CHAPTER 1

Methods Dialogue: Difference

Brandi Wilkins Catanese, Nicola Mārie Hyland, and Ben Spatz

Suggested Reading

Hyland, N. (2020). '"I Am Not a Princess": Navigating Mana Wahine in Disney's *Moana*'. *Performance Paradigm*, 15, 7–22.

King, R. S. (2019). 'Radical Interdisciplinarity: A New Iteration of a Woman of Color Methodology'. *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, 18(2), 445–56.

Spatz, B. (2019). 'Molecular Identities: Digital Archives and Decolonial Judaism in a Laboratory of Song'. *Performance Research*, 24(1), 66–79.

Paul Rae: Hello, everyone. I'm Paul, and I'm British, though I'm beaming in to you from the Wurundjeri land of the Kulin nations in Melbourne, Australia. In Australia, we start these kinds of introductions by acknowledging the elders and families of those on whose land we work, and pay our respects to them.

Tracy C. Davis: I join this conversation from the homelands of the Council of Three Fires (the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa, as well as the Menominee, Miami, and Ho-Chunk nations), in Evanston, Illinois, along the shore of Lake Michigan.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: I come to you from the city of Oakland, which is in unceded Ohlone territory in Northern California.

Nicola Mārie Hyland: Ko Ruapehu Te Maunga, Ko Whanganui Te Awa, Ko Aotea Te Waka Ko Te Atihaunui ā Pāpārangi Te Iwi; Ko Ruahine Te Pae Maunga, Ko Rangitīkei Te Awa, Ko Takatimu Te Waka, Ko Ngāti Hauiti Te Iwi, Kō Nicola Mārie Hyland Tōku Ingoa. Tēnā koutou katoa. My name is Nicola Hyland, I whakapapa to the Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpārangi, Ngāti Hauiti iwi in Whanganui in the central North Island, but I am in beautiful Wellington, Te Whanganui-a-Tara,

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which is the traditional homelands of Te Ati Awa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, and Taranaki whānui iwi.

Ben Spatz: I currently live in Northern England, and I've been thinking about what the equivalent of a land acknowledgement could be here. I'd like to say something about dwelling in an economically depressed area within a former empire and current neocolonial power. But I don't have precise language yet.

Tracy C. Davis: Welcome, everyone. Please say a bit about your choice of the suggested reading material and how that situates you in terms of what you research, and how you research it.

Ben Spatz: The article I shared is one of the first pieces I published after a transformative experience organizing a new kind of theatre laboratory. The project was an investigation of jewish identity, but its methodology was not exactly either critical or auto-ethnographic.[1] I call the approach 'ethnotechnic', meaning that I was looking to experiment actively with jewish identity in relation to other identities, and especially in relation to whiteness, not only in order to understand theoretically how identity works, but also to enact a kind of 'molecular' intervention in identity through what is called practice research, artistic research, or embodied research. In the article, I try to explain what is happening in specific moments of videographic documentation and how this research process overturned some of my assumptions about what it means to research and what the results of research can be. Specifically, I've tried to use artistic research methods to integrate a critical scholarly perspective on contemporary (jewish) identity with my embodied identity and practice, leading to a series of audio-visual publications.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: I shared an essay by Rosamond S. King that functions for me as a resonant thinking partner: King writes about various women of colour scholars and creative spirits who have influenced her approach to merging literary, historical research with her own creative practice. In my current work on Black motherhood, reproductive justice – an analytical framework that doesn't just focus on safe gestational politics but offers a broader conception of what it is to have the right to choose to parent or not parent and to fight for the right to nurture people into a hospitable world – offers a productive way to understand what's important and feminist and yet frequently not discussed in what many artists are doing. For example, Lynn Nottage is a Black woman playwright, and, though we don't necessarily lead with talking about her plays as feminist,

there are instances of frustrated motherhood in many of them. It became clear to me that reproductive justice offers a useful interdisciplinary way of talking about the questions of care and kinship that permeate her work and the work of other Black feminist artists.

I'm trying to look at the ascendancy of reproductive justice as a framework for Black feminist political action, and the way the arts participate in that. I started with the theatre, but I'm also looking at political practice and other modes of aesthetic practice. I'm still in the exploratory phase in that regard, but as I lean in to that social science scholarship it brings up anxiety: I am an avowedly qualitative researcher, and very focused on feelings and other reactions that can't easily be quantified but are intimately linked to the kinds of structural analyses of power that undergird much existing scholarship in the reproductive justice arena. What is required to bring that literature into relation with the things that I want to think and talk about that are in a more decidedly humanistic realm? How do I also step towards it? What might it require me to look for in my cultural objects of analysis? That is the reason that King's piece resonates for me.

Nicola Mārie Hyland: I wrote the article 'I Am Not a Princess' against my will. I didn't want to write about *Moana*. I didn't want to engage with it. For a long time, people would say: 'Have you watched *Moana*? Can you tell me what you think about it?' The article came out of a conference paper, and it evolved (or devolved) specifically to engage with the idea of feminism from a Māori perspective, utilizing our feminist discourse, which is the mana wahine approach. I work in the realm of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge): you could describe it as non-traditional Indigenous theory. It's old knowledge; we inherit it through oral histories, archaeology, the palimpsest of performance and contemporary archaeology, and the decolonizing of the archives. The application of this knowledge to 'postcolonial' life is relatively new. Māori academia is maybe fifty or sixty years old at most, and while these ideas are centuries old, how this knowledge is applied and made relevant to today is truly innovative. So old knowledge is applied to contemporary work, weaving these precolonial ideas into postcolonial acts.

That is why the article starts with a riddle: Why does Moana affect me in such a visceral and corporeal way? I don't actually think I answered that question in the article, but I feel it propelled me into my current research, which is more about Māori performance as enacted remembrance and Māori conceptions of affect.

Paul Rae: If you're talking to people who are not working in theatre and performance studies (TaPS), how do you explain what your methods are?

Nicola Mārie Hyland: I find this question quite terrifying. I've never really confronted it, and I feel I've devolved from a well-behaved utilizer of Western theory to somebody who deliberately doesn't structure things in a way that makes any sense to most people in academia. Essentially, my tools are primarily Indigenous. I am heavily influenced by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Most methods I utilize seek to find new ways to work with old knowledge. However, I write in English, predominantly for a global audience, and my agenda is to reinforce how our culture is still living, energetic, vital, and original. For instance, I always find opportunities to mix in elements of global popular culture, often ironically, to demonstrate the complexity of contemporary Indigenous identity. To articulate ideas from distinct and often contradictory worlds of knowledge (Western and Indigenous) is a delicate negotiation. I'm not a fluent Māori speaker, so there are multiple layers of translation involved in framing a method: bridging the gap between the original language and English – which is never simply literal – to find a hybridized hypothesis.

The provocations for my research often come from a place of anger – a place of 'I don't agree with what you've said about this work' – but I don't want my approach to reading performance to be simply reactive. I'd rather just illuminate it on its own terms, which often involves a process of destabilizing, or unknowing, Western theories and approaches. This was the case with 'I Am Not a Princess', as I was seeking to find a more satisfying method than a Western feminist reading, which led me to apply a mana wahine approach alongside a cultural-materialist, auto-ethnographic approach.

Decolonizing methodologies are also a matter of integrity in my work: while traditional Māori performance is everywhere, very little is written about non-traditional contemporary Māori performance from a Māori perspective, or the ways these modes create meaning on a deeper level beyond entertainment. It is important to point out that practices of performance using 'Māori means' are widely understood and applied in New Zealand. Māori performers have a general set of tikanga (protocols) applied to rehearsal and production that are both common sense and widely practised and, for me, are my default way of doing things. And since the Māori process offers a strong framework for creating devised work, even if I am making such work, I can focus on creating research questions around the politics of the material, rather than the way I work in the room. For

example, this year I am working with students to decolonize John Gay's *Polly, an Opera* (1777) through textual adaptation, operating within a tikanga-led rehearsal process. Tikanga creates a kind of cultural safety net around the work from the outset, and also facilitates the conditions for the research, in practice and on paper.

Paul Rae: In practical terms, when you are doing research, what are you actually doing? What are the practical activities that you undertake?

Nicola Mārie Hyland: A lot of reading. One of Smith's ethical frameworks – it's not hers, she just shared it – is the idea of Titiro, Whakarongo, Kōrero, which is watching and listening before you speak. The first thing I do when I approach the performance is to look and listen, paying attention to the way that other people are having a first-hand phenomenological experience. I do have confidants – different people I talk with about language and about feelings – and my research involves measuring my own reaction against other people's before I articulate an analysis myself. Then there is the part that is traditional in the sense that I'm sitting in an office, doing a lot of reading and googling a bit. That doesn't help me that much, and there are a few resources that I head back to repeatedly, such as Hirini Moko Mead's *Tikanga Māori* (2016) or Rachael Ka'ai-Mahuta and colleagues' *Kia Rōnaki* (Ka'ai-Mahuta et al., 2013). It's pretty spiral – not very linear.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: Nicola, I just want to say I appreciate that you're leading with the fact that this question of 'What are your methods?' can instil a kind of terror. I certainly feel that: when you receive your training in an interdisciplinary programme a definitive methodological orientation is one of the hardest things for your instructors to try to name because they never cover all the methods. They have to pick one or two. Those might, or might not, resonate with you and suit the needs of your project. It's possible to be a credentialed person in the world, trying to do the work that matters to you, but never to be able to say: 'this is the method I name and claim'. For myself, it has often produced a certain amount of anxiety because when I am mixing methods it's hard to know when I'm finished. When have I done enough to be able to say the thing that I want to say, and to feel that I said it with rigour, so it will hold when other people engage with my work?

With that as a preamble, what does it look like when I do what I do? It looks like reading. It looks like writing. It looks like viewing. It sounds like questioning. I often do talk to myself when I'm working alone, so

sometimes it's just asking questions out loud. I read something, it begets a question, and I must put the question to the side to keep pursuing the thing I'm working on right now. I do go back to that question and figure out what it illuminates about the thing I'm trying to do, and where I need to get additional information to answer that question and funnel that material back into the primary project. That, in an iterative fashion, is the most basic description of how I do what I do most often.

At the conceptual level, I think of myself as engaging in close reading and in what I call a kind of discourse analysis: not semiotics and textual structure but more broadly the relations of power that structure how particular cultural objects get produced and what their conditions of circulation and consumption are.

When I teach performance analysis, I encourage my students to think sequentially about the what, the how, and the why of a work: first content and context (What's happening and where? Who's watching it?); then execution (What is the skill with which it's done? What ideals of beauty or refinement or accomplishment does or doesn't it achieve intentionally or unintentionally?); and then impact (Why does it matter that this happened in this time, in this place, for these people, or for us today at a remove from the original circumstances of its creation?). In my own work, I often try to march through that same thought process to account for all those things, not in equal measure but in proportion to whatever the project's question requires.

I think another way of answering the question of what your methods are, particularly for humanists in writing-based fields, is really about theoretical frameworks. For me, Black feminist thought is definitely one of the primary frameworks that structures my thinking about the work that I do, especially the 'why' of my work.

Tracy C. Davis: Framing questions is a classic part of qualitative and quantitative research. Brandi, do you find yourself with a large number of questions you then sift through and prioritize? Do you try to get down to one central question?

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: It depends on the project. Some begin with a question: there's some sort of 'why' that strikes me and motivates me. In those instances, the supplementary or subsidiary questions often come up as a result of whatever mode of engagement is required to begin the process of trying to answer that first question. For example, 'Why does Lynn Nottage have so many instances of frustrated motherhood scattered across her body of work?' Sometimes the additional questions are 'What are the other questions I need to ask?' or 'What are the other

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things I need to know to answer that question?' Sometimes that involves doing due diligence about the artist's body of work and its critical reception. Sometimes there are little questions that feel tangential at the moment that pop into my brain but end up rerouting the work because I suddenly find that the question with which I began is not the most important question, it was just the invitation to show up. The tangential questions can lead me in a different direction and help clarify what methods might be most appropriate to lean on more heavily in order to do right by my research subject.

Ben Spatz: My experience of mixing methods has led me somewhere surprising. For a long time, I experienced two different streams of research – scholarly and artistic – as separate and parallel to each other. This was a problem for me as a scholar, as an artist, and as a person. During my PhD work, the focus was on theory and history, and what that really means is a methodology of reading and writing, a scholarly practice of the humanities in which knowledge is located in written texts. At the same time, I was following another pathway that rejected academia quite strongly, and I was really thinking that the last thing I would ever become was an academic! This other path was influenced by my encounters with the work of Jerzy Grotowski and those who were influenced by him. Grotowski used the term *research* in contexts of art-making and spiritual or esoteric practices, which he called 'ritual arts' or 'art as vehicle' (Schechner & Wolford, 1997: 368). For a long time, I was struggling to bring together these two meanings of the term *research*. How can we understand the generative things that happen in spaces of practice – in a theatre studio for example, or in what Grotowski called a 'theatre laboratory' – as research in a rigorous sense? In the last part of his life, Grotowski postponed the moment of public presentation indefinitely, which to me suggests a turn from questions of representation and communication to questions of methodology. What are practitioners doing, day after day, when they explore particular kinds of embodied technique? How can we understand embodied practices as research in a sense that is not just metaphorical? What are the actual methods and methodologies of embodied research? What are its results and outcomes?

Tracy C. Davis: Ben, your doctoral research and first book, *What a Body Can Do: Technique as Knowledge, Practice as Research* (Spatz, 2015), covered many different communities (yoga, actor training, and theatre-making, as well as observations of everyday life). Are you thinking of them all or of one in particular? Is everybody always doing research?

Ben Spatz: 'Is everybody doing research?' is a good question. I want to say, in a sense, yes. This is part of what happened for me when those two (scholarly and artistic) streams of research came together: the object of research exploded. On the one hand, the artistic stream of research, which I had been exploring through post-Grotowskian practices, highlighted the extent to which knowledge is a matter of doing, part of embodied life, not something separate that is contained in texts. But those theatre laboratory practices can also be isolated from the world in ways that avoid other kinds of difference. They can be patriarchal and extremely white (not that academia isn't). They can be ableist and construct a very narrow image of embodied research. When this focus on embodied practice collided in my work with critical scholarly perspectives, it became clear that the specific materials one practises – for example, songs – can never be separated from the embodied identity of the practitioner. Instead of a division between practice and theory, or body and mind, what appeared was the inextricability of technique and identity. This is what eventually crystallized into a new research method. And what was most surprising to me in this method was the centrality of video recording.

A video camera had never been part of either type of research for me. Theatre laboratory practices historically exclude cameras from the room, creating a strict division between embodied practice and audio-visual documentation. Theatre and performance scholars often have recourse to video, but in a way that almost by definition gives priority to the live event of public performance. When I introduced a video camera into the space of the theatre laboratory, everything changed. It was as if the camera revealed how much both the idea of embodiment and the writing-based disciplines are based on a sustained rejection of audio-visuality. In the lab method that crystallized in 2017, the camera is located at the heart of the practice. It comes inside the space of play, no longer generating performance documentation but facilitating something completely different, a kind of experimental video data. This is similar in some ways to ethnographic uses of video, but it is experimentation rather than fieldwork. In this context, it becomes possible to work with embodiment and identity in a different way – or rather, to reveal in a new way how embodiment and identity have always been explored and reinvented as part of the processes that lead to performance.

During the Judaica project, which is the focus of 'Molecular Identities', I worked for six months with two other practitioner-researchers, Nazlıhan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel. The main starting point or source material for our work was a set of ethnographic recordings of jewish songs. We

would learn the songs and then play with them, at first just the three of us in a studio, then later also with invited guests and in other kinds of sites and spaces. From the beginning, we were rotating through the roles of practitioner (performer), director, and videographer. As we watched the video material coming out of those lab sessions, I realized that something new was happening. The embodied process was like a theatre laboratory practice – exploring songs, texts, and ways of working – but the result was different. We weren't making a performance. There was no intention to create a repeatable score that could be performed for others. Instead, each moment in which our bodies and identities collided and interacted with particular songs, texts, objects, and places was inscribed in a kind of experimental video data, which could then be edited into new forms of audio-visual publication.

We are still in the process of working through this video material. What I can say at this point is that the process drew heavily on both scholarly methods and artistic methods, but when it crystallized, it brought those two streams together in an unexpected way.

Tracy C. Davis: As you mix methods and methodologies in terms of a sequence of acts and engagements, how is it that, additionally, you strategically work with worldviews and epistemologies that bring to the fore certain kinds of knowledge and understanding? How does that feel? How does your affective response factor in when it's both your starting point and, in some cases, the entire focus?

Nicola Mārie Hyland: For me, it's a relationship between freedom and boundaries. Having an Indigenous standpoint gives me more freedom to articulate things, but it creates boundaries that can protect me and my ideas. There are things that I will refuse to write, and things that I feel really ballsy about saying, because my positionality is becoming increasingly explicit and fundamental to what I'm writing. Having an Indigenous standpoint also means I do not need to speak about the things that I don't know. Mostly it's common sense, and I very rarely get the answer to things from anywhere apart from my own Mātauranga Māori knowledge. It's an amazing, affective experience when I solve a riddle (or I think I have) – a riddle that emerges from my experience of watching or participating in performance. It is something deeper than, but similar to, the question of 'Why did I feel that way about this piece?' If I can articulate in words, in some way, the feeling of being fully overwhelmed by performance, in a way that I can't understand at all while I'm experiencing it, it's so fulfilling. In some ways, solving the riddle kind of replicates that affective

response from the original encounter, through finding answers to questions generated by feelings.

Paul Rae: Would you say that it's through your research and your intellectual engagement with these contexts and settings that aspects of your Indigeneity have crystallized for you, or indeed changed and grown?

Nicola Mārie Hyland: Absolutely. It's ironic because not that many Indigenous people are found in academia. In my university only around 2 per cent of the academic staff identify as Māori, and the majority of these are based in Te Kawa a Māui – the School of Māori Studies. So it's uncomfortable finding myself, the lone Māori person, in a typically non-Indigenous space. Part of the struggle is not being able to share questions of method with colleagues who do not and cannot feel the same as I do about work in my field. This is isolating, but also liberating – I experience a performance, alone, and then have this need to put my head on afterward and to go and try and illuminate that feeling for other people who weren't in the room. This is a kind of archaeological process, a layering. Everything that I produce is part of an ongoing conversation that, when I pass away, should add up to the history of my ideas being put together in relation to the sense of the development of my own fraught cultural identity, operating within the academy. I still feel like a neophyte in a lot of ways, because I've turned away from traditional Western frameworks and am moving towards a much more holistic way of working.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: Nicola, I was struck by what you said about the multiple positionalities that we bring to our work: who you are in relation to your research questions; the places where you engage in fact-finding and analysis; who you are in relation to the project of knowledge production; and how the fruits of your contemplation end up circulating and towards whom. I too think about this a lot. The parts of me that I can or should bring to the research process – that help me get to know a performance, or a performer, or understand a community in order to be able to say something about what's happening there – might leverage facets of my identity, my ability to move through space and access information, and the ways I make sense of what I encounter in those spaces. I might need to summon entirely different parts of myself and my social, political, and ethical positionality in order to share that work. As you mentioned, there may be things that you discover that you will not share because it's not right for them to move from performance into written form to circulate in a decontextualized way, because that would dishonour the relationships through which the knowledge was gained.

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I think a lot about the translation required to move from what I know as a result of the conditions of my coming to know it, into the professional responsibilities of demonstrating what I know in the context of my institutional affiliation, departmental affiliation, and so on. It may be super cool for us to leverage our practitioner selves in order to do the work that we're doing, to ask the questions that we're asking. But depending upon how we earn a living, we might be required to boil that down into the format of an essay that has all these citational practices that are going to validate us to colleagues who decide whether we keep our jobs or earn a new job title. This concern about professional legibility is something I think about a lot in terms of my mentorship of the next generation of students, who are so flexible and eclectic in their interests and their desires, for how to build a life as a scholar. How do you acknowledge the methodological expectations of your field, and experience that acknowledgement in your work as something other than conservatism or conformity? Can we think of it as methodological inclusivity, as a way to make something useful within 'conventional' choices of writing style or citations that is not inherently a betrayal of the expansiveness and complexity that one's subject matter requires, or of the practice of freedom that is necessary to push our field forward?

Ben Spatz: I think methods are profound. They are ontological and epistemological frameworks. When we mix methods, we are mixing worlds. It is parts of ourselves that are being mixed, not only at an individual level, but the worlds that we are part of, that we are, that are part of us. It's been eight years since I started to work on jewishness as an identity: to reflect on it, to read about it, to explore my own upbringing in an auto-ethnographic way, but also, just as importantly, to interact with different kinds of materials in an embodied and artistic way that highlights the complexity and materiality of identity. The Judaica project began in 2012, when I shifted from working with invented, non-lexical songs to working with jewish songs. (In the article, I analyse this shift in relation to whiteness and my own need to examine identity and situatedness more carefully.) But what is a jewish song? There is no simple answer. I eventually became interested in the category of songs that are marked as 'Judaica' in the Smithsonian Folkways record label archive, precisely because there is so little, apart from the genre label, that ties those songs together (Smithsonian, n.d.). Within that category you can find folk singers and professional musicians, religious and profane contexts of performance, recent and very old recordings, and an incredible diversity of locations, cultures, and languages. When I learn a song from a recording and sing it, the meaning of that action is completely different than when the same song is sung by someone who is

Polish or Turkish, Christian or Muslim. Not only that, but the meaning of my own singing action changes from day to day, depending on place and context. All of this is well established in TaPS, in a sense. But analysing a moment of performance is quite different from setting up a methodology to work experimentally with technique and identity.

Paul Rae: All three of you have referred to multiple communities in which you participate and/or locate yourselves. How and where do methods feature in the dynamic relations that you have as researchers with these diverse communities?

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: Building on what Ben said, if we think about methods as ontological and epistemological frameworks, our methodological practices become world-making activities. In other words, in the context of my research, I want to live in a world where questions that anchor the Black feminist tradition are constantly part of public dialogue rather than being ignored. How we ask and answer questions offers modes of connection within and beyond the academy. When I attend a play, sit in on a rehearsal, direct a rehearsal, participate in a post-show discussion, or participate in an academic panel organized under a different disciplinary rubric from my own, an affirmation of these shared values is what enables this satisfying experience of pursuing questions together, of making something new together. When I move into a space where people value different ways of seeking out and producing knowledge, it's a privilege and an asset to have that methodological dexterity that enables me to know I can connect with this different community on a subject that matters greatly to us. We may bring different bibliographies to the conversation, but something is going to offer the way in. It might be a love of ethnography, or a love of many modes of discourse analysis, or the joys of the archive. But methods enable co-presence, collaboration, and connection, across objects of analysis, across social identities, and across disciplinary affiliations, and it's not always a loss to temporarily step away from one set of methods in order to step towards another. There's great benefit in the conversations that come from being fluent in multiple methods.

Nicola Mārie Hyland: I teach a whole range of subjects from a whole range of positionalities. It's a survival mechanism, but it's also a reason that academics can be quite empathetic in conversation, because we're trying to engage with our students' worldviews. My students' worldviews are quite diverse, and we must be open to that. Likewise, it's necessary and strategic but also mutually beneficial to engage with methodologies outside of our own and see their efficacy for what they are in the contexts that they are created.

Paul Rae: We often think of methods as a means to an end that lies beyond the immediate circumstances within which methods are being deployed. Can doing research in an ethical way, within a community environment that one has come into for that purpose, also be an end in itself?

Nicola Mārie Hyland: It is often hard for me to justify doing something for a community when the knowledge that I'm imparting about them is not new to them: they're not learning as much about themselves as other people learn about them. Through performance, they're showing their mana (power), originality, and innovation, yet I'm trying to communicate this to a different community, in a different space. Sometimes writing from a Māori perspective feels like rectifying wrongs – where previous scholarship has analysed Indigenous work using Western ideas – but I think a bigger part is showing respect for what these artists are doing and the pride that comes with seeing their success. Being really respectful of the protocols that they use themselves, and being humble, are really important. It's an arduous task. I lived in Australia for eight years. Coming back to New Zealand, justifying myself and building relationships afresh as a Mozzie (Māori Australian) has taken a long time. Sometimes I feel the burden is quite heavy, and it would be easier to write about people who are not around anymore, but the deeper I go into it and the more that I'm open and sharing about processes, they're recognized as mutually beneficial.

Ben Spatz: By temperament and lineage, I have never felt myself easily part of any large community or social group. I've never seen myself as researching with, much less on, any community. In my book *What a Body Can Do*, I had an intentional strategy not to do primary research on anyone. That book is primarily a theoretical intervention: I reinterpret existing secondary sources by applying a new idea (the distinction between technique and practice). For the most part, I did not rely on primary research, because I don't feel comfortable in that position. I generally do not feel comfortable with the conventional scholarly relationship to an object of study, that of a scholar who writes about or on behalf of a community or artist and who then often becomes responsible for the way they are inscribed into the archive. At the same time, I don't see myself as an artist who makes public works. What I always wanted, and what has started to crystallize for me in this new approach to research, was to be able to move back and forth between these positions – the scholarly and the embodied/artistic, or the subject and the object – which I now understand also as gendered and racialized positions (Spatz, 2020). I am looking for a sense of community and a sense of home, but I know that I can only find this

in a situation where these roles are more fluid than they are in either the academic or the artistic contexts I have experienced. I need to be able to enter the vulnerable, embodied flow of the practitioner or performer, but I also need to be able to step back and out from that role, in order to analyse my own practice and that of my colleagues from a critical distance. To me, this possibility of shifting positions is the promise of practice research or artistic research. But more concrete methods are needed to realize this promise fully.

I think of methods as building blocks or leverage points for creating alternative institutions, such as a different kind of university, and alternative worlds. I want to support a generative approach to methods, where people are genuinely experimenting, reclaiming, and reapplying older marginalized methods while also inventing new, as yet non-existent methods.

Tracy C. Davis: Given these significant experiential, affective, cognitive, epistemological, and ontological shifts that occur, how do you think about placing your work? Brandi, from your experience as an editor of *Theatre Survey*, do you have submissions that reflect this, and how do you work with them? How can authors who are doing these kinds of work navigate the challenge of placing their work into the public domain?

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: During my time as part of *Theatre Survey*'s editorial team, I would say that we have been very interested in and open to a certain amount of mixing methods. *Theatre Survey* has standing as a historically driven journal, and obviously there are emphases on archival scholarship or a particular kind of ethnographic or oral-historical fact-finding and rumination that legitimize the work as historical. That, first of all, is certainly something to think about: What is privileged when those are the ways that we qualify work as historical? How do we honour the stated mission of the journal while also being clear that doing so is not about reproducing limiting and exclusionary value systems about knowledge production; that we welcome fresh approaches to historical scholarship on performance? Naming one's divergence from a methodological tradition can be a worthy endeavour. I think the 'why' of methods is incredibly important. It's unfortunate that some methods are seen as so self-evidently worthy that people who use them don't actually have to explain why the methods serve the questions being posed, and also what might be missed by a sort of over-loyalty to those methods. Folks who are mixing methods or bringing methods from one field into another field, where they're not as commonly affirmed, have the responsibility of explanation. That responsibility is also an opportunity that invites us to think about, for example, why first-person

voice in a piece of writing is a necessary component of its knowledge production, whether that's about honouring the relationships that enabled one to access the community and the information and wisdom it holds, or some other reason. There's something generative in not just using but contextualizing your use of mixed or unexpected methods. And I think that folks who stick with more traditional approaches would also benefit from taking a little bit of time to share with their readers not just the fact of their commitment to a particular methodology but the benefits of their using it.

Ben Spatz: In 2017, I founded the *Journal of Embodied Research* (*JER*), a scholarly journal that exclusively publishes video articles (*JER*, 2017). There are no established methods for creating video articles, so the question of what makes a robust or rigorous video article is being explored through processes of peer review. As of March 2023, *JER* had published thirty peer-reviewed video articles on topics ranging from performer training, contemporary choreography, and intercultural musical collaboration to performance-based filmmaking, site-specific eco-performance, and reconstructed medieval martial arts. Our special issues have addressed 'embodiment and social distancing' (*JER* 3.2, 2020); a specific form of videographic composition that I call 'illuminated video' (*JER* 4.2, 2021); and most recently 'ecologies of embodiment' (*JER* 5.2, 2022), with guest editors Raffaele Rufo and Doerte Weig.

When I launched the journal, my understanding of the video article form was very open. What is a video article, after all? I felt that a platform was needed to explore this question. Over the past few years, I have come to understand *JER* more specifically as a space in which the relationship between textuality and audio-visuality can be contested and investigated. The whole apparatus of scholarly publishing is set up to support the circulation of textual documents. These days, many online journals allow authors to embed multimedia within a text. But what if that topology is reversed, so that writing is within video? Most submissions to *JER* still include extensive voice-over, but is this necessary? What are the possible configurations and relationships of textual and audio-visual layers within a video article? What does video as a medium for thought allow us to understand differently about writing?

To a large degree, these are methodological questions: how to generate video material, how to watch and analyse video material, how to edit and annotate video material. Asking these kinds of questions changes what we understand as knowledge and who can be recognized as knowing, as knowledgeable. There are connections to be made here with contemporary Black and Indigenous decolonizing methods, which I am learning a lot from now.

Paul Rae: Do we usefully reframe the discussion if we ask not 'What are methods?' but 'When are methods?' In conventional research terms, methods come at the beginning, when you identify your hypothesis and establish the means by which you will explore it. But we know that even if one is explicit about one's planned methods at that point, they may change over time, in response to the situation that person is in and to external events. Perhaps that's particularly acute when we also consider multiple identities and standpoints alongside the question of methods. Can you think of examples where something has prompted a radical reassessment and recalibration of your methodological thinking and reframed it while a project was in process?

Ben Spatz: This may not be the answer you are looking for, but I want to point out that there is often a powerful wall erected between the 'when' of research and the time we experience as parents, as children, as caretakers, as lovers, as disabled, as any aspect of our being that is not counted as professional work. I wonder what would happen if we thought about these time frames more in relation to one another.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: At this very moment, I'm having a little bit of a focus issue. My eight-year-old is in and out and in and out of the room. So are you coming to say hello? You might as well. This is my eight-year-old.

Brandi's daughter: Hi!

Brandi: Okay, thank you very much.

Paul Rae: Earlier on, you saw my sixteen-year-old slinking embarrassedly into the room and then out with the hair dryer.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: Mine is always fascinated by what I am doing here in front of this machine all day, every day.

Nicola Mārie Hyland: I have an eight-year-old who walks behind me like he's going down an escalator. I can definitely jump on from what Ben was talking about. There's a really strong correlation with identity formation when I'm talking about my positionalities. Indigeneity and motherhood go together in a really strong doubling. For instance, I describe my directing style as maternal – aligned to ideas of the Whaea (mother) figure, which are deeply embedded in mana wahine theory. I've learnt a lot about parenting from methodology, and I've learnt a lot about lecturing from parenting. Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, I've learned a lot about the organization of time: theory time and parent time and teaching

time. The structure of structure itself is a life force for me: to have something in my life that I have an ability to have agency and control over. You find what becomes important with your research and how to work efficiently. There's this wonderful liminal space between the time that I leave the office and the time that I get home, where I actually have space to think about the things that I want to think about. Then I get home and I feel like I'm not ready to leave that conversation in my head, but there are three young people coming towards me with all of these ideas of their own.

Brandi Wilkins Catanese: Methods are a 'how' that you always grapple with. Particularly for me, methods are always present from an ethical or integrity perspective. If ruminating upon your information is happening with a proper sense of accountability to your thinking partners – the communities for whose benefit you hope to be working – there is never a time when you should feel you have satisfactorily pondered whether the questions you're asking are the right ones or are being asked with the appropriate level of care. There should be ongoing mindfulness about the impact of the where and the how of the circulation of your work. In that regard, the answer to the question 'When are methods?' is that methods are always. There is no time outside of methods. They are always under scrutiny and in development, and that is probably at the root of some of my anxiety about being an eclectic interdisciplinary worker. You never get to stop wondering whether your 'how' is the right how, whether it's good enough, or whether it's sufficient. The 'how' is a responsibility and a challenge. That's the best way I can put it.

Note

1 I lowercase *jewish* and *judaism* to 'mark a corporeal, materialist or phenomenotechnical approach to jewish identity', as I explain in 'Molecular Identities' (Spatz, 2019: 70).

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