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CURATING THE FIELDWORK PLAYLIST

The following contributions all highlight, in a variety of different ways, how music can shape and even transform the fieldwork experience. In this essay, I consider the music that has been chosen and what this assemblage of musical tracks, this anthropology playlist, might tell us about fieldwork as a research practice. In addition, I have been given the privilege of curating the tracks, a creative task enabling me to tell the story of fieldwork as I understand it as an outsider.

It should make it clear from the start that I'm not an anthropologist. I'm a researcher trained in musicology who now works in the area of research capability and development, studying research practices and research cultures and supporting researchers to develop their practice and the environments in which they work. In this sense, I exist across and between disciplines. My research practice is largely rooted in notions of synthesis and creativity, drawing on a range of methods and methodologies taken from the social sciences and the humanities. I draw on this approach in this essay, examining what the musical tracks can tell us as cultural and aesthetic artefacts, but fusing this with a creative exploration of music as a narrative medium.

My invitation to contribute to this collection stems from my previous research into the emotional and communicative power of the mixtape and, in particular, how in recent times the mixtape has been reimagined and refashioned (via online music platforms, such as iTunes, Spotify, and Amazon Music) as a digital playlist (Fenby-Hulse 2016). It's worth providing a brief overview of this work before

going on to consider what a Fieldwork Playlist might tell us.

THE MIXTAPE AS MESSAGE

To understand the playlist outlined in this volume, I begin by considering the playlist in historical, social and aesthetic terms. The origins of the digital playlist lie squarely with the mixtapes of the 70s, 80s and 90s, a medium by which friends, colleagues, and lovers could share music. Both an artefact and a social activity, the mixtape was usually a single cassette that consisted of a series of re-recorded tracks from either the radio or your own musical collection. The tape was usually 60 to 90 minutes in length and had a title, a theme, album art, and occasionally descriptions of the songs that had been selected. The mixtape enabled users to create musical stories, or narratives, for particular events and activities, as well as coded messages for friends and loved ones. Mixtapes could be 'Best of…' compilations, such as the *Best of Metallica* or the *Best Jazz Tape Ever*. They could be used to showcase your musical collection and musical knowledge and to educate friends on musical genres or the latest up and coming bands. Mixtapes also offered a powerful (and affordable) way of showing affection. The romantic mixtape functioned as a kind of narrative capacitor, the creator's message embedded and storied within a carefully selected series of musical tracks, which the listener then had to decode. The value ascribed to the romance mixtape is not economic, but emotional, and resulted from the care taken in crafting the perfect selection. As

the character, Rob, describes in Nick Hornby's novel *High Fidelity*:

> [M]aking a tape is like writing a letter —there's a lot of erasing and rethinking and starting again. A good compilation tape, like breaking up, is hard to do. You've got to kick off with a corker, but hold the attention (...) and then you've got to up it a notch, or cool it a notch, and you (...) can't have two tracks by the same artist side by side, unless you've done the whole thing in pairs and...oh, there are loads of rules. (Hornby 1996: 77)

A mixtape required time and dedication. Much thought was needed to determine what songs to include, how the songs were to be ordered, and how this relates to the message you were trying to convey.

From the middle of the 1990s onwards, the form and content of the mixtape began to change—a direct result of increasing access to the Internet at home and blank CDs becoming a more affordable format. The birth of peer-2-peer (P2P) file sharing also contributed to the mixtape's loss in popularity, with the mix CD and digital playlist becoming the preferred media for music sharing. Indeed, P2P file sharing provided music lovers with access to a diverse and global library of music, enabling playlist creators to create 'the perfect' mix CD, as the sequence of tracks was no longer dependent upon an individual's limited music library.

The introduction of the iPod in 2001 took music listening and sharing to the next level, enabling users to create endless playlists quickly and easily. In addition, the iTunes music platform offered users with a legal route by which to purchase not only albums, but also single tracks, offering a new way in which to collate and order music. As Dylan Jones, author of *iPod Therefore I Am*, states:

> Albums ceased to matter, and I could edit with impunity. Why bother with REM's New Adventures in Hi-Fi when all you really want is Electrolite and E-Bow The Letter? Why continue to ruin Pet Sounds, the best album recorded by anyone in the 1960s, by suffering the absurdity of Sloop John B when you can simply delete it. (Jones 2006: 18).

iTunes-iPod synchronisation enabled users not only to create a personal library of music at the level of the musical track, but also to curate their music collection through the use of playlists. As Jones notes, albums could be easily tweaked and playlists created to suit your mood or a specific activity.

For Michael Bull (2007), the iPod revolution enabled users to find a place of warmth in a cold urban environment. By creating a range of playlists to suit their personal mood (music to go to sleep by, music for the gym, relaxing jazz), iPod users furnished themselves with a music library that could cater to their daily working lives. The iPod enabled listeners to aestheticize their urban environment, the portability of a vast music library allowing iPod users to rewrite the urban spaces in which they were enclosed, to transport themselves to an entirely new space, a dreamworld or perhaps a reimagining of the space that they were in.

In contrast to the cassette-based mixtape, the listening experience offered by the iPod was rarely social and more often private and personal. While providing respite from a cold urban environment, the iPod playlist fostered a listening environment and culture that lacked the social warmth that was associated

with sharing and listening to mixtapes. What connects the mixtape to digital playlist, though, is the way in which musical tracks are carefully collated and curated. Although a term usually associated with work taking place in museums and galleries, the idea of curation has become a buzzword in popular culture. As Steven Rosenbaum has said, 'Today, curation is the coin of the realm. Film Festivals curate their program. Web sites curate their editorial. The team at the shopping site Gilt Group curates the items it offers for sale.' (Rosenbaum 2011: 3).

For Rosenbaum, curation is an activity that involves expertise and careful selection and is something undertaken in a range of different realms. However, as Mieke Bal (2012) has argued, the act of curation is nuanced and is about guiding thought processes and cultural mediation. She understands curation as a performative act that is fundamentally concerned with 'framing objects and speaking through those framed objects to addressees' (2012: 179). It is from this perspective that I want to engage creatively with the idea of the Fieldwork Playlist and devise a thoughtful playlist that takes listeners on an anthropological journey.

INTERPRETING
THE FIELDWORK PLAYLIST

The playlist presented in this collection provides a musical rendering of a series of fieldwork experiences. What I want to explore now is whether, as a musical artefact, it offers a listener an insight into anthropological, ethnographic, and fieldwork practices and, in turn, whether this playlist could be used as a pedagogical tool to give an anthropologist-in-the-making an insight into the fieldwork experience. In short, I want to question what it means to refashion anthropology as art.

The first thing that leaps out from looking at the playlist is that all the tracks are vocal tracks, with a tendency to draw on music that features a solo voice. There is no techno, classical, or instrumental music here; neither is there any choral music. It requires no intellectual leap of faith to conclude from this that the playlist carries a human tone. The largely solo voice focus, and the lyrics and musical stylings to particular songs within the playlist, bolster this feeling by creating a sense of intimacy and directness. Songs such as Kristofferson's *'Help Me Make it Through the Night'* and Sade's 'By Your Side' use sparse instrumental textures that accentuate the voice, drawing the listener in. The lyrics in these songs, as well as in songs such as Rawl's 'You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine', further establish the one-to-one connection with the listener through storytelling and direct address to the listener.

While the overarching mood or meta-narrative of the playlist seems to lie with intimacy and directness, the broad and diverse range of musical styles and genres presented unsettle this somewhat. This is not simply a playlist of acoustic, singer-songwriter music; it includes soul music, country music, dancehall, reggae, pop, Mayan evangelical music, mbaqanga, R'n'B, rock, and vocaloid music.

The diverse range of styles provides the playlist with moments of stark contrast that grab the listener's attention and provide additional nuance and depth to its meta-narrative. Tracks such as 'Wild Gilbert', 'Indaba', and 'Melt' are geographically evocative, each rooted in regional or national dialects, languages, and musical styles. The emotional disconnect between home and fieldwork alluded to in a number of essays presented in this collection is captured musically in the playlist through shifts and contrasts in language and musical style. Indeed, the array of languages and styles within the playlist can

foster feelings of otherness and unfamiliarity. Throughout, though, I have been careful not to curate a playlist that is based on shock musical contrast and feelings of 'otherness'. To ensure the playlist doesn't present a dated view of anthropology based on notions of insider and outsider, Western and non-Western, or familiar and exotic, I have tried to ensure that where there are stark contrasts, there are also connections, both lyrically and musically, in attempt to complicate and represent voice and positionality.

As well as musico-geographical differences, the playlist is also host to temporal dislocations in terms of when the music was written, recorded, and performed. Michael's Jackson's 'Billy Jean', The Wedding Present's 'Dare', and Lou Rawl's 'Never Have a Love Like Mine' all evoke an earlier time within music history. These tracks contrast with the more recent 'Melt' and 'Sahabat'. A number of essays in this collection refer to the longitudinal element of fieldwork research and how past experiences inform, mingle, and distort the present, a dynamic I have hoped to capture in the playlist. As Daynes and Williams have said: 'the ethnographer's knowledge, in that sense, is not based on a fleeting moment—on one interview, one phone call, or the murky circumstances of an online survey—but on life as it unfolds in and over time' (Daynes and Williams 2018: 7).

As noted above, curation is a performative act. Its narrative power stems from the way in which cultural artefacts are mediated and framed. The order in which the tracks are placed in relation to one another, then, is important in shaping how the Fieldwork Playlist is heard. Drawing on some of the musical contrasts and stylings discussed above, I hope to activate within the listener a sense of fieldwork by bringing to the surface some of the feelings, attributes and

characteristics that the anthropologists in this volume ascribe to the fieldwork experience.

Given that the music of this playlist (and the fieldwork experiences with which the music is associated) crosses both borders and timelines, it felt appropriate to follow the format of the early playlist and, like a mixtape, create an imaginary cassette with two sides.

The Fieldwork Playlist: Side One

1. The Wedding Present—'Dare'
2. Toto—'Africa'
3. Vybz Kartel—'British Love (Anything For You)'
4. Lovindeer—'Wild Gilbert'
5. Michael Jackson—'Billie Jean'
6. Mayan Evangelical Singer—Song featuring lyrics 'Oh Señor…'
7. John Holt—'Help Me Make it Through the Night'

As recommended by Hornby in his novel *High Fidelity*, the playlist opens with a lively number to grab the listener's attention. The musical thrust and drive of 'Dare' by The Wedding Present is, perhaps, representative of the enthusiasm for fieldwork before it begins. As noted by Alexander in his essay, this track fosters a feeling of being in the moment, of focus. The lyrics talk of new experiences, of risk, of daring. Perhaps this song also speaks of the challenge faced by modern anthropology today and the need for anthropology to challenge traditional, and often widely held, notions of knowledge creation and dissemination. For Ingold, anthropology should be less concerned with notions of knowledge generation and more with notions of wisdom. As he states, 'it is the task of anthropology … to restore the balance, to temper the knowledge bequeathed by science with the wisdom of experience and imagination' (Ingold 2018: 10).

Retaining the liveliness and enthusiasm associated with the opening track, the next two tracks speak to cross-cultural understanding. The musical contrast between Toto's 'Africa' and Vybz Kartel's 'British Love' could be representative of differences in perspective between research and researched, as well as the cultural baggage (and assumptions) the researcher brings to the field site. Taken together, the tracks allude to the tensions in the early stages of fieldwork when our assumptions, values, and biases come to the fore, highlighting what Monaghan and Just describe as the implicit practice of anthropologists in cross-cultural comparison (2000: 20).

The heady mix of musical styles that open the playlist is discombobulating and serves to unsettle the listener. The musical effect here is, perhaps, akin to the 'culture shock' described by Jenkins in her essay, a common feature of anthropological fieldwork as researchers immerse themselves in the communities that they are there to study. Toto's 'Africa' and Vybz Kartel's 'British Love' provide additional nuance to the playlist's narrative through cultural and geographic references. In the case of 'British Love', rap and Jamaican dancehall blend together with lyrics that reference UK locations and culture habits; in Toto's 'Africa', an imagined, romanticised picture of Africa is painted. Both songs serve to complicate the sense of place and geography outlined above through cross-cultural explorations and understandings of place that affirm both difference and distance.

'Wild Gilbert' that follows shifts us from Jamaican dancehall to Jamaican reggae. Whilst geographically we remain in the same space, temporally we are relocated as 'Wild Gilbert' was written more than twenty years before 'British Love'. This musico-temporal dislocation is emphasised by the fact that 'Wild Gilbert' refers to a specific temporal and geographical

event: the devastating 1988 hurricane that took over 300 lives in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. Despite the tough subject matter, the song is upbeat and jocular in nature (discussed in detail in Jamieson's essay). The combination of difficult subject matter with upbeat music and jocular lyrics could be understood, in the context of this playlist, as a reference to the complicated and emotionally challenging nature of fieldwork research, with highs and lows: moments of joy and laughter as well as moments of frustration and sadness.

Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean' transforms the soundscape of the playlist, projecting the listener into a musical space that is, for many, more familiar. The music of Michael Jackson has global appeal, with this track coming from one of his most famous albums, *Thriller*. A track that speaks of Western modernity, this toe-tapping number makes the listener immediately aware of the body. It is not a track that inspires introspection, but movement. Physical awareness and embodied knowledge are key parts of the engaged anthropological endeavour.

The body, though, can sometimes feel at odds with the intellectual element required in fieldwork. As Jenkins discusses in her essay, time alone to think is not guaranteed. The track that follows this lively number is used intentionally to jar with the sense of familiarity and bodily presence fostered in 'Billie Jean'; its power results from their absence. The track is a musical memory of Mam Evangelical Music described by Weston. This musical fragment is inseparably connected to his insomnia and symbolic of the challenging elements of his fieldwork. By having no name or performer, the remembered refrains from Weston's fieldwork open up an imaginative space for the listener and shift the focus of the listener from the body to the mind. This track thus becomes representative of the moment within the research process when pathways

aren't defined and outcomes are unclear, and when research is not going quite the way you had planned.

The final track on Side One seems an appropriate follow-up. For Weston, the Mam-language Evangelical Christian music became inextricably wed to his insomnia and the repeated and disturbing appearance of a mouse in his bed. Holt's upbeat version of 'Help Me Make it Through the Night', on the other hand, offers a grounding antidote that brings the listener's attention back to the body, while the lyrics highlight the importance of companionship. Isolation can be one of the most challenging aspects of undertaking fieldwork; support and companionship can be essential, particularly when researching emotionally challenging and difficult topics.

The Fieldwork Playlist: Side Two
1. Kris Kristofferson—'Help Me Make it Through the Night'
2. Ryo—'Melt'
3. Soul Brothers—'Indaba'
4. Sade—'By Your Side'
5. Lou Rawls—'You'll Never Find a Love Like Mine'
6. Najwa Latif (featuring Sleeq and Syamkamarul)—'Sahabat'

Side Two opens with Kristofferson's 'Help Me Make it Through the Night'. While the lyrics are familiar from our previous listening, this version is musically very different. The use of two very different renditions of the same song at this structural juncture in the playlist could be thought of as depicting the pivotal or 'lightbulb' moment in understanding that can occur during the research process.

The sparse acoustic accompaniment and soft vocals of Kristofferson's version draw the listener in and return us to the idea of the intimate nature of much fieldwork. As Daynes and Williams (2018) note:

> [I]ntimacy allows for access to a culture, to the norms and codes shared by insiders, but it also yields a deep understanding that is difficult and sometimes impossible to attain when using other research methods: the time spent observing, participating, talking, and listening, gradually allows the ethnographer not just to see, but to understand what he sees. (2018: 7)

'Melt', which follows, provides a sharp contrast to the acoustic instruments and allusions to rural America of Kristofferson's ballad. This vocaloid track brings the digital to the fore. Dated and stereotypical understandings of anthropology can conjure up ideas of studying detached or 'primitive' rural communities. 'Melt' tells us that this is not the case for modern anthropology, the track giving the Fieldwork Playlist an urban and digital edge. 'Melt' also calls into question notions of authenticity, the use of a digitally mediated vocal distorting our perception of what it is to be human in the twenty-first century.

'Indaba' complements 'Melt' through its lively dance feel. Yet it couldn't sound more different. 'Indaba' takes us away from the digital world of vocaloid music to the specific South African genre of mbaqanga. The upbeat nature of the track refocuses our attention on the body, and in relation to the digital world of 'Melt'. The change in language and musical style serves to highlight the diverse cultures and communities with which anthropology is occupied. Yet, as Van Wolputte discusses in his essay, *Indaba* can also ask us to turn ourselves around and, when taken in relation to 'Melt' (and all the preceding music), this track can lead us to reflect on the impact of technologies, increasing globalisation and cross-cultural influence.

Sade's 'By Your Side' draws explicit attention to cross-cultural influence. The inclusion of a British Nigerian singer-songwriter asks us to consider the effect of international mobility and the growth in diasporic communities on anthropology. As Ingold argues:

> What was inconceivable for the anthropology of the twentieth century, that cultural and biological variations are concordant, is emerging as foundational for the anthropology of the twenty-first. It is borne out in studies of neuroplasticity that demonstrate the malleability to experience of the developing brain, in studies of how movement trains the body and perception the senses, and even in studies of anatomy which reveal the effects of nutrition and activity on skeletal growth. (Ingold 2018: 127–128)

In addition, the lyrics of the song recall the importance of intimacy and trust and, in this case, the importance of sustained relationships over time. To my mind, the song speaks of the complication of leaving the field, of the ethics of care to the communities researched, and how to sustain and preserve those relationships and ensure the research is of benefit to those communities.

Rawls''You'll Never Find a Love Like Mine' builds on this idea of sustained relationships. A disco classic from 1976, this track conjures up a different musical world, the style very much of the time. The track has the potential, for some, to create feelings of nostalgia, something that is accentuated by lyrics that allude to better times. As Monaghan and Just have said, 'fieldwork is what gives the enterprise of anthropology a good deal of its romance' (Monaghan and Just 2000: 13). This song, for me, perfectly catches that

sense of nostalgic romance. There is little doubt that the act of writing-up after the fieldwork can create feelings of dislocation, in terms of not only space and place, but also between mind and body, between what was once said and done, and what is to be written. This track, to my mind, makes the 'me' in research felt. The song's nostalgic longing brings an awareness to our feelings. Stephen Nugent's addition of 'Feelings' by Morris Alpert, discussed in the editorial, would have perfectly complemented this track and, indeed, the overarching narrative of the playlist here.

The playlist concludes with 'Sahabat' by Najwa Latif (featuring Sleeq and Syamkamarul). Released in 2012, 'Sahabat' is an upbeat pop song that returns us to the intimate and direct nature of fieldwork through the use largely of solo voice and acoustic guitar. It is a song of hope and friendship. In her essay, Allerton describes the song as 'an acoustic glimpse of a more optimistic, youthful nation'. My inclusion of this song at the end of the playlist echoes that reading, the song framed so that it provides comment on a possible future for anthropology. For me, the most interesting element to the song is that while it starts with the voice of Najwa Latif, it also includes a rap by Sleeq and increasingly features the vocals of Syamkamarul. In short, the focus on the individual voice is, as the song progresses, replaced with a host of different voices, singing in harmony. For Ingold:

> [W]hat drives anthropologists, in the final resort, is not the demand for knowledge but an ethic of care. We don't care for others by treating them as objects of investigation, by assigning them to categories and contexts or by explaining them away. We care by bringing them into presence, so that they can converse with us, and we can learn

from them. That's the way to build a world with room for everyone. We can only build it together. (Ingold 2018: 131)

I hope to have shown in my discussion how the Fieldwork Playlist as a musical artefact can help us to reflect on the discipline of anthropology and the fieldwork experience. Through my curatorial approach to the playlist, I hope to have given an impression of what it might be like to undertake fieldwork. Without the title to the playlist, the list of tracks are meaningless, however. It is the title that largely provides the interpretative frame through which to listen and understand. We will all no doubt read slightly different things into the playlist, dependent on our own experiences, understandings, and context, but there are elements to it that I hope cut through when the tracks are presented together. An ethics and care, to my mind, sit within, across and between the selected tracks, along with notions of voice and place, of the human and the digital, of the body and the mind, of then and now, of the individual and the community.

Anthropology and the fieldwork that underpins the discipline are evolving practices. The playlist here provides a musical insight into anthropology in 2019. As the field changes, so too would the playlist. Indeed, future playlists may see an increasing number of urban and digital tracks, music without voice, new instruments and technologies, languages old and new, and music that draws on a complex range of styles and influences as the world becomes increasingly digital, global, and complex.

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