

Creating spaces for radical pedagogy in higher education.

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In search of radical human rights education

In their 'Introduction to Radical Teaching About Human Rights,' editors Michael Bennett and Susan O'Malley (2015, pp. 2-4) raise the question: What is human rights education (HRE)? They observe that human rights educators may engage in condemning human rights violations and 'point the finger at others for violating human rights' without critical self-reflection on their own contexts, for example, their involvement in an 'imperializing settler colonial state.'

This critique resonates with us as a starting point to reflect on the development of a study abroad programme—the central subject of this paper—we initiated for undergraduate students to investigate diversity and the human rights of minoritised groups. We recognize that students engaged in HRE learning/research become more aware of injustice and more motivated to act against it. However, we also ask in what ways does it, at the same time, reproduce dominant discourses about the problems faced by 'minorities' and reinforce students' mainstream positioning within hierarchies of 'us' and 'them'? The issue is, as Sanjay Sharma (2006, p. 204) puts it, 'the *im/possibility* of engaging with alterity, outside of a pedagogic relationship of appropriation or domination.' The question posed by us in confronting this issue becomes: What would a (radical) pedagogy of HRE, that creates the conditions for an 'ethical encounter' with otherness (Sharma, 2006, p. 204), look like?

We have approached this question from different but interconnected intellectual and pedagogical locations: one of the authors, from a Peace Studies perspective and teaching/research roles within the Centre/Department for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney in Australia; the other, from the perspective of teaching English and Cultural Studies within the Law Faculty at Chuo University in Japan. We draw on several converging strands of critical thought that dissect the interrelationships of power and knowledge (Davis, 2004, p. 9) in relation to learning/researching about diversity and human rights with marginalised groups of people. In particular, we have found compelling the call in Aboriginal/Indigenous Studies to decolonise methods of research (Smith, 1999). As Lynne Davis (2004, p. 5) explains:

[W]ith ‘research’ and ‘representation’ so deeply implicated in replicating relationships of dominance rooted in our shared colonial past, contemporary researchers striving to engage in an ethical relationship with Indigenous communities are challenged to decolonize their thinking and research practice.

Borrowing from these ideas, we take this challenge to be equally important for human rights educators and their students, in the work they do with all marginalised communities (see Briskman, Latham & Goddard 2008; Cislighi, 2018; Ife, 2009; Zembylas & Keet, 2018).

Working with Japanese colleagues and students, we particularly note the importance of addressing the ‘residual effects manifest in many obvious and subtle ways to this day’ of Japan’s colonisation of territories in Asia, including the lands of the Ainu people in Hokkaido and the Ryukyu Kingdom (including Okinawa), both of which have been incorporated into the Japanese state (Mason and Lee, 2012, pp. 5-6.). In this process of colonisation, ‘[c]ore narratives of progress and civilization’ became part of popular knowledge and ‘the Ainu were gradually constructed as a primitive and racially immature “other” [and] Ainu inferiority was contrasted with Japanese modernity’ (Weiner, 2009, pp. 15-16). The Japanese government has refused until recently to recognise the Indigenous status of the Ainu and new legislation passed in 2019 continues to deny them rights to their land or to acknowledge the historical injustices they have experienced (Higashimura, 2019).

Like Jim Ife (2018), we believe that HRE should not start from a top-down teaching of the UN Declaration of Human Rights but with learning from below about the hopes, needs and experiences of human beings in specific situations. Following radical educators such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks, we suggest this requires a critical pedagogy in which learners engage actively with lived experience—and a pedagogy of hope. Furthermore, we concur with Audrey Osler (2015, pp. 30-32) that HRE should be ‘an emancipatory or transformatory form of education where learners get to study justice/injustice and equality/inequality... to support greater justice and equality in learners’ lives and to promote solidarity with others to achieve these ends in the wider society’; this involves a pedagogy that addresses ‘asymmetrical power relations’ and recognises that human rights can ‘become part of a hegemonic discourse used to control, if rights and principles are applied without dialogue and without consideration of people’s specific needs.’

In this paper, we argue for a ‘radical pedagogy’ at undergraduate level that can create the conditions for more ethical relations in human rights research with

marginalised groups. We draw on the fields of cultural studies, post-colonialism and critical-multiculturalism as we consider how knowledge about diversity can be negotiated at the borders or in ‘third spaces’ (Bhabha, 1990; Sharma, 2006, p. 204) and what it means for learners to ‘unlearn their privilege’ (Spivak, 1990, p. 9) and become ‘border crossers in order to understand otherness on its own terms’ (Giroux, 1992a, p. 28). We explore the impact that rethinking ‘research as storytelling’ (Davis, 2004; see also Phillips & Bunda, 2018) can have on more ethical or ‘dialogic’ research relationships.

‘Radical pedagogy’, for us, means creating the conditions for more ethical relations in human rights research in two distinct ways. Firstly, shifting from information gathering around (human rights) ‘problems to be solved’ to enabling relationships in which listening to (human rights) issues identified by ‘marginalised others’ is key (see also Ife, 2009). Secondly, shifting locations from fieldwork in formal spaces to also include informal spaces enhances the potential for the sharing of stories and the creation of more equal research relationships (see also Briskman et al., 2008). Furthermore, active learning also involves students discerning how their questions about human rights come from their own motivations, pre-conceptions and experiences. This creates ‘risky’ spaces within HRE—in bringing together groups and individuals from very different backgrounds and with students taking control over the learning experience/research encounter. A surprising insight from the programme under analysis here is that although always ‘risky’, these spaces create possibilities for students to connect more ethically with ‘otherness’ when investigating diversity, human rights and civil society—as the research encounter is highly contextual and continually in negotiation (Davis, 2004).

In this spirit of research as storytelling, we engage with the possibilities and challenges of our ‘radical pedagogy’ through stories. We start by telling the story of how our thinking about research and relationships has changed over the five years since the Sydney Active Learning Programme (SALP) began - the *SALP Story* is the tale of an experiment in HRE. We then tell three additional stories. *Sho’s Story* tells of the challenges for learners in crossing borders, unlearning dominant discourses and encountering otherness on its own terms. This is followed by the story of our relationship with the Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group, an illustration of how we have tried, in collaboration with partner organisations, to create new ‘third spaces’ for learning about ‘difference’ on its own terms. Our final narrative is *Eri’s Story*, which tells of her struggle with relationships of appropriation and domination; this story suggests both the possibilities and limits for more equal and ethical research relationships in the field of human rights in higher education.

The SALP story: an experiment in HRE

The Sydney Active Learning Programme was born in 2014, emerging out of conversations between colleagues at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS) at the University of Sydney and the Faculty of Law at Chuo University in Tokyo, Japan.¹ Entitled *Investigating Diversity, Human Rights and Civil Society in Japan and Australia*, the pilot project saw four Japanese undergraduate students visit Sydney for a week.² With the support and collaboration of a growing network of academic institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and community groups, the programme has now engaged close to fifty undergraduate students from Japan and created ongoing project relationships and partnerships in Australia. In the story of SALP we give here, we highlight two essential threads that mark this experiment in

HRE: firstly, a shift in our thinking about what it means to learn about diversity, human rights and minoritised groups through research and fieldwork; and secondly, a growing understanding of the importance of relationships within the programme. These threads interweave to form the fabric of our radical pedagogy in which researching/learning is understood as developing ethical relationships.

From the start, the programme has emphasised the value of student-centred learning, self-directed research and meetings with actors ‘in the field.’ As we explained back in 2015, the programme explores ‘a praxis for learning about and building “peace with justice”³ based on the principles of agency, engagement and dialogue’ (Nix, Kodama, Ito, So & Kawashima, 2015). Each year, the programme begins with a semester of self-directed, mostly internet-based research by the undergraduate student participants at Chuo University. After learning about the programme’s three broad diversity themes—Indigenous rights, refugee and migrant issues, and sexual diversity / gender equality—each student develops an individual research project on a specific interest or concern. As inaugural SALP2014 participant Sho Kodama (Nix et al., 2015, pp. 135-136) explains:

At the start of my research, I was interested in the legal aspects of the repatriation of ancestral remains, because in Japan, more than 1,600 Ainu remains are kept by universities, and, in one case, several Ainu people have taken legal action for the return of their ancestral remains from Hokkaido University (Scott, 2013). In Australia, by contrast, more than 7,200 indigenous remains are being or have been repatriated. I wanted to know why Aboriginal people have been able to negotiate with museums and universities without taking legal action and to learn from the Australian situation how Ainu people can also have their remains returned.

This focus on individual research projects, beginning in Tokyo and culminating in fieldwork in Sydney, has been very valuable for many students and has often transformed their understandings of diversity and the human rights issues or situations they have been learning about. Sho Kodama continues:

[A]rranging interviews was challenging for me but I could exchange information with three repatriation experts about the Aboriginal and Ainu situations, and learn many points about repatriation in Australia, which I couldn’t find from secondary research. I also learnt a lot from conversations [with my PhD student mentor] at CPACS Sydney University, [who] supported me in all of my interviews. And the fieldwork enabled me to learn in unexpected places as well, such as a conversation with young Aboriginal men on a bus.

Contested learning about diversity and human rights

However, this approach to learning about diversity and human rights has also raised questions. Students often enter the programme with the belief that learning about ‘minority’ groups means finding out about the problems they assume those groups have, investigating how ‘we’ can help ‘them’ and deciding solutions on their behalf. An active learning approach encourages learners to assume the responsibility for identifying and investigating research issues and questions for themselves, and this

may reinforce orthodox information-gathering, problem-solving approaches to doing research.

During fieldwork students may fall into interview mode, pen and notebook in hand. Their focus might be on gathering the information they need to answer their research questions, and not on understanding how their interlocutors see the situations and issues. Students may also give less value to the views and experiences of minoritised groups than to more 'authoritative' sources such as government websites, agency reports, and academics or experts; they may overlook – or not even hear – accounts in fieldwork that they can't integrate easily into their research 'question' or framework. At the same time, learners are often anxious to include many fieldwork meetings in their Sydney schedules, without having the time to reflect on those adequately, nor to engage with discordant viewpoints in ways that can open their thinking to the possibility of transformation. As discussed in theoretical detail below, we see the difficulties here of breaking with relations of domination and assimilation, and positioning themselves as 'outsiders', when student researchers engage with 'otherness', even when they do so with good intentions (Sharma, 2006; Davis, 2004, pp. 4-7).

We started with a focus on agency, engagement and dialogue (Blanchard & Nix, 2015). Initially we thought that to help students engage in dialogue meant helping them become 'experts' in their research area for Japan by gathering information that they could share with the people they met in Australia. As it became apparent that a focus on research as information-gathering could actually reduce engagement and dialogue in fieldwork meetings and reproduce relations of domination and assimilation, we responded by putting an emphasis on sharing stories in the research process. One aspect of this was that students minimised the 'interview method' and developed their research stories to share with the people they met in Australia; this included sharing information about the human rights situation in Japan. A second aspect was to encourage the confidence to 'listen' to the stories of their interlocutors and learn from those stories about how members of minoritised groups and their supporters, understood the issues. A third aspect was for students to incorporate the disruptions to, and reframing of, research questions/assumptions in their own research story.

Furthermore, it became gradually obvious to us that more informal spaces for 'encounters with alterity' (Sharma, 2006)—such as participation in the Community Kitchen at Auburn Centre for Community, in which we are one group amongst many participants—encouraged the exchange of stories, or 'yarning',⁴ and enabled the development of more relaxed, attentive and equal relationships than was the case in formal fieldwork meetings. As a consequence of all of this reflective thinking about SALP and what it means to do research with others, we have come to see ourselves, and to encourage our students to see, that the quality of the research we are doing depends very much on the nature of the relationships we construct.

Creating hybrid spaces for ethical relationship-building

Right from the pilot SALP2014 project, in which we initiated relationships with the Refugee Art Project, Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group (BMRSG) and Tribal Warrior Corporation, an emphasis on relationship-building has been key to SALP praxis. Reflecting the authors' early concern with creating a collaborative framework for the programme between their home institutions, as well as the possibilities we

saw in the pilot project for working with community and civil society organisations, we initially understood relationship-building in mainly institutional terms.

In the first two years, the programme was run as a collaboration between Chuo University and the University of Sydney with the students based mainly at CPACS during their time in Sydney.⁵ However, we soon built a network of connections with other Sydney universities, and from its third year the programme has been hosted by the Law Faculty at the University of New South Wales.⁶ We once thought of the programme reaching out to a network of institutions and organisations to create connections and partnerships. However, a rhizomatic model (Sharma 2006, p. 11-12) of how the programme grows, spreads and pops up in different locations and contexts may now be more appropriate. For example, from our first involvement with Tribal Warrior Corporation as guests on their Sydney Harbour Cultural Cruise for SALP2014, we have subsequently been invited to participate in their early morning boxing mentoring programme at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence in Redfern. Tribal Warrior have in turn connected us with Donna Ingram, whose walking tour of Redfern we now participate in. In turn, she has introduced us to Mudgin Gal, the Aboriginal Women's Support Centre, and taken us to Biri Biri Café an Aboriginal start-up, where we have met Aunty Beryl Oploo who leads the Koori Job Ready programme.

We now meet many people in SALP in multiple locations. Let us take the example of a group of refugees and asylum seekers we have known since the start of the programme, through the BMRSG. We meet at the Refugee Art Project, have dinner in Auburn, take trips to the beach, and visit the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade together. While the programme can only run because of the incredible hospitality of a large number of partners in Sydney, some relationships have also become more reciprocal. For example, staff and Practical Legal Training students at Anti-Slavery Australia deliver a workshop about human trafficking, and we invite them to join the Tribal Warrior Harbour Cruise and Aboriginal Kinship Workshop in return. Similarly, we were able to offer places on the 2019 cruise to students from the Koori Club at Cabramatta High School in response to the school's welcome to SALP students over the past couple of years. We have also hosted asylum seekers from the Refugee Language Programme on the cultural cruise. In this way, the Tribal Warrior Cruise—which we now commission every year as a part of the programme—has become a hybrid space where our project partners, students, academics, schoolkids, graduate law students, asylum seekers and other people can meet, talk and share stories in diversity and HRE.

As the *BMRSG Story* explains later in this paper, we now also organise a party together in the Blue Mountains for which we cook some Japanese food and other guests also bring food to share. We have become participants, not just guests, at the Community Kitchen, with our SALP2019 students teaching how to fold paper cranes for peace. These informal, unexpected places for learning (as Sho Kodama describes them above) have become more important in the programme as our relationships with organisations and individuals develop. Spaces have been created where we are both hosts and guests, where learning through conversations and the sharing of stories seems more natural than interviewing (though the desire to gather information for research may remain), and where people can relate to each other more (although maybe not entirely) as individuals rather than in their roles as 'researcher' or 'activist' or 'refugee' or 'representative of a particular minority group.'

These hybrid spaces offer learners the possibility of creating new relationships, and even friendships, instead of playing out the roles of researcher or outsider or visitor. They are spaces in which relations of dominance and appropriation in research can become contested. They re-configure ‘research-in-action’ (Davis, 2004) as a process of enabling relationships, and they foreground the issue of what ethical relationships and ways of doing research might look like. Reflecting on this *SALP Story* and engaging in a theoretical discussion is a useful next step for this paper—as it is this understanding of research as a reflexive process of trying to construct more ethical relationships that has come to characterise our ‘radical pedagogy’ for HRE.

Elements of a radical pedagogy for HRE

In developing this pedagogy, we are taking seriously a key starting point in research about human rights: ‘[i]n the context of decolonizing research, contemporary researchers must create a flexible practice that disrupts power relations inherent in a multitude of decisions, processes, and interactions that define research-in-action’ (Davis, 2004, p. 1). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 120) has produced a set of principles in her Maori-centred approach to performing research (Kaupapa Maori): ‘a respect for people; the seen face (that is, presenting oneself to people face to face); look, listen, speak; share and host people, be generous; be cautious; do not trample over mana of people; do not flaunt knowledge.’ We see storytelling, or *storying*, in the sense of sitting down and making meaning together through sharing stories—rather than gathering data in narrative form (Phillips & Bunda, 2018) — as crucial to such attempts to decolonize research processes and relationships. We are also interested in Davis’ (2004, p. 17) claim that ethical practice in ‘research as storytelling’ has a high degree of ‘contextuality,’ meaning that the research process is constantly in negotiation:

Over and above efforts to codify ethics through protocols and codes, ethics finds its ultimate expression in the multitude of practices, decisions and interactions that define research in action. Ethics has spirit. It is this spirit of ethics that needs to break free to create ethical relationships that escape colonization’s bonds.

These ideas from Indigenous Studies scholarship provide the inspiration and challenge for us to articulate the key elements of our radical pedagogy: border crossing; unlearning privilege; third spaces; research as storytelling; dialogic research.

Border crossing and negotiating ‘outside’/‘insider’ identities

In his work on developing a ‘border pedagogy,’ Henry Giroux (1992a, 1992b) refers to ‘the need to create pedagogical conditions in which students become border crossers in order to understand Otherness in its own terms’ (1992b, pp. 23-24). This idea succinctly articulates the challenge of helping students to listen and understand the perspectives and analyses of others, especially when they don’t fit neatly with the students’ own framing of the ‘problem.’ But what does it mean to become a border crosser? For us, this is not a question of crossing the border between one categorically defined cultural entity or identity into another. It is not, for example, about non-Indigenous students becoming in some way Indigenous students—it is

rather about negotiating the borders between ‘outsider’/‘insider’ positions in research (Davis, 2004, pp. 6-7).

‘Border pedagogy’ then helps students not just to analyse texts, ‘but also how they “read” themselves intellectually and affectively into those cultural identities and subject positions offered by dominant and oppositional representational practices’ (Giroux, 1992b, p. 25) and ‘border pedagogy points to the need for conditions that allow students to write, speak and listen in a language in which meaning becomes multi-accented ... a language in which one speaks with, rather than exclusively for others’ (Giroux, 1992b, p. 24). As Giroux explains:

[S]tudents engage knowledge as border crossers by moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power. As students cross borders, they are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations which organize them become destabilised and reshaped. Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps (Giroux, 1992b, p. 25).

Unlearning Privilege

For Giroux, border pedagogy requires ‘deconstructing forms of privilege’ that are a legacy of colonialism and which allow some to assume authority and agency and prevent others from speaking (Giroux, 1992b, p. 19). This involves more than a disengaged critique of dominant discourses by those with the authority to act and speak on behalf of others. It requires what Spivak has called, ‘the unlearning of one’s own privilege. So that, not only does one become able to listen to that other constituency, but one learns to speak in such a way that one will be taken seriously by that other constituency’ (Spivak, quoted in Giroux, 1992b, p. 19). Understood in this way, unlearning privilege is one of the conditions for creating relations in which students as researchers can attend to and value the views of others and also share their own stories.

Spivak’s approach to unlearning privilege also suggests the importance of opening ourselves up to the heterogeneity of a field of enquiry and recognising discourses and interpretations beyond the dominant ones imposed by imperialism (Spivak, 1990, p. 9). Spivak sees this as ‘the necessity of unlearning one’s learning,’ not just by stepping outside of dominant paradigms of knowledge, but by ‘trying to learn outside of the traditional instruments of learning’ and asking what it means to learn (see also hooks, 1994). Indeed, Spivak refers to the importance of ‘just sort of hanging out’ with people who articulate different possibilities to the dominant discourses, suggesting the need is to re-configure relationships, practices and locations of learning, not just find other texts to read (Darius, Jonsson & Spivak, 1993, pp. 24-25). So unlearning privilege also requires unlearning the authority to conduct research as a process of information-gathering and problem-solving on behalf of others (see also Porter, 2004).

Storytelling in third spaces – creating spaces for ethical research

Thus, border crossing as a form of critique involves creating new spaces in which the encounter with ‘otherness’ is no longer ‘us’ reaching out from our positions of authority (Giroux 1992b, p. 13). This claim draws on ideas from Homi Bhabha (1990, p. 20; 1994, p. 211), who contends that the discourse of ‘cultural diversity’ that seeks to contain ‘cultural difference’ creates the necessity for a ‘third space’, which can disrupt existing modes of knowledge and representation. For example, how can

undergraduate students of HRE be encouraged to engage with storytelling, especially when they may cling to orthodox notions of research as information-gathering through interviews?

One approach to encouraging 'research as storytelling' may be to create spaces for learning through encounters with others, spaces that do not feel like formal fieldwork venues or trigger the roles of researcher and researched. For example, Louise Phillips (2016) characterises storytelling as 'performative accounts' that involve 'thinking, observing and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being' (citing Barad, 2007, p. 133). Phillips argues that a 'performative account' advocates '*relationality between specific material (re)configurings of the world through which boundaries, properties and meanings are differentially enacted...*' (citing Barad, 2007, p.139 – italics as per original). This suggests a link with third spaces, in which performative storytelling engages us with the world in the materiality of encounters with others rather than viewing them from the dominant discursive position of the 'outsider.' This makes possible a reconfiguring of the borders of difference.

From dialogue to dialogic research

One clear feature of the SALP story is a shift in our understanding of the dialogic. Our early concern was with 'communicative dialogue' (Ellsworth, quoted in Burbules, 2010, p. 265) in which the 'aim of dialogue [is] to speak and understand across differences' (Burbules, 2010, p. 259) and the principle of reciprocity is key. Reflecting after SALP2015, we wrote about the importance of preparing students,

to be ready to *engage* with the people they meet during fieldwork, not just to interview and gather information from them.... students need to build knowledge about their human rights issue in Japan so as to share this knowledge with professionals and activists in Australia; and to thus enable a genuine exchange of information and dialogue (Blanchard & Nix, 2015, p. 17).

At this point, our concern was to equip undergraduate students with the language and literacy skills and knowledge for them to participate on an equal footing with the 'experts' they met in Australia.

Notions of dialogue as a rational, equitable, even democratic exchange, which are central to much critical pedagogy, have been trenchantly critiqued by feminist writers such as Elizabeth Ellsworth who have pointed to the dynamics of power that unequally structure 'dialogic' encounters between people from different social groups and can make reciprocity and mutual understanding impossible (Ellsworth, 1992, pp. 106-108). Nicholas Burbules (2010, pp. 260-261) asserts that 'dialogue is not just speaking across given positions of difference, but a relation in which those very positions can be (need to be) questioned.' And drawing on Bhabha's (1994) critique of cultural diversity, he argues that traditional approaches to dialogue can 'domesticate' difference. This reduces difference to degrees of variation (or diversity) on a continuum, preventing a recognition of more radical conceptions of difference—such as incommensurability—emerging in dialogue (Burbules, 2010, pp. 260-261). We have seen this in our students' work when, on occasion, they deny the value of what interlocutors have told them—or even fail to hear it—because of a preoccupation with their research questions and assumptions.

This has led us to take a Bakhtinian approach (Lillis, 2003) to the importance of the dialogic in fieldwork and research. This approach foregrounds the constant tension in discourse and learning between the monologic (one truth, one voice, one authoritative position) and the dialogic (many truths, voices and positions). Such an approach emphasises that dialogue needs to go beyond a dialectical synthesis of two voices or positions into a single truth by keeping multiple differences in play and attending to actual utterances rather than abstracting them into a unitary understanding of a problem (Lillis, 2003, pp. 198-199). Such a dialogic approach enables us to listen more fully to multiple and disparate accounts and to recognise complexity rather than try to reduce research to neat answers. This helps create the conditions for students to encounter ‘otherness’ on its own terms, rather than within their self-initiated frames of reference.

Together, these elements of our radical pedagogy aim to address Sharma’s claim about the ‘im/possibility’ of escaping relations of domination and assimilation and the three stories that follow shed light on the productive possibilities and limits of this position.

Sho’s Story: the challenge of ‘border crossing’

Sho was a second year undergraduate Law student when he joined SALP2018 and wrote in his learning journal, ‘...The main reason that I wanted to [join this programme] is to “recognize” how important human rights [are] for civilians like me.’ He was specifically interested in Indigenous Rights and, early in his research, was alarmed to learn about the levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal people in Australia. He asked in his research journal, ‘why does physical violence to Indigenous people tend to happen, rather than to non-Indigenous people?’ Sho explained this focus on the problems faced by Aboriginal people in Australia by referring to previous volunteer work he had done in an Indigenous community in Malaysia: ‘I lived with Indigenous people whose names were “Ibans.” Maybe because the duration of time was too short to understand them, it seemed that there were no problems for themselves to live. So, I had a prejudice that all Indigenous people in the world must have no problem around their lives.’

In his attempt to better understand why Aboriginal communities experience violence, Sho did some research into the experience of the Stolen Generations, and subsequently intergenerational trauma. He then researched the Child Protection Service because, as he reported in his journal, ‘there was a document which indicated that Child Protection Services which exists today is quite similar to Stolen Generations... Child Protection Services is the action which is done by The Department of Community Service to remove children from families if they are at risk of significant harm.’ Sho next turned in his research to the experiences of Ainu people in Japan, hypothesising that ‘the fact like “Stolen Generations” must [have] happened in Japan.’ However, at Charanke Matsuri, an Indigenous festival in Tokyo, he learnt from a man with Ainu ancestors that the ‘ancestors moved from Hokkaido not because they had [an] experience like [the] “Stolen Generations”, but because they wanted to [escape] from discrimination in Hokkaido in terms of employment, culture. So, my hypothesis was not correct.’

In preparation for fieldwork in Sydney, Sho’s internet research included Aboriginal organisations and programmes concerned with community empowerment and the promotion of human rights, several of which we had developed relationships with over the previous years. Reading and listening to these

sources, Sho wrote in his learning journal: '[I] settle my research question as—what makes it possible to overcome cutting connection between culture and identity?' a break he had learnt was another aspect of the experiences of Stolen Generations.

In Sydney, Sho's fieldwork included participation in the Tribal Warrior Corporation Mentoring programme for 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth of all ages [which is] all about forming good habits, guiding by example, acknowledging our achievements and including everyone' (tribalwarrior.org). Many mornings Sho would make his way to Redfern by 6.00am to join the early morning boxing programme which is 'designed to help recidivism rates in jail – meaning we want our youth to stay out of jail through commitment to the program and learning discipline during physical training– the program is so successful that the local police have reported a decrease of 70% in crime in the area!' (tribalwarrior.org). Sho was able to engage in informal discussions after the boxing sessions with Tribal Warrior mentors such as Bert and Jacob, and with Tribal Warrior CEO, Shane Phillips, who had started the mentoring programme. He also observed the language classes for Indigenous youth, and realised from this that 'empowerment by discipline and revitalization of Aboriginal language' were keywords in the Tribal Warrior approach.

Sho also planned a visit to Mudgin-Gal Women's Centre—identified from his research as offering 'support for women, girls and their young families,' with a key project acknowledged as a best practice model for addressing family violence in urban Aboriginal communities. At Mudgin-Gal Women's Centre Sho introduced himself, 'Hello... I am from Japan and I am interested in Indigenous peoples because I once visited an Indigenous community in Malaysia. What I want to know is about why there is violence in Aboriginal communities.' The Mudgin-Gal project coordinator then introduced herself: 'Welcome everyone... actually, last year, my daughter went to Japan as an exchange student and she had a wonderful time.' The coordinator then talked with the students about the important work of the Mudgin-Gal organisation to support the human rights of Aboriginal women— including its interventions in 'Birth Alerts', which give medical staff the power to remove Indigenous babies from their mothers. This experience had a significant impact on Sho, who recorded in his learning journal:

I visited Mudgin-Gal because I thought that I could deepen my analysis about why cutting the connection between culture and identity can happen because of the Stolen Generation, by asking questions to people concerned. In fact, I could listen [to] the reason which seems to have a deep connection to my motivation to visit Mudgin-Gal. ...Also, I could listen to the story about why 'Child Protection Service' is not good. Because 'Birth Alerts' enables non-Aboriginal people to judge whether [to remove] the baby [from] Aboriginal women, the break between baby and parents can happen... the biggest reasons why the break between culture and identity happened because of Stolen Generations, is the deprivation of kinship.

We see from *Sho's Story* that there is always a tension in his research between wanting to take up Indigenous perspectives—that is, to learn about the Stolen Generations, people's experiences of intergenerational trauma and the cutting of connections with culture and identity—and the 'authoritative' view of dominant discourse (for example, that of the Child Protection Service) which assumes the problem lies with Indigenous people. This sets up a border between 'majority' and

'minority' populations, with the problem located with the latter. Interwoven with this are other tensions, between identifying 'violence' as a feature of Aboriginal communities *and* as something that has been visited on these communities as a legacy of colonisation; and between a focus on the problems that Indigenous communities face *and* the actions these communities are taking to empower themselves.

We also see how it has proved much easier for students like Sho to build ethical research relationships within informal spaces, such as the early morning boxing programme, than in more formal field visits, to Mudgin Gal for example, which was more fraught for the 'nervous' researcher. This was despite learning, prior to doing fieldwork, about building ethical research relationships through role play practice with peers, including introducing themselves by sharing their research about Japan. However, because we have developed prior relationships with our host organisations, the research partner feels able to take back the initiative. As we see in *Sho's Story* above, the Mudgin Gal Coordinator reclaims the space and the students could sense the relationship building, as the 'insider/outsider' border is renegotiated to create more equal relations.

Sho's Story is an example of how students can deal with the challenges of complex issues in human rights research and fieldwork and how they can work to actively unlearn dominant discourses and, with motivation and reflection, become border crossers. However, along the way there is a constant struggle to escape the appropriation and domination associated with the researcher role. This is especially the case for undergraduate students working in an additional language and in unfamiliar cultural settings, as Sho suggests after reading the first draft of this story:

I am really sure about the fact that I had a lot of problems to participate in [SALP]... in terms of the 'impossibility of engaging in alterity'; changing the attitude of asking questions, changing the words I use, being more confident in myself, avoiding questions which are uncomfortable to listeners, my communication skills, adjusting [to] different circumstances⁷

However, Sho's struggle to understand 'violence' *in* Aboriginal communities or 'violence' *on* Aboriginal communities, crosses that border. He is finally able to listen to what 'violence' might mean—from Mudgin Gal's perspective—and how that affects and impacts the human rights of Aboriginal peoples. Beginning to engage with difference, as Sho does here, is also a theme in the *BMRSG Story*.

The BMRSG Story: *engaging with 'difference' on its own terms*

Our relationship with the BMRSG is one of the longest and most characteristic of the SALP programme. In its development, we can see how important relationships have become and how the development of reciprocal relationships and hybrid spaces have transformed our understanding of what it means to do research.

The relationship began back in February 2014, on the pilot programme. Two of the four students were researching issues facing asylum seekers and refugees: one student wanted to know more about the medical situation of people seeking asylum and the other wanted to visit a detention centre in Australia to compare it with what she had seen of Japanese detention centres as an intern with the Japan Association for Refugees. We knew that getting access to detention centres is very difficult, and we were worried about having no connections with the detainees; however, we had

discovered the BMRSG made weekly visits to Villawood Detention Centre and so we asked them if we could join a visit.

Our contact in the BMRSG, Grant, was initially positive about helping us but, after discussing our request, a meeting of the volunteers decided they couldn't take us with them to Villawood. His email explained, '...the volunteers already feel under enough pressure organizing weekly visits for themselves and dealing with the bleak and inhumane conditions for the men they are visiting.' They were concerned for the well-being of the detained men, whose mood was very low due to their treatment by the immigration authorities and the threats of forced deportation. 'The men feel like they are under constant observation and stress levels move constantly up and down. We don't want to add to their anguish and distress.' And Grant further explained that they were 'concerned that the visit could add to the "fishbowl" effect and have an unintended negative outcome.'

Our disappointment at this 'rejection' was mixed with a feeling that we had been naive about the ethics of 'researching' people held in immigration detention, and already under surveillance, and had allowed our research instincts to over-rule our humanity a little bit. We felt, though, we had learnt something about the difficulty, perhaps impossibility, of doing research with a group of people as marginalised as asylum seekers in detention in Australia, when our relationship with them is so unequal.

Then Grant got back to us with a remarkably generous invitation to meet with the BMRSG members and 'refugee friends' in a situation that would be much less unequal and 'fishbowl-like'. He wrote:

[O]ur plans are well under way for the get-together between your Japanese exchange students and our refugee friends....one of our members has agreed to host the lunch one of our refugee friends will cook a selection of Afghani food for our lunch... Fourteen men have accepted the invitation. We have known them from Villawood over many years and now they are all in the community working. All have remarkable stories to tell.

When we arrived at the party, most of the refugees had been there since 7am cooking up an amazing meal of Afghan curries for us. We spent three or four hours there talking with refugees from Iran, Afghanistan and Burma about food, about their lives in Australia and our lives in Japan, about the countries they had come from and, perhaps most passionately, about our favourite football teams!

At this party we first got to know refugees like Murtaza, who we have met again on all of our subsequent visits to Sydney. And a 'welcome' party with the BMRSG has now become an integral part of our programme and one of the highlights for students, according to their feedback. Gradually, our role in the organization of the party has changed as our relationship with the group has developed. At first we were outsiders and guests, enjoying the hospitality of the group; but from the second year we made a donation of \$300 to cover the cost of food while the BMRSG did all the organising and preparations as hosts, which made us feel more like partners in the event. From the fourth year of the programme, we became insiders, taking on the role of joint-hosts for the party alongside the BMRSG, inviting refugee friends and supporters to the Blue Mountains Youth Hostel as our guests, cooking food, playing games and music, and listening to stories.

This sense of co-ownership and shared responsibility for the party, as well as the individual conversations between our Japanese students, our refugee friends and the refugee supporters and advocates, creates a learning space that includes all the principles of research posited in Smith's (1999) Kaupapa Maori approach. In this milieu insider/outsider identities are blurred and it seems to be more possible to engage difference on its own terms. As we shall hear in *Eri's Story* below, it is these regular informal meetings that had such a complex impact on her engagement with human rights.

Eri's Story: struggling with relationships of appropriation and domination

Eri was in her first year as an undergraduate Politics major in the Law Faculty at Chuo when she joined SALP2017. She was in a first-year seminar class on gender issues but quickly developed an interest in learning about refugees, seeing early in her research how the potential of refugees in Australia is thwarted, noting: 'Despite eagerness to work and experience, many refugees are unemployed.' In November 2018, she talked with us about her current refugee support activities in Japan, and how her experiences in SALP had influenced her involvement in these. In an email before meeting us, Eri had said she was happy to discuss this because, 'SALP is the very first step for me to be interested in refugee issues.'

Eri explained to us that she was doing an internship with a refugee support organisation in Tokyo, setting up a programming school for people who are seeking asylum. She wanted to help refugees become more independent because she thought they shouldn't be dependent on support organisations which could only provide limited support and sometimes had to refuse support for those who wanted their help—and programming skills could help refugees find employment. Eri said that in the future she wanted to create a company that would provide refugees with support and training for finding jobs, again to help support their independence.

However, Eri had spent a year worrying about whether these activities were the right thing to do. She had been trying to find what she called a right 'relation'—or 'feeling'—between herself and refugees, one which wasn't based on sympathy. Eri said her worry was sparked by her friendship with Murtaza, the Hazara asylum seeker from Afghanistan. Eri and other SALP students had met Murtaza several times during their three-week visit to Sydney in February-March 2017 at various informal events: a party organised with the BMRS; a dinner in Auburn; a trip to the beach at La Perouse; and even a visit to the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras parade. Eri said that meeting and talking with Murtaza several times in these informal settings had been the most important experience of SALP for her—more significant than fieldwork meetings such as an interview at the Refugee Advisory and Casework Service. She talked about how Murtaza still kept in touch on Facebook.

As Eri explained, however, the moment in the meetings that most affected and really saddened her came near the end of our Sydney visit. Murtaza said that although he enjoyed meeting students like Eri and appreciated that the programme came back to visit him each year, in the end the programme could only help the students, not him. The students could go back to Japan having learnt from the programme, but he couldn't leave. And, for a year, this signalled for Eri the impossibility of escaping from a broader unequal relationship in which the characteristic 'feeling' was sympathy.

Eri then explained how she finally came to find a 'feeling' or 'relation' that made it right for her to start actively supporting refugees. She came to this realisation

through recalling the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in Tohoku in March 2011. She is from Fukushima and so was close to the effects of the disaster. She explained that soon after the disaster she met school friends who had lost everything. Those friends had come to her junior high school as 'transfer students'. She realized that her support and solidarity at that time had been for people who had 'lost everything', as people seeking asylum in Australia had also 'lost everything.' This made her 'feel' it was right to embark on her activities to support refugees in Tokyo and now, nine months after we talked, Eri has taken a semester off university to focus full-time on her work with refugees and asylum seekers.

Listening to Eri's story, we are struck by how important the relationships she has with refugees are for her. For her, there are two key issues: the kind of relationship between refugees and their allies that any activity is based on or constructs; and the possibility of refugees escaping a dependence on support organisations. The encounters with Murtaza that she describes seem to have created a more equitable and dialogic research relationship, and it has become possible, in some ways, for Eri and Murtaza to establish a friendship that goes beyond the dominance and appropriation of a formal researcher-researched relation.

But we also see how Eri was faced with the impossibility of escaping from an unequal relationship: she and other students could take what they had learned from their visit to Australia and from meeting Murtaza back to Japan with them, and these experiences might enrich or change their lives; however, as Murtaza says, his situation would not be fundamentally affected by this encounter. To move beyond this realisation, it was important for Eri to break out of the frame of domination which locates her within mainstream society, where she is motivated by feelings of sympathy for 'others' who can't help themselves. She needed to cross a border and feel a connection with the people she wanted to support.

Postscript: Reflections on a Radical Pedagogy

So, what can we learn from listening to these stories? Within SALP, the students' self-directed research projects have the potential to both reinforce and challenge the idea that learning about human rights and diversity means understanding how mainstream society can help 'minority' groups. Eri's story in particular suggests the 'radical' potential for HRE in higher education to create the possibility for students to move beyond relations of appropriation or domination, and to (provisionally) create more equal relationships with the people they are learning from. Like Sho, she finds ways to temporarily negotiate the im/possibility of engaging difference on its own terms, especially in the kinds of third spaces that emerge in the relationship with the BMRS. However, their stories also indicate this possibility is always shadowed by the impossibility of fully and permanently crossing the borders of appropriation and domination, and unlearning the privilege of the researcher. This is especially the case when relations between the students and the people they are learning from are structured by fundamental social and economic inequalities of the kind that Eri encountered—there are limits to how much difference can be negotiated away, or borders decentred, by sharing stories in third spaces. Reflecting on these tensions in the stories and the programme—the oscillation between the possibility and impossibility of negotiating power dimensions within HRE—points to further directions for research.

Indeed, returning to the argument that Davis (2004, p.5) makes at the start of this paper—that both 'research' and 'representation' have played a part in

recreating relationships of dominance from the colonial past—helps us realise that we have only addressed part of the problem. In our 'radical' pedagogy we are interested in creating the conditions for more ethical relationships in the process of research, but we have not engaged with the issue of how our students represent the people they have learnt from when they share their research. Perhaps our attempts at re-imagining research/learning about human rights as the process of developing ethical relationships are just first steps in creating a radical pedagogy for HRE in higher education.⁸ For Davis (2004), control over how research is disseminated, to whom, and for what purposes, is key to developing ethical research practices and relationships that do not marginalise those being researched. This raises new challenges for a radical HRE pedagogy around how undergraduate students can involve the people they are learning with, not just in storytelling and dialogue, but in negotiating the shared ownership of the research itself. Our story of the search for more ethical relationships in learning and researching about human rights goes on.

Notes

¹ We particularly wish to acknowledge the work of Saeko Nagashima and Ryota Nishi at Chuo University who have been collaborators in the development of the programme.

² The pilot was made possible by the generous support of the Australia-Japan Foundation (DFAT), which provided \$14,500.00 of seed funding to CPACS to initiate the project.

³ See Rees (2003, pp. 186-221), who links 'peace with justice' with defining and attaining human rights.

⁴ See Geia, Hayes & Usher (2013, p.15) who discuss the contribution from Indigenous studies of 'yarning...an informal and relaxed discussion; a journey both the researcher and the participant share as they build a relationship and visit topics of interest to the research'.

⁵ CPACS community involvement includes homestay hosts during SALP2015 Jane Fulton, Marty Morison, Ben Oh; and CPACS student mentors Mujib Abid, Juliet Bennett, Tim Bryar, Viviana Rodriguez Carreon, Punam Yadav.

⁶ We gratefully acknowledge the collegial support we have received from Gabrielle Appleby, Lucas Lixinski, and Colin Picker at UNSW Law.

⁷ Listening to Sho's feedback about his story helped us to reflect on *our* position of domination and appropriation as researchers in relation to the students we write about here, something we wish to address in any further research we do about SALP.

⁸ This point is also made by one of the peer reviewers for this paper who contends that our pedagogy 'is not radical from the perspective of community organizers who subscribe to social research that puts importance on the role of the people being researched.' This reviewer suggests we consider the value of a co-generative approach to research in which knowledge is co-created or shared with local stakeholders to increase their control over their situation. We find this an interesting critique to address in the future.

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