he's from Dunedin or something. He came up to 128 one day and was like: "Oh, this place is really interesting, I've just moved to Wellington and I'd like to get involved in a place like this". This is while I was living there and I was asleep and someone came and woke me up and was like: "There's a Māori here who wants to join the collective". I was like: "That's nice".' As we all crack up, Kura goes on, '"Cool. One day, when I'm not in bed, I'd like to meet him". But pretty much it was like: "Here's your Māori team-mate".'

'So you quickly threw together a pōwhiri for him?' Francis says and the laughter keeps building as Te Awanui calls out, 'Come up, come up. Come up the stairs!'

'That sounds like a really sensitive and thoughtful way of dealing with that,' Francis says.

'Yeah,' Kura says. 'It's quite the same with lots of Māori related stuff. People's way of being sensitive is: "This is primarily a Māori issue, so–". You know, it's like they're saying you have more say, but ultimately they're saying you should have the responsibility.' The room hums with recognition and she concludes, 'Yeah. It's weird.'

'Yeah, often it's either one extreme or the other,' Amiria says. 'Like you take responsibility, or I'm just going to totally forget that you're Māori while we talk about this.'

'I totally felt like that the time I asked that Helge not speak for us when we went somewhere,' says Francis. 'Like if I didn't want Helge to speak for us, I had to come up with some other plan, other than: "Let's not have a speaker".'

'I was going to ask you about that,' Mara says. 'I remember I heard about it and I said: "What? He can't do that!" and it was like: "Well, apparently Francis said it was alright". I said: "What?! Francis can't do that!"' That gets a big laugh from the rest of us.

'That's the other thing,' Te Awanui says. 'You are always in the position – if you are the Māori person in the group, you have to vouch for the rest of the group not being racist and stupid. And it's like: "I'm not going to do that!"

'I can't vouch for that!' Amiria exclaims and sets us all laughing with her.

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The story above gives a small taste of the costs for Māori of collaborating with Pākehā. There are interesting parallels between the ideas raised in the Black Rainbow discussions about the limitations on power-sharing in the anarchist scene, and the limitations of power-sharing within this collaborative research

project. I was in a position of power as the instigator and author of my research thesis, and I shared many of the same difficulties – such as seeking consensus and not being sure if it is found – as some of the people discussed by Black Rainbow during our meetings. Nevertheless, this project was an important change experience for me and it created a space for Māori members to share their experiences with each other. The form that the thesis takes asks the reader to 'listen' carefully to the participants. Careful listening demands that Pākehā, as activists and academics, find something other to say than '*This is primarily a Māori issue, so...*'

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. A symbol of Maori sovereignty.

2. Central Wellington, is not in fact Tūhoe land (which is centred in the Bay of Plenty), but Te Ātiawa/Taranaki ki Te Upoko o Te Ika land.

3. Forever.

4. Māori self-determination.

5. The autonomy of the Tūhoe nation.

6. Quoted with permission from Ocean Mercier.

7. All names used here are pseudonyms.

8. This phrase is borrowed from J.K. Gibson-Graham and Gerda Roelvink (2009).

9. Aotearoa Anarcha-Feminist Hui, April 2-5, 2010.

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The Benefits, Challenges, and Disincentives of Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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ABSTRACT | Research consistently demonstrates the value of inter-disciplinary collaboration. It has also become common for universities to encourage their faculty to engage in interdisciplinary and collaborative research. However, there are several challenges and disincentives to this type of work. In this article, we draw on a single case study of a project employing interdisciplinary collaborative event ethnography (CEE) to demonstrate the benefits, challenges, and disincentives of this approach to research. We highlight the enhanced and nuanced outcomes achieved through interdisciplinary collaboration that would likely not have been achieved through an intradisciplinary approach to the research questions. The case study also highlights the challenges and disincentives associated with this research strategy, including longer work times, difficulty in publishing due to editorial and reviewer criticism about violating methods preferences or disciplinary boundaries, and issues related to publications outside of one's field. We conclude with a call to enhance the incentives associated with interdisciplinary collaborative research.

Keywords: collaboration; interdisciplinary research; ethnography; case study

Introduction

Interdisciplinary research collaborations involve scholars from two or more fields working together to explore, develop deeper understandings of, and craft solutions to complex problems. Elaine Ecklund (2010) argues that interdisciplinary research is the tool best suited to finding answers to pressing questions. Over the last 15 years, there have been increased calls for interdisciplinary research to address complicated problems that have not been successfully managed or resolved through intradisciplinary research (Klein 2010, National Academies 2004, Rhoten and Pfirman 2007). 'A multidisciplinary analytical team can generate unique insights from differing perspectives, engage in critical discussion of unclear or subjective data, and ensure consideration of multiple interpretations of the data' (Curry, Nembhard, and Bradley 2009: 1448). The nature of interdisciplinary research collaborations and how they operate, particularly those that are integrationist, render them better situated than intradisciplinary research to produce novel insights to complex problems that may cross disciplinary boundaries.

Interdisciplinary collaborations may yield novel insights or outcomes, but they are also accompanied by a set of challenges that are not present or are less pronounced in intradisciplinary research collaborations. The limited extant research on interdisciplinary collaborations, which is usually conducted by survey or by focusing on case studies from natural science and engineering collaborations, highlights the benefits of these partnerships and enumerates some of the challenges encountered by faculty participating in these projects. In this article we draw on a case study[1] from our research – an integrationist[2] interdisciplinary collaboration between social scientists in criminal justice and communication studies on firearm culture – to explore whether similar benefits, challenges, and disincentives emerge in a social science collaboration. This case study was focused on firearm culture, generally, as the initial phase of a research agenda aimed at exploring the etiology of firearm violence in the United States. Specifically, we ask:

1. What benefits can be generated from an interdisciplinary research collaboration of firearm culture between social scientists?
2. What challenges or disincentives are associated with an inter-disciplinary research collaboration of firearm culture between social scientists?

To address these questions, we begin by outlining some of the challenges involved in interdisciplinary collaboration. We then describe how we developed our research partnership and collaborative process, and explain how we conducted and analysed our research on firearm culture using interdisciplinary collaborative event ethnography (CEE). We both work for a university with a Carnegie R1 classification, which is awarded to doctoral universities with very high research activity (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education n.d.). Administrators frequently advocate for collaboration and the Division of Research and Innovation explicitly supports interdisciplinary research collaborations, as

indicated on their website. In addition, our departments are both located in the School of Social Research and Justice Studies, which also encourages inter-departmental collaboration. Indeed, our collaboration produced enhanced and nuanced research outcomes. As we discuss, the data collection, analysis, findings, and discussion are all much different than they would be had we conducted the study alone. However, despite the encouragement and positive research outcomes, we also experienced challenges and disincentives to maintaining the collaboration similar to those experienced by interdisciplinary researchers working in natural science and engineering collaborations. We conclude by suggesting policy changes aimed at realising the potential of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Challenges to Interdisciplinary Collaboration

As noted above, the literature on interdisciplinary collaboration tends to focus on the benefits that can be derived from such partnerships. There is much less discussion about the challenges or disincentives of this work for the researchers who would conduct it. For example, interdisciplinary work requires more time due to the requirements of integrating at least two disciplines (Lattuca 2001). Researchers routinely identify navigating differences in disciplinary terminology as the most common barrier to interdisciplinary collaboration (Brewer 1999, Fry 2001, Gooch 2005, Öberg 2009, Repko 2012, Salter and Hearn 1996). Partners must also learn other modes of research, identify common ground, identify and resolve conflicts in insights, and the process simply takes longer because there are more people involved in the project (Borrego and Newswander 2010, McCoy and Gardner 2012, Repko 2012).

Interdisciplinary work also presents challenges in terms of professional assessment and advancement. Plank, Feldon, Sherman, and Elliot (2011) explain that most research universities have the infrastructure to support collaboration, but the incentive structure for individual faculty members is rooted in the assessment of their records in clearly defined fields, which is typically measured as publication in disciplinary journals. They write:

> Research-intensive universities enjoy – or suffer – a paradoxical rep-utation: They are thought to be dedicated to both cutting-edge research and to preservation of the canon. They are seen as broad and diverse communities of scholars with a vibrant collective intellectual life, yet also as silos of disciplinary entrenchment (2011: 35).

They further explain that there is no consensus on a fair or effective process for evaluating faculty work that falls outside of traditional disciplinary paradigms (Plank et al., 2011). Faculty and their research agendas may be simultaneously driven and hampered by structural factors in academia.

The promotion and tenure (P&T) process is not designed to properly account for or evaluate interdisciplinary scholarship (Ecklund 2010). The additional time required for interdisciplinary research and publication renders it hazardous for tenure-track faculty given the need to rapidly develop a reputation in one's respective field, again, typically based on publication record (Lattuca,

2001). Tenure-track faculty involved in interdisciplinary research are significantly more stressed about the P&T process than tenure-track faculty who do not participate in interdisciplinary research for this reason (Hurtado and Sharkness, 2008).

Institutions that encourage interdisciplinary collaboration may not recognize that it requires additional time to complete. Instead, as reported in a five-year study, faculty engaged in this type of work report that their institutions expect the 'work to occur in addition to everything else they had to do' (McCoy and Gardner 2012: 48). In other words, universities promote interdisciplinary collaboration, but consider it as if it were supplemental work rather than researchers' primary approach to complicated research questions. Viewing and evaluating interdisciplinary collaborations in this way runs contrary to the requirements of such a research approach and likely contributes to the dearth of this type of research.

Research Partnership and the Collaborative Process

Our collaboration came about when criminologist Jennifer (first author), who adopts a positivist approach and primarily relies on quantitative data, was thinking about the etiology of the pernicious problem of firearm violence in the United States. She decided to begin by studying the broader firearm culture but could not figure out how to measure culture. She recalled that her colleague, Sarah (co-author), is a communication scholar with expertise in communication and culture. Jennifer walked down the hallway to Sarah's office, explained the general research idea, and asked, "How do you measure culture?" Sarah, who adopts a critical-interpretive approach to how people organize and primarily relies on qualitative data, responded, "I don't *measure* culture; not the way you would." Thus, began our research partnership.

We decided that gun shows would be a good setting to observe the variations in firearm culture. Their size would allow us to observe individual and group behavior in an unobtrusive way. We employed CEE, a method that is collaborative by definition, for the case study described in this article. CEE allows groups of researchers to jointly study large events in action by simultaneously allowing researchers to 'study up,' or observe overall trends at large sites, and 'study down,' or examine the experiences and interactions of individual people at a location (Brosius and Campbell 2010, Büscher 2014, Ganesh and Stohl 2013). This approach supports the detection of nuance (Büscher 2014). We moved through gun shows together so we could document similarities and differences in our observations, employing participant-observation as our primary data collection method. Participant-observation allows researchers to 'see the behavior you are interested in as it happens' rather than 'hearing about them secondhand' (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013: 81). Collecting data together also allowed the research collaboration to benefit from our relative strengths; the criminologist's ability to identify legal violations and propensity to document the frequency of observed behaviors, and the communication scholar's ability to identify methods of communication and stigma management practices. We studied seven gun

shows in Nevada, Ohio, and Virginia using CEE to identify common themes and differences across sites to account for possible regional variation.

Data analysis and writing were also collaborative processes. We wrote brief 'scratch notes' (Lindlof and Taylor 2002) at the gun shows, collected artifacts (e.g., flyers, pamphlets, stickers), and typed our field notes separately after each gun show. We documented our observations of the research partnership itself, including the benefits we experienced and the challenges we faced. This process generated 50 single-spaced pages of field notes and 200 artifacts. We also conducted document reviews (e.g., the field notes from the initial study, e-mails from journal editors and manuscript reviewers, annual and academic year evaluations, contemporaneous notes kept from meetings with university administrators regarding collaboration and publication).

The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. We conducted all of the coding and analyses together. We evaluated the data using an explanation building process. Explanation building is a method employed to develop a robust explanation for the case in an explanatory case study (Belk 2012, Yin 2018). Yin explains that the method 'has not been well documented in operational terms' (2018: 180). The method is described as an iterative process that is partially deductive, based on propositions derived from theory or existing literature, and partially inductive, based on the case study data (Yin 2018). The result is a strong explanation for the case that can withstand rival explanations in subsequent research.

Once the analyses were complete for a manuscript idea, one of us would take the lead on writing the manuscript and send the draft to the other for her contributions. Then, we exchanged multiple drafts of the manuscripts to work through our research questions.

Benefits of Interdisciplinary Collaboration

This collaboration produced enhanced and nuanced research outcomes that may not have been identified if either researcher had independently executed the study. As a criminologist, Jennifer was able to identify legal and behavioral issues that were not obvious to Sarah. For example, she identified illegal items for sale at several gun shows, including immediate sales of suppressors, which universally require a registration process involving a background check, a tax stamp, and period of time for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) to process the application (see Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives 2018). During one field visit, she observed a retailer who identified himself as a federally licensed firearms dealer (FFL) telling patrons, 'We won't run a background check.' This is illegal (see Gun Control Act of 1968). During a field visit in Nevada, she observed an FFL tell a patron seeking to purchase a large-capacity magazine not to produce his driver's license in case he is from California; large-capacity magazines were illegal in California at the time (Prohibition on manufacture, import, sale, gift, loan, purchase, or possession of large-capacity magazines, 4 Cal. Penal Code § 32310) and it would be illegal to sell the magazine to the patron (Gun Control Act of 1968).

Jennifer also observed the frequent unsafe handling of firearms. There are several generally accepted rules for the safe handling of firearms. She observed the regular violation of two of these rules: always point the firearm in a safe direction (i.e., don't point a firearm at any person or thing you don't intend to shoot), and always keep your finger off the trigger (National Rifle Association 2019, National Shooting Sports Foundation 2019, Project Child Safe n.d.). In several cases, the FFL posted signs about requiring safe handling of firearms, patrons violated the rules, and the FFL did not highlight the problem behavior or remind the patron of these rules in any of the instances observed by the authors. All of these observations were not recognized by Sarah, but were included in the dataset because of Jennifer's background and experience as a criminologist.

Sarah, as a communication scholar, also made unique contributions to the project. She identified stigma management methods and practices and interactions that were not obvious to Jennifer. Firearms are subject to core and event stigma (Hudson 2008). Core stigma is attached to organizations by virtue of their existence and render their general social acceptance unlikely (Hudson 2008). Hudson (2008) explains that event stigma stemming from particular events will be associated with certain types of organizations. In the United States, the high level of firearm violence, including myriad high-profile incidents, relative to other high income, democratic, and industrialized countries, renders firearms organizations and events subject to both core and event stigma (see Editorial 2007). These organizations and events communicated (through interactions, symbols, and texts) a range of stigma management practices that were not obvious to Jennifer. We both identified a range of troubling items at the gun shows that reflected racism, sexism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, and anti-Muslim bias. However, Sarah identified non-verbal communication practices related to these themes in this environment. These methods of communication were not apparent to Jennifer.

We integrated disciplinary knowledge, as well as discipline-preferred data collection and analytical methods, to address the National Research Collaborative on Firearm Violence's call for qualitative firearms research 'to identify factors that influence individual and group firearm behavior' (Lanterman and Blithe 2018: 31, Weiner et al. 2007). Thus far, this interdisciplinary collaboration has produced two journal articles, including one in which we identified stigma and identity management practices in gun collectives (Blithe and Lanterman 2017) and another in which we examined the firearm culture socialization of young children at gun shows (Lanterman and Blithe 2018). The interdisciplinary nature of these papers suggests that neither of us would have independently been able to produce the same work.

A number of positive changes occurred for both of us based on this collaboration. First, we each vastly increased our breadth of knowledge about the topic, which led to more publications. Second, we both benefitted from having "new eyes" on our writing, which challenged and improved our abilities to write for different audiences. Third, we each learned more about literatures and methods, rather than repeating studies in our preferred traditions. In addition to general knowledge building, we also benefitted socially. The collaboration

allowed us to build a friendship, and to network with each other's networks, which was beneficial for our academic and social support as two professors on the tenure track. In addition, publishing in interdisciplinary fields has made the authors intelligible to a broader audience. This has some practical benefits – for example, our scores on ResearchGate and Academia.edu are fueled by citation rates, which impact the likelihood of being promoted to full professor, or success in seeking other academic jobs.

Other positive outcomes resulted from the collaboration. We firmly believe that our respective fields benefit from the inclusion of the other's perspective. For example, Jennifer sees great value in including qualitative data into firearm violence research and criminal justice more broadly. Sarah sees a desperate need for communication scholars to be knowledgeable and involved in gun violence research. Undoubtedly, the research produced was much more robust because of its interdisciplinary nature, which benefits readers in both fields.

Challenges and Disincentives of Interdisciplinary Collaboration

We encountered numerous challenges that disincentivized maintenance of our collaboration. The project required more time than disciplinary work due to the integrationist nature of the collaboration. We also experienced difficulty in publishing due to editorial and reviewer criticism about violating methods preferences or disciplinary boundaries, and we had to contend with issues related to publications outside of one's field.

Longer work times

Our research on this collaborative project took more time than disciplinary work for several reasons. First, we sought to understand and to integrate our divergent positivist and interpretive epistemological approaches, as much as possible (Repko 2012: 138). A researcher who adopts a positivist approach believes in studying only observable actions rather than attitudes; studying people independent of their environments with the goal of explaining their actions; and the primacy of quantitative data (Repko 2012, Szostak 2004). Conversely, a researcher who adopts an interpretive approach often studies attitudes and the meanings of actions; studies people in their natural environments with the goal of understanding rather than explaining their actions; and employs qualitative analysis (Repko 2012, Szostak 2004). We studied observable actions and attitudes conveyed by participants at gun shows and focused on qualitative analysis. It took time for us to work through our differing research approaches and develop our study design.

During data collection, we spent extended time in the field, discussing what we observed and why we thought it was important, rather than moving through the observation and taking field notes. Much of our initial conversation at each site revolved around how to observe, what to watch, and whether or not to engage with other participants. We shared our own disciplinary knowledge with one another and ultimately still collected different data in our observations.

Second, we had to learn the terminology, literature, theories, and preferred methods in each other's disciplines. This process allowed us to identify common

ground and decide upon what literature and theories to rely and methods to employ for the overall project and the two journal articles. As discussed above, we engaged in joint data coding to address issues related to disciplinary differences. The process of understanding each other's approaches to research, disciplinary terminology, literature, theories, and preferred methods resulted in a longer initial preparation period than would be observed in a collaboration among scholars in the same discipline. It sometimes felt like learning a completely new language. Our decision to engage in joint coding resulted in longer time to complete analyses. Rather than splitting the data to code separately, we went through each line of data together, and had lengthy conversations about how to code each piece. In addition, we had more initial codes than might have otherwise existed because we each saw value, themes, and patterns in different ways.

Finally, our disciplinary differences resulted in longer periods of time to draft, review, and provide feedback on manuscripts. We each continually considered the other's disciplinary orientation to the work as we wrote. We also have different writing styles, so we often worked through several more manuscript drafts to settle on a final version than we would when working independently. Jennifer is direct, brief, and quite organized in sentence and paper structure. Sarah, on the other hand, writes much longer sentences and tends to loosely organize her papers by themes. It took much back and forth (and quite a few laughs about our own idiosyncrasies) to complete a manuscript. Ultimately, though, we each improved and broadened our repertoire of academic writing.

Violating preferred methods and disciplinary boundaries
We experienced higher than usual rejection rates for each paper we submitted to journals for review compared to our intradisciplinary manuscript submissions. The reasons for the rejections varied by journal and discipline. Ultimately, the disproportionately high rate of manuscript rejection resulted in much longer periods of time from drafting the initial manuscript to eventual publication of accepted papers.

Criminal justice and criminology journal editors expressed concerns over methodology. There is a strong preference for quantitative research in criminal justice and criminology. A manuscript based on social learning theory was submitted to two criminal justice journals focused on theory. In both cases, the manuscript was subject to desk rejection due to the use of CEE, a qualitative method, even though neither journal website indicates a requirement for quantitative methods. In one case, an editor suggested that we either search for a journal outside of criminal justice that will accept qualitative research or find a way to study the topic of interest using quantitative methods. This manuscript was later published in the only criminal justice journal that focuses on qualitative research.

Communication journal editors and reviewers expressed concerns over focal topics and disciplinary issues. Reviewers for an article submitted to a communication journal claimed that the article would 'make a better fit in another journal,' and that we did not 'sufficiently put [our] findings in conversation with the organizational communication literature.' To be sure, the literature review was

rooted in literature from both disciplines, which may have made the literature review seem less robust for reviewers who are experts in a specific disciplinary literature. Further, reviewers expressed concerns about the methods employed in our study, explaining, 'I am still unclear how observing participants at gun shows makes sense, methodologically' and concerns that the study 'lack[s] in scholarly rigor.' The reviewers also noted the unusual pairing of our individual contributions. For example, one reviewer noted, 'These practices, such as cash payments, are important for understanding how hidden organizations function, but the communicative aspects of these practices are not well illuminated.' In some places, meshing our individual observations did not translate to clear findings from the reviewers' perspectives. In a similar way, another reviewer commented, 'Your efforts to connect a paper about [firearm collectives] to your concern about gun violence dilutes the value of your argument.' In this case, we paired two distinct areas of expertise – organizing and gun violence – and rather than clearly communicating a novel insight, the effect was confusion and a diluted argument for the reviewers. Some of these critiques may have arisen for reasons other than the interdisciplinary nature of the project. However, neither of us had previously experienced these kinds of comments from editors or reviewers, which seem to point to the mixing of literatures, expertise, and styles.

We submitted a manuscript on how different groups of people communicate about firearms to a journal that addresses cultural issues in communication. The editor rejected the manuscript on the grounds that the ways in which groups of people communicate about firearms was not appropriate for a journal on communication. He suggested that we submit the paper to a sociology journal. Ultimately, we published a version of this manuscript in an interdisciplinary journal, entirely outside of the communication field.

Journal discipline and credit for publications
It is necessary for one author to take the lead on a co-authored manuscript. This can be complicated in an interdisciplinary collaboration, because the paper will either be submitted to a journal that is outside at least one collaborator's field, or the paper will be geared toward a journal that is outside of all of the collaborators' fields because it will accept interdisciplinary work.

We are employed by a university that evaluates all faculty each year, and tenure-track faculty twice per year, through the universal annual review and an academic year review. We were both on the tenure track when we commenced our collaboration. Our department chairs reviewed and assessed our work twice per year, and the department personnel committees and college dean reviewed our work once per year. The research component of these reviews focuses on the number of manuscripts submitted and published, the disciplinary rank of the journals, intellectual contributions to the discipline, and emerging reputation in the field.

We received conflicting feedback in these reviews. Generally, those reviewing our records supported the collaborative research project. However, in the review process there were some concerns expressed about the number of manuscript rejections, the length of time it was taking to get manuscripts accepted

for publication, and the publication of manuscripts in journals outside of our respective disciplines that receive less weight than publications in one's discipline. Our collaboration – theoretically supported by our university – was the source of the issues subject to criticism in these reviews.

Discussion

This case study demonstrates that an interdisciplinary research collaboration between social scientists yields the same types of benefits and generates the same types of challenges and disincentives highlighted in survey research and case studies of natural science and engineering collaborations. Our research, an integrationist interdisciplinary collaboration, studied firearm culture. Consistent with past research on integrationist interdisciplinary collaborations, we produced more comprehensive and nuanced understandings of firearm culture and behavior among participants (Curry et al. 2009, Repko 2012, Vickers 1998). Our work yielded outcomes that likely would not have been discovered if we had each pursued the project independently or with intradisciplinary scholars. We wrote several manuscripts outlining our innovative approach to the study of firearm culture and the unique insights produced through our work.

This collaboration reinforced our belief that diversity in disciplinary perspectives is useful on research teams. We each observed behaviors the other research partner did not notice. In some cases, we observed the same behaviors, but had different thoughts about what we observed. The combination of different observations and varied interpretations of shared observations lead to deep conversations. This research collaboration also underscored our views on the value of multiple and mixed methods research. Ultimately, these observations, discussions, and disciplinary boundary-violating approaches to the research resulted in novel work.

Despite the novel approach and unique insights yielded through this project, our interdisciplinary approach was stymied by several challenges and disincentives to maintaining the collaboration. All aspects of the project discussed here require more time than independent projects and projects that fit squarely in our respective disciplines. The longer study planning, execution, and writing times, coupled with the more frequent manuscript rejections from journals outlined above, create a circumstance in which every manuscript accepted for publication requires much more time from start to finish than standard publications in our respective disciplines. The prolonged time to execute the study and secure the publication of manuscripts reduces researchers' publication records, which presents difficulties for us in terms of professional assessment.

There is a recognition among researchers that there are gaps in the firearms culture, behavior, and violence research as reflected in the National Research Collaboration on Firearm Violence's call for qualitative research, particularly ethnographic study, of individual and group firearm behavior (Weiner et al. 2007). We responded to this call with a study using CEE to examine firearm culture at gun shows in three regions of the United States, and our study yielded information not yet discussed in the research literature. However, gatekeepers at journals significantly slowed or prevented the dissemination of novel findings to the

broader field. Fine (2018) explained that working in difficult collaborations can yield both unexpected insights into the subject of study as well as unexpected incites associated with the disruptive nature of non-traditional collaborations or approaches to work. We experienced both new insights and incites through this collaboration as evidenced by our experiences with journal editors and reviewers. Journals, the primary outlets for research dissemination in many disciplines, are hampering the circulation of innovative research that reveals new insights due to parochial concerns regarding traditionally preferred methods and disciplinary boundaries. In other words, journals are, in some cases, hindering rather than facilitating research into some of the most pressing issues facing society; precisely the types of issues that are ripe for interdisciplinary research.

Finally, there is a disconnect between professed university support for interdisciplinary collaborations and the structure within which faculty are assessed. Our university administration is supportive of interdisciplinary collaboration. However, annual and academic year evaluations included criticism related to publication issues (e.g., number of manuscript rejections, longer time to publication) that are a result of the interdisciplinary collaboration, which reduced annual evaluation scores and can detract from opportunities for P&T over time. Consistent with the findings of Plank and colleagues (2011), our home university maintains a traditional incentive structure for faculty that is rooted in the assessment of their records in clearly defined fields, which is typically measured as publication in disciplinary journals. Currently, the P&T process is not designed to adequately account for the conditions of interdisciplinary collaboration, as highlighted by Ecklund (2010). And, as previously found by McCoy and Gardner (2012), we were expected to conduct work on the interdisciplinary collaboration *in addition* to our disciplinary publication without consideration for the increased time necessary to complete interdisciplinary research or the every-increasing time demands associated with teaching and service.

Collectively, these issues are problems for all faculty, but these issues are particularly pressing for faculty at R1 institutions. Typically, these institutions have high publication expectations in terms of the number and placement of papers in top-tier disciplinary journals, and tenure-track faculty must establish a disciplinary publication record in a short period of time. The work conditions for faculty, particularly at R1 institutions, and the obstacles associated with publication in disciplinary journals serve to suppress interdisciplinary collaboration and the search for answers to society's most pressing problems.

Plank and colleagues (2011) argue that research-intensive universities ought to be or are thought to be places where cutting-edge research occurs. The capacity exists among the faculty at these universities to conduct this type of much-needed interdisciplinary research, but universities must enhance the incentives for interdisciplinary collaborations. Universities cannot expect researchers to sacrifice professional advancement for the sake of participating in interdisciplinary projects.

Our experiences, as well as the extant literature, suggest a few requisite policy changes. Annual review and P&T criteria should explicitly address how interdisciplinary research is evaluated and counted in assessment processes

(McCoy and Gardner 2012: 47). All review criteria should address how publications outside of one's discipline will be considered in the assessment process. In order to support or encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, universities must consider straying from the traditional assessment practices of only affording credit to publication in disciplinary journals, affording significantly less credit to journal articles outside of one's discipline, or only considering journal articles outside of one's disciplines in addition to a requisite annual number of articles in disciplinary journals. If non-traditional publications or extra-disciplinary journal publications are accepted by more research-intensive universities, then this shift may impact the journal market in terms of the types of work journal editorial boards will accept or support the development of new journals open to interdisciplinary research.

Our study and previous research demonstrate that interdisciplinary collaborations typically require more time than single researcher or intradisciplinary collaborations. Policies should account for the additional time necessary for these collaborations. The form this policy takes will vary based on the structure of the assessment system. For example, in a points-based assessment system, additional points can be afforded to collaborations. Beyond these basic policy changes, more elaborate collaborations may require additional resources and consideration in the faculty assessment process.

Research-intensive universities have the capacity to be centers of cutting-edge research rooted in collaborations. However, policies need to account for the challenges associated with collaborations, especially interdisciplinary collaborations. Without institutional policies that adequately account for longer work times and the challenges associated with publication, universities may inhibit and continue to disincentivize innovative work geared toward addressing pressing problems.

Notes

1. There are two types of interdisciplinary collaborations. Generalist inter-disciplinary work involves the interaction of two or more disciplines but does not result in the integration of approaches or methods (Moran 2010: 14, Repko 2012: 4). Integrationist interdisciplinary work is focused on integrating disciplinary theory and methods to address the complexity of the issues under study (Newell 2007: 245, Repko 2012: 4). Integrationist interdisciplinary collaborations produce 'new knowledge, more comprehensive understandings, new meanings, and cognitive advancements' (Repko 2012: 10, Vickers 1998). In integrationist collaborations, '[T]he quality and breadth of analysis are enhanced by ongoing and close involvement of multiple analysts from differing disciplines' (Curry, Nembhard, and Bradley 2009: 1448, Denzin and Lincoln 2000, Mays and Pope 1995, Patton 1999).

2. Case studies are appropriate when the researchers intend to produce 'concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge' (Flyvbjerg 2004: 421). A single-case design may be employed in five circumstances, including when the single case is

a common case and the goal is 'to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation' or a common experience in a particular context (Yin 2018: 50). We selected this case because we considered it to reflect common experiences in interdisciplinary research collaborations among social scientists.

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COMMONING ETHNOGRAPHY

A Conversation with the Karrabing Film Collective

Lorraine Lane, Cecilia Lewis, Elizabeth Povinelli, Linda Yarrowin, and Sandra Yarrowin
Karrabing Film Collective

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ABSTRACT | This piece is a lightly edited transcript of a conversation with members of the Karrabing Film Collective – Lorraine Lane, Linda Yarrowin, Cecilia Lewis, Sandra Yarrowin, and anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli – interviewed by anthropologists Melinda Hinkson and David Boarder Giles. The Karrabing Film Collective are a community of Indigenous Australians and their whitefella collaborators who make films that analyse and represent their contemporary lives and also keep their country alive by acting on it. This conversation appeared first as Episode Eighteen of *Conversations in Anthropology@Deakin*, a podcast about 'life, the universe, and anthropology' based at Deakin University and produced by Giles and Timothy Neale, with support from the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University, and in association with the American Anthropological Association.

Keywords: Indigenous Australians; Aboriginal Australians; Indigenous film; settler colonialism; collaboration

Introduction

The following lightly edited transcript captures a conversation with members of the Karrabing Film Collective – Lorraine Lane, Linda Yarrowin, Cecilia Lewis, Sandra Yarrowin, and anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli – interviewed by anthropologists Melinda Hinkson and David Boarder Giles. The Karrabing Film Collective are a community of Indigenous Australians and their whitefella collaborators who make films that analyse and represent their contemporary lives and also keep their country alive by acting on it. In the process, they seek to integrate their parents' and grandparents' way of life into their contemporary struggles to educate their children, create economically sustainable cultural and environmental businesses, and support their homeland centres. The Karrabing Film Collective have produced and tour internationally in support of films such as *Wutharr: Salt Water Dreams* (2015), *The Jealous One* (2017), and the winner of Best Short Film at the 2015 Melbourne International Film Festival, *When Dogs Talked* (2014). In addition, Povinelli is the Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University, and the author of books such as *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (2011), and *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (2016). This conversation appeared first as Episode Eighteen of *Conversations in Anthropology@Deakin*, a podcast about 'life, the universe, and anthropology' based at Deakin University and produced by Giles and Timothy Neale, with support from the Faculty of Arts and Education at Deakin University, and in association with the American Anthropological Association.

The conversation explored the meaning and practice of the Collective's grassroots, DIY approach to film-making, and the widespread critical success that has led them from Northern Australia to Paris, Berlin, Eindhoven, London, Guangzhou, and much more. While Povinelli's theoretical work has been highly influential on anthropology, the conversation here eschews that subject in favour of the relationships and community sustained and enriched by the Collective's work. Povinelli insists, she didn't come to talk about anthropology. And yet the conversation holds crucial lessons for anthropology, and any other interlocutors interested in decolonising theory and practice. The Collective articulates their experience of pressing contemporary issues, from the ongoing political and economic effects of racism and settler colonialism to the impacts of Australia's Northern Territory Intervention, now twenty years old, which has imposed strict police controls and welfare restrictions on Aboriginal life. In addition, the conversation explores relationships of community and mutual aid among the Collective, which includes distinct families and kin groups. As the reader will note, the conversation is full of affection, laughter, and unapologetic local inflections and terminology (at one point, Povinelli suddenly remembers to pronounce 'film' in the standard Anglophone way, rather than the vernacular 'fil'm'), indicative of the longstanding collaborations between each interlocutor that date back before the Collective's first film and even before Povinelli first studied anthropology. While Povinelli apologises that the conversation wasn't 'about anthropology,' these concrete, on-the-ground relationships are the very stuff of ethnographers' work. (Or if they aren't, perhaps they should be.)

If the history of anthropological knowledge is, as Ghassan Hage puts it, 'white colonial knowledge of nonwhite cultures' (2017) then the Collective positively eschews it. But if, as he simultaneously suggests, anthropology aspires to a universalist ethic that valorises and embraces humanity – all of us, in all our breadth and depth – or as Ruth Benedict put it, aims at 'a world made safe for difference' (1946: 15), then the Collective is one of its most beautiful examples. We leave the reader to decide.

***

DAVID: Thanks very much for joining us. So I wonder if we could just go around the table and introduce ourselves?

LINDA: Hello, my name is Linda Yarrowin. I'm one of the Karrabing Collective.

CECILIA: Hello, my name is Cecilia Lewis. I'm one of the Karrabing Film Collective.

SANDRA: Hello, my name is Sandra Yarrowin, from the Karrabing Film Collective.

MELINDA: Hello, my name is Melinda Hinkson. I'm an anthropologist at Deakin University.

LORRAINE: Hello, my name is Lorraine Lane and I am one of the Karrabing Collective.

BETH: My name is Beth Povinelli and I'm part of the Karrabing Collective.

DAVID: And of course I'm David Giles, your usual host for Conversations in Anthropology@Deakin. And we're really grateful to have you all here. And we normally start off with a sort of icebreaker question. How did you all meet? How did anthropology show up on your radar?

BETH: We didn't meet through anthropology. Anthropology had nothing to do with it, to be honest. (Laughing.)

DAVID: No, so how did you meet?

CECILIA: We met Beth when we were a child going to primary school back in 1984. We didn't know who she were. She was some white lady. (Laughing.)

SANDRA: That come all the way from New York. I remember that one.

CECILIA: She came from New York. We used to go and sit with Beth every after school. Hang around with her. But we didn't know her.

BETH: How old you been, Mom?[1]

CECILIA: About seven or eight.

SANDRA: Ten, I think.

BETH: Seven, I think. Cecilia?

SANDRA: Seven. You was very young eh? You came to Belyuen.

BETH: Yeah. What? Twenty-one or something like that.

SANDRA: Nineteen or twenty, twenty-one. You were so young, yeah.

LINDA: Me, I guess being ten years old when I met Beth. She came over.

DAVID: How long had you been in Belyuen at that point?

BETH: Well I had been in philosophy at Saint John's College in Santa Fe out in the desert, and (laughing) I had – I don't know – I saw some movies actually, some Australian movies, like Chant of...

LINDA: ...Jimmy Blacksmith.[2]

BETH: (laughing) Jimmy Blacksmith – your dad!

SANDRA: Dad, yeah.

BETH: But I had no idea, of course. I didn't know anything. [Just] the great books – like Western philosophy. And I just wanted to get out of that country. So there was a fellowship to just get out of the country. So I said I wanted to go to Australia. And I was camping at Mandorah. And Big Truck Mom, your mom and that Kuma Mom came down and said 'What the heck are – who are you?' I said 'Oh I'm Beth Povinelli.' They said, 'How did you get here?' I said I was on a fellowship. They said, 'Oh do you know how to write a grant?' I said (confidently) 'Yeah I know how to write a grant.' They said 'Do you know anything about childcare?' I said (confidently) 'Oh yeah I know about childcare.' I didn't know *anything*. (Laughs) And they said, 'If you come and help us and work for that **Wulgaman,** that Big Truck Mom...'

SANDRA: **Wulgaman** Nuki.

BETH: '...Yeah, you can stay.' And from there, that's how I been come to be daughter of that one. That Big Truck Mother. I grew up in Louisiana. You know, outdoors, hunting turtle, everything, squirrel, frog, bullfrog. And another thing is my white family – my father's side family – we come from a little village in what's

now the Italian Alps. But it used to be the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And on my white father's side, we think of our country as belonging to five families. And it's called Carisolo, and it's itself. We don't consider it to really be part of Italy or anywhere. It's just us. So I was just like, 'Wow this is like my family'. I don't know, and then I just stuck there.

Anyways at the end of the year they were involved in a big land claim. And by law Indigenous people can't just represent themselves through the Land Rights Act. They have to be represented by a lawyer and by an anthropologist. And those old people been say, 'Ah you don't seem like a stupid white woman. Why don't you come be our lawyer?' And I said 'I don't want to be a lawyer. All my life, I've been *not* being a lawyer.' They said 'What about anthropologist?' And I said 'What is *that?*' (laughing.)

And so that's how that anthropology part been come in. But anthropology, for me it's not what's important. For me anthropology is studying how white people continue to put themselves on top of my Indigenous family. No matter what they say, they're always really trying to just take money, or take stuff, or take information, or take land. And *that's* what I study. And I don't care about anthropology really. Maybe I shouldn't say that on a podcast.

MELINDA: No, it's a good thing to say.

BETH: I care about my family to be honest.

MELINDA: So we're going to come back to a lot of those questions.

BETH: But I'm done now. Their turn now.

MELINDA: You're all here in Melbourne for a very exciting business: to show Karrabing films at the Melbourne International Film Festival. Could you tell us what Karrabing is?

Linda: Well Karrabing is a low tide turning. It's just going out.

CECILIA: That's the meaning of the word. Meaning, how many, four different family groups – but we're all one family, brought together, living together. And we just call ourselves 'Karrabing.'

LINDA: We don't call ourselves through a family clan group, so we just use the name Karrabing. We all come from four different parts.

SANDRA: And the meaning of the 'low tide turning,' it's just, we know when the tide is going out that means we can collect and gather food.

MELINDA: So it's a good time? It's a hopeful time?

SANDRA: Yeah.

LINDA: It's a good time. Collect mussels, or crab.

SANDRA: Periwinkle.

CECILIA: Mangrove snake.

BETH: Maybe we could tell everybody how Karrabing started.

SANDRA: We was homeless... Living in a crowded house. Because we had that big thing, eh?

CECILIA: Riot, back in 2005... 2007.

BETH: There was a big riot.

SANDRA: Yeah. That's when we become homeless and things like that.

CECILIA: All our kids were very small back then.

BETH: Ah, 2007 eh? That riot was before the Intervention? Right before, eh?

CECILIA: Before.

SANDRA: Right before.

BETH: Like there was big riot, and then government been promise house, eh?... And then Intervention happened, and what happened to that promise?

SANDRA: Must've been forgot about us.

CECILIA: We tried to get justice. We couldn't.

SANDRA: Yeah, it was so sad in those days.

CECILIA: We lost everything... Went through justice, through court. Nothing.

SANDRA: Nothing.

LORRAINE: They burned my sister's house.

LINDA: Burned her house down.

CECILIA: We lost the house. And her car. Burned the car.

SANDRA: It was so sad.

LORRAINE: So sad, those days.

CECILIA: Took all my kids clothes. Bedding.

BETH: So we been wind up homeless in the bush. But there wasn't Karrabing being yet, eh?

SANDRA: No.

LORRAINE: No.

BETH: There was a day that we really came up with that idea of Karrabing eh?

LINDA: So we were all sitting down the beachside.

CECILIA: We was waiting for ABC mob to come and interview us... And we all gathered around, waiting. But that didn't happen. Somebody stopped it.

SANDRA: Because they don't want to know what the truth is, you know?

LINDA: Didn't want to know.

CECILIA: Didn't want to hear our side of the story. So we thought... 'Why don't we make a movie? And show them how we've been living, our lifestyle, struggle through life, and all that.'

LINDA: We been decided, sit around along the beachside talking to each other, 'Let's just do something for ourselves.'

CECILIA: You know, we tell our story a different way...

SANDRA: By making a movie.

CECILIA: ...by making a movie.

DAVID: And then you've made a couple of films now.

CECILIA: We made the first one...

SANDRA: *When Dogs Talked*.

CECILIA: ...was really about how we were struggling through life. And how I used to put up with my family overcrowding in the house, and the problem with Territory Housing and all that.

BETH: We won the Melbourne Cinema Nova Best Short Fil'm Prize at the 2015 Melbourne International Film Festival.

LINDA: Yeah. And there was another one.

BETH: Then we been make *Windjarrameru*. And then the next one was *Wutharr*.

CECILIA: And *Windjarrameru* is about our young kids, who used to get blamed for stealing this and that, causing problems, and policemen always pick on them.

BETH: Even though the mining...

CECILIA: ...were stealing.

SANDRA: The mining was stealing, yeah.

BETH: Yeah the mining mob, stealing the whole country and meanwhile police are putting Indigenous young people in jail, eh?

SANDRA: Yeah.

BETH: It was about that. And then that third one was *Wutharr*, that saltwater...

LINDA: Broken down boat.

BETH: ...broken down boat. And different people got different ideas why the boat broke down. Like trying to show that we're all together. But we also got different ideas.

CECILIA: Beliefs too, you know, like our beliefs.

BETH: Yeah. So, like Linda...

CECILIA: ...believe in the law. Trevor believe in his ancestors.

BETH: And Suntu believe in – that just the motor broke down. (Laughs) They were just like 'No spare part, that's all.' And then that fourth one, *Night Time Go*? Based on a real story.

LINDA, CECILIA, SANDRA: *Night Time Go*, real story.

CECILIA: Nana's story. When my grandmother was in the war back in 1942 maybe?

MELINDA: I watched that one.

BETH: A lot of people don't know about those internment camps you know? Where they collected everybody, forced them onto internment camp, and [it was] really bad.

CECILIA: It was based a true story, where my grandmother and her family escaped from that camp, went back to the homeland.

BETH: But we changed the ending. **Gammon.** Like we say, then they got everybody to chase all the white people out of the whole Northern Territory. (Laughs)

CECILIA: (laughing) We wish that happened.

MELINDA: That's a big moment in that film. When your Melbourne audience watches that film, it'll be like a moment where everyone stops and just thinks, 'Oh,' because that's the moment where all the whitefellas in Australia, they get really, really frightened. 'Oh, Japanese are coming.' But then we see all those ceremony films that you put that film, celebration. It's like, 'Oh. Different way. Different story.' Different way of telling about that time.

BETH: Instead of celebrating that Japan been driven out, celebrating *white people* been driven out.

MELINDA: One thing that I heard you say Beth, on some films some time ago is that Karrabing is a schoolhouse made out of film. Now that might be long time ago. I don't if you still like that line...

BETH: No, that's right.

MELINDA: ...but I thought that was a really interesting way to think about what you mob are doing, like if it's a schoolhouse.

CECILIA: Yeah, to us it was a learning thing too. Most of us we don't know anything about technology. We get the young kids, they're really smart on it.

BETH: But also I've been meaning – like, we were been talking the other day – those young kids they want to make fil'ms. And so while they're making that fil'm...s... fil'ms. Films. (emphasises anglophone pronunciation) When they're making *films*.

CECILIA: (laughing) Get it right.

LINDA: And same time they're learning as they go along.

BETH: The stories.

SANDRA: Of the country, living off the land.

CECILIA: Stop them from drinking or whatever and getting problems with the police. And they get excited for travelling and all that.

BETH: Yeah. And when we go overseas, or even Brisbane, or wherever, they meet other people who have similar struggles. And they learn more about European history. When it was me, Over and Gabo first time go **la,** Eindhoven for that Van Abbe thing. And we were in that museum and they were showing all these pictures of the Dutch that – really in the north, those European in the north – from, I don't know, 1500s or something. Like loooong time ago.

LINDA: (low whistle)

BETH: And were **killimbetgidja**, they were killing each other. Like bullocky them, hang 'em up, self, you know? Like from leg. And Over said 'Beth what the hell is... what is this?' And I said, I said to the curator, 'What is this?' And she said, 'Oh these are prints from when the Christians and the Catholics were slaughtering each other.' And I said to Over, 'Yeah see that's the thing they don't tell you, is that white people they first slaughtered each other, like bullocky. And when they were done with themselves they came and slaughtered you.' And Over went 'Woah.' So it's like better than school eh?

LINDA and CECILIA: Mmmm.

DAVID: Where have you shown the films?

CECILIA: Been to New York, London, and Paris when they played in the Pompidou and Tate Modern.

BETH: You been go Berlin. The HKV.[3]

CECILIA: We won one award in Berlin too.

BETH: Oh, we won one award in all of Europe – the world really. That Visible Award.

SANDRA: Yeah, I've got that thing at home, eh?

BETH: Yeah. And where did you just come back from?

CECILIA: China. Guangzhou. Whatever they call that place (laughing). I can't pronounce it properly.

BETH: And Gavin and everybody. Shannon we went to...

CECILIA: We went there this June, eh?

LINDA, BETH (agreeing): June.

BETH: Yeah. And those younger people and Suntu went to the Van Abbe in the Netherlands. Then we went to Helsinki and Stockholm. And we've been to...

LINDA: Sweden.

BETH: ...Sweden and, oh, we've been everywhere, really.

CECILIA: First trip they went to Jerusalem.

BETH: Qalandiya, Palestinian Biennale. Yeah. The three young kids.

CECILIA: I meant to go but my passport didn't come.

DAVID: That's a lot of places. When you go to a new place and you show the films to new people, does it change how you think about the films? You know, someone from China, or someone from Paris, they're going to have a different background, so they're going to see the film different.

LINDA: You know it just make we think that we are not just nobody. We are somebody. We've made it. you know. That we are doing something.

BETH: Yeah. I would say – but I'm asking you – it's interesting, because a lot of people they go out, they show their work, or they show their fil'ms, or show their book, or show their art, whatever, and they change it afterwards. They change how they do it or what they're doing. But my experience is mainly these fil'ms are changing us for the good, i.e. in giving real confidence.

LINDA: And also making us really proud of us too.

BETH: Yeah right? And keeping kids out of jail.

SANDRA, LINDA (agreeing): Yeah.

CECILIA: And being a role model to our kids too, you know?

SANDRA: Leave the past behind we, and go forward.

CECILIA: We don't want to live in the past anymore. We just want to keep going forward. Doing something like making movies was different for us. We didn't know that it would get this far, you know? That we'd be famous and all that. And travel. Most of them have travelled halfway around the world.

BETH: Yeah, it's like, anthropology, what is anthropology *for?* Is it for itself? Or what is philosophy *for?* Is it for itself? Or what is anything for, right? And if you ask me, the thing is only meaningful if it's for making the world better for the people that you are committed to. And you want their world to be better. It's not for itself, right? You don't go and use people to make anthropology better, or to make philosophy better. You go and use those things to make the people that you care about better. Like the films are better. To be honest, I think the films are getting better and better and better and better.

LORRAINE, SANDRA, CECILIA, SANDRA (agreeing): Yeah.

BETH: *But*, the point is to use the films to make the...

SANDRA: People

BETH: ...people better. If the films get better, or if anthropology get better, or philosophy get better, but the people remain the same or worse, *fuck it*. Fuck it all. To be honest. Burn the film. Burn anthropology. Burn philosophy. Because it's not doing what it's supposed to be doing. (hits table) Sorry. Is that too...

MELINDA: No, it's so true. But it's so hard, isn't it?

SANDRA, LINDA (agreeing): Yeah.

BETH: Why is it hard?

MELINDA: It's hard because government never listens. You know what I mean? The transformation is hard.

SANDRA, LINDA, LORRAINE (agreeing): Mmm. Yeah.

MELINDA: We can make together all sorts of wonderful things that might show a better world.

BETH: It's not about *showing*. It's more, well, if you want to know, it's pragmatism. Like in the old philosophical sense of pragmatism. It's like, you do this thing to make the world better. And the world is – don't you think Karrabing is more better than it was?

LINDA: Yeah, it's more better than it was before.

SANDRA: It was. More better than, you know?

LORRAINE: Yeah.

BETH: Yeah, you guys feel more better?

CECILIA: Feel much more better.

LORRAINE, LINDA: Yeah.

LINDA: You know, we are able to, if people come and ask, 'What's Karrabing about?' we open up and express ourselves.

SANDRA: We tell them.

BETH: And we left that community. Now you're on the Council. You got full time job. Him working. Like governments might never do anything. But if you wait for government, nothing's going to happen.

CECILIA: Best, you've got to do things yourself. Make things happen. Try to tell them. If they're not listening, well, find another way of doing things.

BETH: Another way doing things.

MELINDA: Sure. My favorite film so far is the *Jealous One*.

LORRAINE, BETH, SANDRA, CECILIA, LINDA (pleased, enthusiastic, laughing): Oh, Ah.

MELINDA: Yes. I like that. Really great. Yeah. And one thing that's going on in that film is this business of anthropology and government, together, always knocking down the country.

CECILIA: Yeah, they're stopping the Traditional Owners. Blocking the Traditional Owner trying to get to his country.

LORRAINE, BETH, SANDRA, LINDA (in agreement): Yeah.

MELINDA: So our friend, Tess Lea, turning up (imitates Tess' character's officious tone): 'You need authoris...'

MELINDA, CECILIA, BETH (in unison): '...sation.'

(All round laughter.)

BETH: She's a good actor that Tess. She plays those white people spot-on.

(All round laughter)

MELINDA: So I got those power things in mind a little bit.

BETH: No, that's right.

MELINDA: That's why I say that back, hey? So that question about how you make a good life, a stronger life. But at the same time, are always coming up against something stopping you to go all the way.

CECILIA: Yes. That happens a lot.

BETH: Well that's right and that's why what she just said was so cool. You go find another way around.

CECILIA: Yeah, you knock the fence down and keep going...

(All round laughter)

CECILIA: ...You don't worry about that padlock.

(All round laughter)

BETH: Yeah. Like I'll tell you a story. I would said this was 1995 and, Ben Scambury, who is now the head of Sacred Sites – right on Ben – was working in NLC on Native Title. He was in charge of Native Title. And we were doing that land claim. And all the old people and me, we started saying, 'Oh this is going to go really wrong. We'd better get all that information for like [unclear] downloaded into Beth.' Because you mob [were] still young. And so we could get it back to you. And one day, we were on a boat. And we were outside... So I had all the husbands, all the brothers on this boat. This kind of boats, **savvy**? And we were really tired. Long way to go. We got to this place called **Banagaiya.** And we were all really tired because you savvy, you know that wave? And we were all sharing so what everybody knows, just getting all, you know, passing around the stories. And Sheree Jane's Father said 'I'm never coming back. It's too far.' (laughing) And I said, 'You know, those white people never ever going to stop. No matter if we win or lose, they're going to keep going. Putting the pressure on. Testing, testing, testing. You wait. They're going to come here next time. Soon.' And that Sheree Jane's Father been say, 'Well, I'm just gonna make those old people do it.' And we're sitting there. And I looked at him. Suddenly I said, 'Oh my God.' I said, 'Do you know what brother? You *are* the old person for this country.' And he was only 38. And he's the oldest person in that family.

CECILIA: Diane, isn't it?

BETH: Oh Diane. Well. Okay. Whatever. [Oldest person] on the *boat*... But that's the thing. It's like, they're never going to stop.

MELINDA: So you guys, you had the longest land claim. I heard that, now, government's got to clean up that country. Before it gives it back. So I thought people might be interested to know what they did on that country for all those years that they've got to clean up now.

BETH: Oh what been poison mob?

LINDA: Asbestos.

BETH: Yeah, but also them PCPs. They had that thing. What that thing? That transmitter?

LORRAINE: Transmitter too, yeah. Where the dump were.

BETH: They had the military during the Japanese war. They had all that military stuff there. And that left all the PCPs into the ground...

SANDRA: In the ground, yeah.

BETH: ...and then asbestos and the transmitter radiation.

CECILIA: And then we had to tell people that land was poisoned. Because people still go hunt out there.

BETH: Yeah. And they put a little fence around it. Like a little area. And so we never went inside really the fenced area. Not really close up. But it ends up, it was *everywhere*.

CECILIA: Everywhere.

BETH: They were testing where the white people live at, yeah, they were testing their bore water all those years.

CECILIA: But they been finding where the poison is coming through the ground now from that old dump. That's why they closed that dump.

BETH: Yeah but only after they were giving the land back. They didn't give a damn before. They never tested our water.

MELINDA: Were they giving that country back, little-bit-little-bit? While they were holding some of that other country for cleaning up?

BETH: We don't know. No communication.

MELINDA (quoting Tess Lea's character again): Mmm... 'You need authorisation.'

BETH: You need authorisation. Maybe tell the story, where we were making that Windjarrameru fil'm. And how we found out that that other area was poisoned. Remember? We were shooting that scene? The fence scene?

CECILIA: You go. You get the big bucks. (laughing)

BETH: Oh we're shooting – you don't want to tell that story? – like *Windjarrameu* is about, okay, so there's four young boys came up with that idea...

CECILIA: Gavin. Kelvin. Reggie.

BETH: ...Really, those three came up with that film. So they said 'We want to do a fil'm where we get accused of...'

SANDRA, LINDA (in unison): '...stealing...'

BETH: '...beer and get chased through the bush by police.' And then Jojo[4] what you been add?

LINDA: The Ranger. It's just looking after Country and land, you know?

BETH: And then Over and Suntu added the miners.

CECILIA: And the miners, they were stealing... She was the ranger. And we sent Cameron to spy on them find out exactly what they was doing.

BETH: The rangers. So we shape up the story. Like somebody has an idea. And then other people add their bits on. And then we shape it into a story. So anyways we were shooting the scene where the four young boys are being chased by the cops. So we picked this little old fence line. And we said, 'Oh, we'll just shoot there. It's really pretty.' So we had the *pretend* cops running, chasing the young boys through the fence. And then the pretend cops stop, because we painted the sign that said...

CECILIA: 'Poison.'

BETH: 'Stop: Poison,' yeah. And we just painted it on a log. And we put it next to the fence. And so we shot that whole scene. It was really fun and funny and everything. And then we were coming out to the main road. And what do we find but *real* policemen?

LINDA: Because we been sitting outside.

BETH: Yeah. You mob been sitting outside. And then they were like 'Oh, real police.' So I decided, 'Oh I'll distract them.' So I went over to the real police. We had the fake police – the fake police and the real police, and me, I'm standing there. And I was like 'Oh, you real police, you should be in the next film. Ha ha ha ha.' ...But the real police asked us 'Where were you guys shooting? Were you in that restricted area?' And we're like 'Oh no, we weren't in the restricted area.

We were on the dirt road that goes to this one little beach camp.' And that police said 'That whole area is contaminated.'

MELINDA: And you didn't know?

SANDRA: We didn't know that.

CECILIA: We just only thought that one little area with the fence around it.

BETH: Well we've been hunting, drinking, camping, eating.

SANDRA: Everything.

LORRAINE: Camp right there.

DAVID: So they've never come and said anything. So when do they come into contact with you really, people from government?

CECILIA: You think they care? They're going to come and tell you?

DAVID: ...Well, or police. The whole state, really.

BETH: The police come every time when trouble's around, people drinking.

LINDA: But they don't mention it.

CECILIA: They don't mention, or tell you where to go and not to go.

DAVID: And that's all you ever see of government, is the police?

BETH: They just come to fine people for drinking. That's it.

CECILIA: They give you a ticket for one can of beer.

LINDA: ...For one can!

BETH: How much ticket for one can?

CECILIA: A hundred and ninety-four dollars. For just one can, open.

LORRAINE: If they see you drinking it.

CECILIA: I only get three hundred and forty dollars a fortnight.

BETH: So one can, that wipes out your whole paycheck. People got fines for seven, eight thousand. Oh, the [name redacted] – she was in jail. Why was she in jail?

CECILIA: She had a fine for $10,000, because she couldn't afford to pay it off.

BETH: So they put her in jail.

CECILIA: She was getting the same amount. Two-hundred-something dollars a fortnight and she couldn't afford the payment.

DAVID: The people I work with in America, a lot of them are homeless. And then they have the same thing. You get fined for sitting on the footpath. You get fined for sleeping in the wrong place.

BETH: Blackfella. African American.

CECILIA: Yeah, they'll fine you for urinating in a public place too.

SANDRA: Oh. Long-grass mob.[5]

BETH: But there's no toilet.

CECILIA: There's no toilet. Where else can you go?

DAVID: Yeah. So people get fines and fines and fines. And they can't pay their fines so they end up in jail. You know it's a cycle. So they end up coming out of jail. And then they've been in jail so they can't get a job. So they end up homeless again. So they get fined again. I mean one of the things I'm really interested in is the way the same things play out in the city, as in the country, but they affect different people. Same process of govern...

CECILIA: Same racism.

DAVID: ...Yep. Same racism. Same classism.

BETH: Well it is true that white – well, I am also white, with the sharp nose...

(All laugh)

BETH: ...So let's just say government – even if it's a progressive government, even if you get Labor or whoever, you know – to put it a **Berragut** way, accumulate capital and power over poor people. They share strategies. We know that.

DAVID: You know it's 2018, and you've been thinking about this together for 30 years now. Longer. Does anything feel like it's changed at this point?

BETH: Better or worse or same?

CECILIA: I'd say the same. You see anything changing?

LORRAINE: Nothing, eh? Not really.

SANDRA: I don't know. It's hard to say.

CECILIA: You can try and change, but then it falls back to the same problems. Same issues. Everyday life.

SANDRA: Yeah.

BETH: Look let's think about where everybody live at Belyuen. Like what color skin is in charge of all the jobs?

CECILIA: White people.

SANDRA: White people run it at Belyuen. All the local people in the community, they want to try to work, but they wouldn't give them a job.

BETH: But we also got a lot of stress and...

CECILIA: And you have some jealous people, get jealous of you when you try to do something.

SANDRA: Jealous people in that community.

BETH: And look, I'll put some truth on the table too. Because it's boring and nothing doing – there's no cars. And used to be, we just would drive around, got any kind of car, you know?

CECILIA: (laughing) With a busted up whatever.

BETH: Doesn't matter. Make it work. Like *before*. ...And we'd just saw off the top and go from Belyuen down to Bulgul. ...Registered? What's a registered car? We got no idea! People hanging off the side of the car. Whatever. *Now*, you try and even get five kilometers anywhere with a car – bang! Fine!

SANDRA: Policeman.

BETH: Like before, yeah, it was rough eh? But you could get anywhere. Just go. And now policemen everywhere. Since Intervention, all the money went into

police force. So now you're more locked up in those communities. So now we're more bored. More worse fighting. So, yeah, sometimes people get a job and they don't show up. Let's face it. But now, because it's more worse, and now people are more strict. They don't like give any slack.

LINDA: When you're at work, you only can use the car to use it for work things. But then again, see this white person always control you. You just have to use the car and take it back to where the workshop is and lock it up.

BETH: Yeah and they're always controlling.

LINDA: And it makes me really really upset, you know? Why can't we – we've got license, we've been trained to drive. Just, why can't they be equal with us? We all human beings.

BETH: And even with Karrabing going around the world, instead of – look I understand jobs. They need people to work in jobs. Okay, I understand that. But – it's like we were saying before with the anthropology or philosophy or film: what is it *for?* What is the communities for? Is it for making sure people turn up to work all the time? Or is it saying, 'This is Aboriginal land. These are Indigenous people, own this place. We should be building up Indigenous people.' So if, let's say Karrabing gets invited to go around the world. Do you say, 'Well, if you leave, I'm going to sack you and you're going to lose your job'? And instead of saying, 'Wow that's really great.'

LINDA: You go and explore the world.

BETH: You know it's really punitive. So I would say it's changing, but not, it's not like changing for the better. It's a just new thing you got try to go around, like **Gigi**[6] been say.

LINDA: But it's just benefit of you know the people in the community. They want to do things, you know? Travel around the world. See the bigger picture, bigger world.

MELINDA: We're hearing these stories all over the Northern Territory at the moment. Same, same, same, same. In community. Very powerful stories.

SANDRA: Yeah? Same, same, eh?

BETH: But I would also like to not just be negative. Because on the other hand Karrabing just keeps doing it anyway.

DAVID: So all of you get together and write the stories yourselves?

CECILIA: Sit around together. Talk about it.

SANDRA: Sit around and tell stories, and things like that.

CECILIA: Who want to play the next part in this movie, that movie.

SANDRA: Play this part, that part.

BETH: Who's got an idea.

LINDA: We're doing one, we'll start up one hip hop. The young people...

SANDRA: The young people are going to do the hip hop.

BETH: Yeah. Kieran, Ethan, Chloe, and Telish had an idea do a hip hop one.

CECILIA: We are going to mix the hip hop with a little bit of corroboree in it.

DAVID: Can we find the music on the Internet?

BETH: We didn't do it yet. (Laughter all around) Come on! Hold on!

MELINDA: So you know, a lot of Aboriginal filmmaking mobs, they're making films, but they always go through their media association... You get a lot of good films. But sometimes people got to work very hard. They got to get that *grant* first.

CECILIA: Oh, we don't have that.

MELINDA: You know? So it's slowly, slowly, slowly. How do you do it without money? Or you bring special money? Or...

CECILIA: We don't get special money.

MELINDA: You just do it without money.

CECILIA: A.T.M. (Laughs all around)

BETH: We have gotten a couple grants. But where we been start this Karrabing thing...

CECILIA: There's you, Tess.

BETH: ...No, more. This Karrabing, not the...

CECILIA: **Mongbetung.**

BETH: Oh, **Mongbetung.** Yeah. Meaning 'money.' Me, I would say making the films can't cost my Indigenous family one cent. It can't cost one cent. They don't

got one cent. That's called settler colonialism and its racial impoverishment. It's got to – both in terms of money, hopefully, but also just in terms of what we're saying – it's got to be *building*. Building people. Building country. So, the deal is I pay to make the films. The first two we used outside Karrabing. We used a camera man...

SANDRA: ...Camera man, sound man.

CECILIA: ...Sound man, lighting men... And we're a been used that director.

BETH: ...So we paid about three people outside. Which means that first short one we never been make any money. You guys never got anything. And then I was looking and I was like, 'God, we're paying all these white people – like I'm paying all these white people.' Plus it's frustrating because – they're *good* – like that Ian Jones, great cinematographer, did Ten Canoes – but we got to do it on their schedule because they're industry people. So that doesn't work for us so well. So we switched to iPhones. So I bought some iPhones. And then David Barker, who's a brilliant independent film guy – taught me how to edit. So each of these fil'ms, they probably cost me thirty, forty, sometimes fifty thousand dollars. Like, where you guys invite me to be *Professor* Povinelli, and you pay me money to talk to you (laughs), that all goes back into paying down... And then any money we make, where do we put that money?

CECILIA: In Karrabing.

SANDRA: In the Karrabing account.

BETH: Yeah. And then how do we decide how to use that money?

CECILIA: We have to have a meeting amongst ourselves. And we discuss what we're going to use it for. If we want to build an outstation or something.

BETH: So it's like a redirection machine.

MELINDA: So you keep all the money power for yourselves.

SANDRA: Yes. Yeah.

BETH: Yeah, so because I've got a sharp nose and I'm white – not *only* that but, you know...

CECILIA: But you're still *family*.

BETH: ...Yeah. But because *racism*. Yeah I'm family, you mob my family – I *hope*. I don't know...

CECILIA: You are! (laughing)

LORRAINE: We're family! (laughing)

BETH: Anyways, but *still* because...

SANDRA: Because colour.

BETH: Because coloured skin, resources still flow into to me. Yeah. So how do I redirect that back into...

CECILIA: Karrabing.

BETH: Yeah. So grants... really, in the end, it's going to flow it out to other people, to be honest.

DAVID: Does it sort of feel like you're wearing different hats at different times then? You've got to put the Professor Povinelli hat on to make the money flow? And then you take that hat off and put another one on to make the film?

SANDRA: Yeah.

CECILIA and LINDA (in perfect unison): Yeah, something like that.

BETH: Something like that. (Laughs) Like where we've been Guangzhou.

DAVID: So was that the first time you saw her give a talk?

CECILIA: Yeah acting like a professor. I never saw her do it in real life.

BETH: What did you think about that?

SANDRA: It was great.

LINDA: Another thing that I saw her, when she gave the profess...

CECILIA: Real **Berragut** come out of you. (Laughs)

LINDA: That's when she talked. **La** London?

BETH: London, yeah.

LINDA: *Full talk.*

LORRAINE and MELINDA (in unison): Full talk!

(Laughter all around)

BETH: And you know what Sheree Jane been say? 'Aunty, why do **Berragut** – meaning 'white man' – go on and on?'

CECILIA: Never stop.

BETH: I said 'I dunno.' She said '*You too!* You can go on and on. Never stop.'

CECILIA: And all our family at the back, you know Karrabing mob [mimes sleep]. We was just falling asleep.

(Laughter all around)

BETH: Yeah, but, it makes us money, eh?

CECILIA: That's what anthropologists do, eh?

DAVID: Anthropologists put people to sleep.

BETH: ...Since this is an anthropology podcast, I guess, it's also like, yeah, I like standing up and saying, how to put it like? When I give a talk – like full on, full **Berragut,** full professor talk, like put on that thing. It's like how do you say, 'This is not about you understanding' – it's not about having the audience, like 'Oh poor indigenous people.' It's about *you*. And no matter – like, let's say me: I'm a good person, other than when I'm irrigating (laughs). But it's not about whether I'm a good person or a bad person. It's about the way, no matter if you're good or bad, certain people *benefit*. Alright? So certain people going to benefit. Like if we say we're family and we got real feelings and you know? Like seriously, that is really true. But nevertheless, they're still going to separate us because I've got this kind of...

CECILIA: **Berragut.**

BETH: Yeah. And they're still going to keep shoving value into me. So how to get people to say, that's going to happen no matter what you feel. And it's about how you benefit. How are you, like me, going to do something to interrupt that? To shake 'em up. You can't solve it. Like I cannot solve the problem. But at least we put it on the table.

CECILIA: Yeah.

BETH: You know? I could give all my money away and I can't solve the problem. But at least it's on the table.

DAVID: Can I ask another question? Because I'm interested in how Indigenous media is kind of a global thing now. Like there's Māori TV. And I have friends who live in America who've seen the Bush Mechanics video from Warlpiri Media. Have you seen that one?

SANDRA: Yeah I've seen it play. NITV.[7]

DAVID: Yeah. So I was just wondering if you look at Māori TV and think about how they did it? Or if you have people get in touch from other Indigenous groups? People are starting, I think, to listen to each all around the world.

BETH: We just do our own thing, to be honest. Do we?

CECILIA: Yeah, when you come. Savvy? We have to make a movie when you're around.

BETH: I don't know why you need me. But you guys come up with the ideas before I come here. But I'm always around.

CECILIA: You're the one with a car. And directing.

SANDRA: You're the director.

CECILIA: Miss Rush Rush.

(Laughter all around)

SANDRA: Give us time, you know, to get up. 'No, no, get up, get up, now.'

BETH: Nah, we been changed that model... You know that's an interesting thing because – what you would say? You would say 'focus.' Get everybody to focus, eh? I think people think, 'Oh well you just, you know, people will just do it or whatever.' But life on community – how much sleep you get sometimes? From fight to fight?

LINDA: You can't sleep. We have to sit up all night. Toss and turn.

SANDRA: You can't sleep.

LINDA: You have to come out and you know...

CECILIA: Check if you're alright.

LORRAINE: People come in the night time, sneaking up.

CECILIA: Them might burn you when you sleep. You don't know what's going to happen.

LORRAINE: Do something stupid.

SANDRA: You don't know what's going to happen.

LINDA: It's just not enough sleep.

SANDRA: Them kids, you know?

BETH: No sleep. [It's really hard. Like physically. I think people don't understand. Like, 'Why don't you stand up and...' You're physically exhausted.] People scattered away, everybody. Scattered out in the Bush. Let's say someone goes down to Beswick. Like Ethan is in Beswick. Which is great. So okay. Like Kieran and Ethan want to do the hip hop thing. How are we going to go get Ethan? We have no motorcar. We have motor cars but they're unregistered. So if we try and go get him – well you end up in jail. Or maybe you're trapped somewhere.

CECILIA: You get a fine.

BETH: And you get a fine. So once again what we face is – like with the **Karrakal**[8] motorcar I gave to Suntu, once we fix it up, where are people going to get eight hundred dollars to register it? Well, I'll do that eight hundred dollars to register it. So it's like, 'director' is called 'focus person.'

CECILIA: Like that Karrabing motorcar. I can't find 1200 to buy that... Because it's not going to come out of my pocket. I'm going to ask you, eh?

BETH: Yeah. Or we can ask each other, 'Should we use some of our funding to fix up **Karrakal** and Karrabing?' Something like that. So it's like if you're going to make fil'ms that are truly grassroots, from really where it's at – not from industry where [they're] living in the, like a fantasy land... Like, even with those iPhones, I still haven't bought the new ones, because the new ones are going to cost like three thousand dollars. But where would three thousand dollars come from?

CECILIA: Good question.

MELINDA: Not out of the sky.

BETH: Not out of the sky...

MELINDA: One of the things that is really beautiful in all your films is you take the viewer on a journey through your Country. And a lot of people listening to us

have no idea what that country is like. Maybe somebody'd like to describe that Country a little bit? Because it's a lot of different kind of country you go through.

BETH: Meaning like saltwater country? What kind? What we got there?

LINDA: It's just, it's all connected, 'cause our dreaming site is all connected in story. And that's why we're all connected with our land.

CECILIA: Totem. Most of our fil'm is on a lot of the Country, that's been shown on the fil'm.

BETH: Also, like, I don't think people in this area of Australia – like we say there's freshwater, saltwater, desert, eh?

CECILIA: But we just say freshwater and saltwater.

BETH: What we?

CECILIA and LINDA (in unison): Saltwater.

SANDRA: And some fresh.

CECILIA: Yeah, maybe fresh.

SANDRA: Little bit fresh.

BETH: Which one do we think is best? Freshwater people or saltwater people?

LINDA, CECILIA, LINDA, LORRAINE (together): Saltwater.

BETH: And why?

CECILIA: Saltwater, you can eat all kinds of things. But plus, our dreaming's in it. We follow our ancestors.

SANDRA: And plus, we're in between fresh and salt.

BETH: I say, I people ask me, I say I like saltwater. Because saltwater you got the salt water *and* the freshwater. Because you got swamp.

CECILIA: And fresh meat to gather.

SANDRA: Goose. Freshwater.

MELINDA: And some of that swamp, that's like paperbark forest?

SANDRA, BETH (together): Yeah.

MELINDA: City mob here, they might not know that one. Really, really beautiful country, eh?

CECILIA: **Medang,** you savvy?

BETH: **Medang**, yeah, paperbark. Oh yeah, like in Jealous Ones where Over and Gabo and, well that swamp, or would – you see all those paperbark paperbark. Yeah. And on top of that Nunggudi Hill, that Black Water Snake Hill and looking over that, where they're standing up talking, top of that hill?

CECILIA: That view.

BETH: Yeah. You look over the biggest swamp. You know what they want to do with that big swamp area? Dam 'em up... that Daly River to develop the North make it the food bowl of the nation... they want to frack it and dam it.

CECILIA: Frack it and poison the water, more like it.

DAVID: And then there are probably people who will listen to this in New Zealand, in America. What do you want to say to them to close up?

SANDRA: Thank you all for listening.

CECILIA: Hope you enjoy our story and fil'ms.

BETH: ...Sorry it's not about anthropology!

Creole Terms:

Banagaiya: A place arrived at by boat.
Berragut: White person, whitefella.
Gammon: Not true, a lie.
Karrabing: Low tide turning
Karrakal: High tide (also a nickname for Beth's truck)
Killimbetgidja: Killing each other
La: Preposition or pointer (i.e. 'at' or 'that')
Medang: Lilly flower tucker.
Mongbetung: Money
Nunggudi Hill
Savvy: You know what I mean?
Wulgaman: Old Lady (e.g. 'Wulgaman Nuki' refers to Old Lady Nuki)

Notes:

1. Beth explains the kinship term: 'I am calling Cecilia Mother – i.e. she is my daughter.'

2. Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith is a 1978 drama describing the life and struggle of an Aboriginal man, the eponymous Jimmy Blacksmith.

3. Haus Kulturen der Welt, Berlin Centre for international cultural exchange.

4. A nickname for Linda.

5. 'Long grass' camping is a reference to Aboriginal people who leave their country or communities to camp on the outskirts of cities like Darwin. They are sometimes identified as 'homeless' or 'sleeping rough,' although for many reasons this is an incomplete description.

6. A nickname for Cecilia.

7. National Indigenous Television.

8. A nickname for Beth's truck.

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