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Editorial.

An Introduction to Trauma-Informed Teaching in Anthropology

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Abstract:
This editorial introduces the significance of a trauma-informed approach for teaching and learning in anthropology. It will provide an overview of key terms relating to trauma, and how these might apply to anthropological teaching and learning contexts. It also considers what these teaching contexts might reveal about trauma-informed approaches, drawing on conversations with colleagues from across different institutions into their experiences working with trauma. It identifies the centrality of trust and control in reflecting the needs of participants and students.

This collection brings together pieces from anthropologists working at different academic career stages: from those writing up PhD fieldwork to those reflecting on longer teaching and research engagements with trauma. The issue also comprises of work on very different ethnographic contexts including the UK, Greece, Italy, South Africa, Palestine, and Lebanon. This heterogeneity illustrates the usefulness of trauma as a lens through which to interpret multiple forms of experience, whether considering how to teach students about challenging topics, engage with those who have experienced trauma, or make sense of how to navigate our own experiences. Overall, it suggests that conversations around how to work with trauma need to be had with others - between students, colleagues, departments, and institutions.

Keywords: Trauma, vicarious trauma, historical trauma, trauma-informed approaches

Introduction:

This Special Issue emerges at a time of considerable violence across the world. The scarcely conceivable violence being inflicted on Palestinians – and aggression spreading to Lebanon – including the aiming of violence on areas designated safe, hospitals, and schools, generates unimaginable trauma as well as the dissemination of images of suffering. There are violent conflicts and war in Ukraine, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and many other countries throughout the globe. The climate crisis continues to enact structural and societal violence across many areas of the world, and disproportionately among what the UN defines as 'SIDS' (Small Island Developing States) as well as immediate climatic violence in the form of increased natural disasters. Each country has their own particular dynamics of contemporary violence. In the United States, for example, as of July there have been 35 shootings on school property in 2024 – following 73 in 2021, 79 in 2022, and 82 in 2023, as well as increasingly violent rhetoric in the lead-up to the elections. In Europe, far-right political parties and ideas are proliferating, most recently in Austria, leading to rising violence against migrants – for example in the recent riots that took place in the UK. Internationally, the world does not feel like a safe place for many people.

Gendered violence remains prevalent across the globe. Globally, the UN women group states that more than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their family, and almost one in three women across the world experience physical or sexual violence during their life (UN Women 2023). In the UK, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) stated that: "A woman is killed by a man every three days in the UK. Domestic abuse makes up 18 per cent of all recorded crime in England and Wales. In the year ending March 2022, there were 194,683 sexual offences, of which 70,330 were rape" (NPCC 2024). From this perspective, violence disproportionately experienced by women and girls. Trans people and those who identify as non-binary also face considerable amounts of violence, much of which is missed through formal reporting mechanisms (VAWNet).

These examples are drawn together not to offer an exhaustive list of everything violent happening, nor to suggest that everybody who lives through them will identify as having experienced trauma. Rather, they indicate that violence is commonplace and many people are likely navigating lives alongside or following trauma. From this perspective, curating trauma-informed approaches in anthropology is a fundamental core shift in ways of working with and interpreting contemporary social worlds, rather than a niche area of further specialism. We know that many of us, those we teach, conduct research with, and work alongside will have experienced trauma at some stage in their life. As Das writes, "most people in the world learn to live as vulnerable beings among the dangers that human cultures pose to each other" (2005:111). Trauma-informed research and teaching approaches should be embedded in our anthropological practice from the outset and not emerge haphazardly in response to the recognition that we are working with people coping with trauma.

This Special Issue seeks to open anthropological conversations around trauma. It encourages open dialogue and sharing of practices and strategies within the discipline, but also outside of it. While trauma – for very good reasons – is often treated as a specific psychological category, we believe that anthropology has the capacity to expand, critique, and learn from its clinical lineage and impacts. These are conversations anthropology needs to be having between students, colleagues, departments, and institutions. We can learn from other disciplinary approaches to negotiating trauma, and we have much to offer particularly in relation to engaged listening. While many will be exploring and navigating these issues in siloes, we hope this Special Issue will offer a catalyst for more open dialogue – diminishing the shame of those who are struggling to work through trauma, and sharing tools to facilitate supportive and accessible academic practices.

Working with trauma is challenging. Living life alongside trauma, experiencing trauma, and grappling with intergenerational and systemic trauma can each shape the way we make sense of and live our lives. For researchers, encountering traumatic experiences during fieldwork, working with survivors of trauma, and engaging with traumatising material can produce forms of vicarious traumatisation, that require us to understand our own needs as well as those of the research and teaching. 'Trauma' is an entangled term encompassing a wide range of experiences, impacts, and aftermaths – and more formal diagnostic criteria. It produces new difficulties to navigate in research and teaching and also opportunities for further understanding and recognising that those we work with are active agents in our academic practice. This editorial and series of articles proceed with the assumption that there is no clear demarcation between author-researcher-teacher and those with lived experiences of trauma. While the conventions of academic language encourage the sense that trauma and its impacts are things that happen to other people and at a critical remove, trauma impacts many within anthropology (and in every other academic discipline) and its impacts profoundly shape many of our lives. Many of us in this volume are navigating experiences of trauma in different ways, including direct experiences of traumatic events, vicarious and secondary trauma caused through close engagement with survivors, and intergenerational trauma and its legacies. None of the contributions to this volume are speaking from a clinical distance, but from the perspective of academics navigating lives alongside trauma's reverberations.

The articles in this issue deal with a range of different forms of trauma, different sets of participants and audiences, and different foci. Some of the articles concentrate more specifically on research and the challenges of supporting those who have lived through trauma to engage with research. These articles also engage with understandings of secondary trauma and vicarious traumatisation: the impacts of working with trauma on the researcher themselves (Borghi; Procter, Spector and Freed; Kotsira). A second theme that emerges is teaching about trauma (Buck; Weston; Brown; Tantam). As Carello and Butler captured it: "teaching trauma is not the same as trauma-informed teaching" (2014). These contributions capture the reflections of those teaching about violence and challenging topics, and think through the techniques they deploy to support student learning and access. A final theme concerns trauma, decolonization, and intergenerational trauma (Naidoo and Shaik; May and Santos). These articles offer a close consideration of the tensions between Western epidemiological paradigms of trauma and Western knowledge systems and different approaches to understanding pain, healing, and learning. Offering different lenses of African Indigenous Knowledge Practices and culture-based interpretations of trauma and response goes further to recognize and meet the needs of those the anthropologists are working with.

Poignantly, the submission from Saleh on 'Teaching with the window open' in Lebanon draws together these different discussions, as she reflects on how to support student learning while also in the midst of considerable cultural harm and distress. Unfortunately, the timing of this issue could not be a clearer example of the need for these conversations if we are to take seriously as anthropologists our responsibility to engage with contemporary

worlds. It can be difficult to reconcile the lived complexity of challenging experiences alongside providing a pedagogic and intellectual guide for our students. As Saleh writes,

> Does all this mean we should let anthropology burn as Jobson suggests? If I have learnt anything from fires, it is that not everything gets burnt away. In the inevitable salvaging process that ensues, recuperation will always be a highly political act. What we try to keep alive is what we hope to bring to the future. (Saleh, this Issue, p19.)

The Meanings of Trauma

While understandings of trauma differ slightly there are commonalities in how it is defined. Most conceptions of 'trauma' incorporate an overwhelmingness which takes the mind and body beyond their capacities to cope (CAMHS n.d., CAMH n.d., SAMHSA 2012). Within this understanding there are challenging nests of meaning and interpretation of overwhelm, capacity, coping, and even the sense of 'beyond'ness. What experiences are defined as taking a body and mind 'beyond' its ability to cope are specifically situated within time, space, and societies. As researchers and teachers it is necessary to balance our motivation to support those who have lived experiences of trauma alongside the recognition that as anthropologists our role is not to diagnose traumatic outcomes.

Lester (2013) develops a "critical anthropology of trauma" in which she argues that anthropology can draw on long disciplinary engagements with "meaning making, symbolic communication, and social organization" while also offering critical engagement with how such experiences are categorised and contextually inflected (ibid.: 761). She refers to trauma as the "events that take us to the very edge of existence" (ibid. 753), as an experience that "sheers us off from our expected connections with others, from our perceived social supports, from our basic sense of safety, however locally construed" (ibid. 754) and through which we are forced to "glimpse the edge of our very being, and we feel our ontological aloneness " (ibid.: 754). Trauma ruptures our connections to being-ness and to those around us, and anthropology is uniquely situated to analyse our connections to one another, and the impacts when these are taken from us. Importantly for our conversations in this Special Issue, she identifies the frequent elision of the description of trauma as discrete injury (for example, 'blunt trauma to the head') and psychological trauma. This conflation generates the sense that trauma has three distinct phases: pre-traumatic experience, 'the' traumatic event, and the end – or having recovered from – the trauma. Such an easy delineation rarely, if ever, exists in people's lives.

When explaining to students the impact of trauma, I ask them to remember a time they stubbed their toe and to note how they feel as they try to remember. They recount their inadvertent physical responses as their toe tingles, they might flinch, or they remember in acute detail an area of skirting board, a bedstead, or a step. Perhaps they can't call to mind an exact experience of stubbing their toe, but can immediately feel the impacts and sensations of when they did in the past. Has the 'injury' of the stubbed toe finished? What category does the memory hold? What relationship does the physical response have to the memory? And to the event? If this is the case for something as minor as a stubbed toe, how then could we possibly interpret a clear-cut 'end' to more extreme experiences? I ask them to consider how their body has learned to somatically look out for future scenarios in which they might stub their toe, and might move in ways that they are not totally conscious of. Our minds keep track of challenging experiences, and our physical bodies find ways of trying to keep us safe. The memories are as much physical as mental, and take place in a plane somewhere between memory, present experience, and future orientation.

Some colleagues from different institutions have voiced similar concerns that along the lines of 'now everything seems to constitute a form of trauma,' and particularly seem to take aim at students they think are not as resilient as they 'should' be. We are explicitly not seeking to provide justification for every challenging event constituting a form of trauma, nor are we necessarily equipped to offer clear guidelines for what necessarily constitutes a traumatic event. Trauma-informed practices go beyond the generalised claim to "be nicer" (Sweeney and Taggart 2018: 383). We recognize that trauma is a contested term with its own histories of Western medicalized discourse and is as much political and social as it is psychiatric (ibid.). Indeed, psychological literature into trauma recognises that people might go through similar events but experience very different outcomes (Ozer and Weiss 2004; Yehuda 2004). Therefore, while opening this space for considering trauma-informed teaching and practice we also want to maintain the view that experiencing trauma goes beyond living through everyday challenges. Culture plays an important role in defining and prefiguring which events will be experienced as especially difficult, and how individuals are expected and supported to respond. We are committed to learning about how

best to facilitate accessibility in teaching spaces and research through recognising that trauma simply leaves impacts.

While 'trauma' is highly subjective, medical and therapeutic professions provide diagnostic criteria for longer term impacts caused by traumatic experiences. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Complex PTSD (C-PTSD) are potential diagnoses for people who have experienced traumatic events (NICE 2024). These criteria provide a range of mental health symptoms including flashbacks, negative self-perceptions, hyperarousal (hypervigilance), and dissociative symptoms. The criteria also provide physical health symptoms including headaches, gastrointestinal issues, and skin disorders. The impacts of trauma therefore spread far beyond short-term challenges, and can reverberate across all aspects of a person's life. Complex trauma refers to multiple experiences of trauma – which can particularly occur when young – and raise the possibilities for people to experience trauma distress and impacts.

If experiences of trauma can be said to extend longitudinally both before and after the seemingly discrete 'event,' then similarly they also extend laterally outwards from the individual to family, friends, and connections, and further inwards than the outwards articulations or nosology of trauma responses. Trauma considerably impacts our relationships to other people. It can jeopardise or strengthen friendships and relationships to family members. It may change how relate to parents, grandparents, or becoming parents ourselves. It can shape the way we feel about going outside, or engaging with online spaces and communities.

Another central element to many definitions is an out-of-controlness. Recognising the centrality of the loss or denial of control to experiences of trauma is fundamental to considering trauma-informed approaches, and can help to orient teachers and researchers when designing materials and projects. Such approaches foreground facilitate students and participants to feel in control , and complementarily finding ways to limit feelings of manipulation, being controlled, and out-of-controlness. This is not to say that we give up exploration, open discussion, and especially not opportunities for play and joy in the classroom or in research, but these should always be done in such a way that students and participants have confidence in us to 'hold' their interests, and we give them control to decide on the level of involvement. I see trauma-informed approaches not as limiting opportunities or providing a set of intransigent rules that should be imposed in abstract terms, but instead a set of iterative practices that can provide the supportive base from which participants and students can flourish most readily. As a keen allotment grower, I think of this not as a Victorian rigid demarcation of neatness, but instead a careful working with and nourishing of the soil that enables growth. There are times at which we need to practice patience and quietness, and other times gentle encouragement and nurturing intervention. Sweeney and Taggart argue that in trauma-informed practices, "Given the centrality of trust in working with trauma, transparency is crucial" (2018: 385).

Trauma can occur on a societal level, such as in experiences of genocide or state violence. Farero et al.'s research points towards the role of culture on shared experiences of trauma, demonstrating that for Indigenous cultures in North America individual experiences may be more likely to be experienced collectively (2024). Similarly, Kidron pointed towards very different cultural understandings of violence, trauma, and coping, between descendants of Holocaust survivors and descendants of the Cambodian genocide (2012). While both groups broadly rejected the "pathologizing construct of transmitted post-traumatic stress disorder," with Holocaust descendants Kidron identified "embodied practices of survival, parent-child silent and partially silent interaction, and person-object interaction that together forma diverse matrix of Holocaust presence" (2012: 724). By contrast, in her research "Khmer respondents totally reject[ed] the pathological profile of transmitted PTSD and show[ed] a disinterest in any form of public articulation of their past" (ibid.: 727). Such close ethnographic reveals the fragility of relying on the particular understanding of trauma articulated in culturally-specific diagnostic categories, reinforcing the importance of "deconstructing the universal semiotics of the traumatised or resilient self" (ibid.: 739).

Experiences of trauma not only challenge universal assumptions of violence and surviving, but about the basis of human communicability itself. Scarry's work in the inexpressibility of pain generates the powerful finding that: "'having pain' may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of what it is to 'have certainty,' while for the other person it is so elusive that 'hearing about pain' may exist as the primary model of what it is 'to have doubt'" (Scarry: 1985: 4). Pain – and by extension, trauma – is therefore defined by an existential gap between those who experience it and those who do not. Even between those who encountered different experiences of trauma there remains an unbridgeable leap between personal and shared understandings. Pillen points towards

the "demise of language" at humanity's extremes, and views trauma as "the ineffable, inexpressible nature of pain or aggression" (2016: 96).

Historical and Intergenerational Trauma

There is an existing and growing body of work into historical and intergenerational trauma attempting to recognise and grapple with the long-term harms of historical wrongs. 'Historical Trauma Theory' (HTT) is gaining increasing popular currency as an attempt to articulate the intergenerational impacts of traumatic events, such as the Holocaust, genocide, and imperial and colonial violence. The impacts of trauma can be passed on over generations, though the particular ways and contexts in which they emerge shift. As Kidron demonstrates in relation to the descendants of Holocaust survivors, such experiences can be transmitted non-verbally through the "silent traces" of the Holocaust in everyday life: in shoes left by the bed, or 50-pound sugar sacks stocked in the home (2009, 6 & 15). HTT has particularly flourished in relation to the experiences of Indigenous cultures in the US, Canada, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Others have pointed out the dangers of associating particular cultural identities with inherited trauma. Gone (2021) cautions that such understandings risk framing "Indigenous selfhood as damaged, disordered, or disabled" (2021: 4). Maxwell argues that discourses of historical trauma "is simultaneously continuous with both Native healing and colonial professional discourses" and while it can contribute to the rebuilding of social relations, it also risks pathologising indigenous parenting (2014: 426). However, for Trundle and Veau working in Aotearoa New Zealand, "HTT has created a powerful impetus for Indigenous healing work in Aotearoa, and it has encouraged the reassertion and rearticulation of Māori modes of healing" (2022: 449). Working through the lens of historical trauma can therefore be emancipatory and pathologising, further demonstrating the need for trauma-informed and participant/student/colleague-centred approaches.

Historical trauma also risks diminishing the continued structural violence enacted in contemporary societies. Kirmayer *et al.* demonstrate that while:

> …the recognition that the violence and suffering experienced by one generation can have effects on subsequent generations can provides an important insight into the origins of mental health problems [...] the kinds of adversity faced by each generation differ, and the construct of trauma does not capture many of the important elements that are rooted in structural problems, including poverty and discrimination (2014: 313).

Each form of trauma has its own context and legacies, and "require their own modes of understanding" (ibid.: 313).

Trauma therefore range across a wide spectrum of experiences, roots, and impacts. While so far I have concentrated on drawing out different forms of trauma, and how these might impact the contexts of our research and teaching spaces, in the following section I consider the particular contributions anthropology might make.

Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Traumatisation

Anthropology departments do not formally or systematically integrate mechanisms to cope with or support engagement with traumatising topics. This is certainly in part an impact of anthropology's departure from therapeutic approaches. It may be the case that there are pioneering individuals within departments who have done so, but from frequent discussions with colleagues domestically and globally it seems clear that support is lacking. This is most easily seen in the lack of support structures: there are no formal supervisions (as in clinical, social work, and cognate professions), nor are there expectations to receive therapeutic support to enable working with trauma. Combined with increasing precarity in Higher Education, heightened pressure to 'publish or perish,' and the incentivisation of impactful and attention-arresting research projects, this produces a reckless situation in which people will – and likely currently are being – harmed. This coming together of extreme professional pressure with traumatising content is an obvious recipe for burnout and exhaustion.

More injuriously, there is a longstanding and deeply held sentiment that professional anthropologists should be able to deal with these issues independently. I recognise my own complicity in these paradigms most acutely. I am currently working through the impacts of years of engagement with adult survivors of child sexual abuse, and a recent and unnecessarily frantic project into experiences of online-facilitated child sexual abuse. When

reflecting on the project, the senior researcher queried whether I had costed in therapeutic support for myself – as I had done for participants and collaborators. Not only had I not costed this into the funding proposal, it hadn't entered my mind to do so. This sense of the anthropologist as invulnerable participant and observer is simple to identify, but not easy to dismantle.

The concern to disguise the challenges of working with difficult materials – both in teaching and in research – is inculcated from the beginning of academic trajectories. A formative moment in academic lives is the guidance of supervisors as PhD students prepare for and engage in ethnographic fieldwork. This is a moment of extreme professional and personal vulnerabilities, and students find themselves as contingent-outsiders to both Higher Education and ethnographic contexts. They need to be able to demonstrate an ability to learn the rules and integrate into these two often conflicting social worlds and, ideally, should be guided by their supervisors. Beckett conducted ethnographic research in Haiti, and critically reflected on "the idea that fieldwork is a baptism of fire from which only the strong survive" (2019). Leaving aside the obvious religious . undertones to this statement (replete with images of the sacrifice of the young), this quotation captures the sentiment that fieldwork should ideally be as challenging as possible – indeed excessively, or even performatively challenging – while at the same time being undertaken independently. Many of us will recognise the loss of some of the strongest aspiring academic voices of our cohorts due to such inherited institutional cultures.

One question I am frequently asked in different formats is: how can someone undertake research into traumatising topics without being impacted. This question can come from potential or new PhD students, those in the middle of fieldwork, those working in different professional capacities including anthropology, wider academic colleagues, and friends and family. As I articulate in greater length in my contribution to this issue, I am committed to the recognition that not being impacted is not the aim. We can take steps to recognise and to try to find ways of managing potential distress, but if we lose our capacities to be upset when confronted with distressing material then we are likely not well placed to engage with others' pain.

Speaking informally with a friend who works as a police officer, he suggested that there was a time limit for working on challenging topics. He argued that someone should not work on issues such as child sexual abuse for longer than a few years, as the impacts would simply be too great. This was not solely related to sexual abuse, but to any traumatising and violent topic. While this may be possible and desirable in other professions, in anthropology we tend to work on topics over many years and even decades. It can take time to build up trust with communities and demonstrate our commitment to engaging and understanding people's lived realities. Increasingly, survivor groups are pushing back against parachute and parasite researchers who make contact, extract data, publish, and then leave (The Lancet Global, 2018; Sheel and Kirk 2018). How might we then develop methods for support to enable long-term engagement in and with trauma?

Anthropology and Trauma

While it can be alluring to elide ethnographic and clinical insights, the two approaches are oriented to different poles. Clinicians engage with service users in a therapeutic context (which can be very broadly defined) in order to help in some way through encouraging further insights or ways of thinking (British Psychological Society n.d.). By contrast, anthropologists orient towards understanding the experiences and social worlds of those we work with. Indeed, this "deep hanging out" rather than a relationship structured around dynamics of therapeutic engagement can paradoxically enable participants to feel truly listened to (Geertz 1998).

Although as anthropologists we therefore relinquish the professional claim to be equipped to offer medical diagnoses, nonetheless we are partially reliant on diagnostic criteria for providing a shared language around trauma with those we work with, and with other disciplines. This is not to say that we can't be critical of these diagnoses, or the diagnostic process, and there have been staunch critiques and examinations of the particular cultural and historical emergence of PTSD (Young 1997). Nonetheless, these categories have very real meanings and value in the worlds of many of those we teach and work with. Even if they have rejected the medicalisation of trauma, and refuse to engage with professional services, nonetheless how they identify and are forced to navigate health and support infrastructures is predicated on a clearly articulated definition of how being traumatised presents in an individual.

Anthropologists can play a significant role in bearing witness to trauma. This does not only refer to being present during a violent event, but can consist in a political orientation to listening to those who survive. In Bufacchi's analysis of the epistemology of violence, he argues that "the act of giving a testimony of violence, being listened

to and believed, is essential for the victim of violence in the process of rebuilding her sense of self and personhood" (2013: 289). Methodologically, this deep listening can be an important opportunity for survivors to really be heard by someone who represents a formal institution. Although it is important to recognize that we are not trained to offer therapy, I have received feedback from research participants that being listened to not as a process towards recovery but rather simply for the value of the insights of someone's experience felt empowering. This is not to say that all research is necessarily beneficial for survivors, but that anthropology's particular methodological toolkits can bring unique benefits for those living with trauma.

At the same time as understanding the impacts of trauma, we are committed to recognising those navigating challenging experiences as individuals with full lives and who are not defined by the traumatic event. There are certainly moments at which the impacts of trauma may be overwhelming, and undoubtedly there will be opportunities that were taken from people by traumatic experiences. However, as researchers and educators it is necessary not to define someone by events that happened outside of their control. Wider academic work with artists who are also survivors of violence encapsulate this tension between being viewed as an authoritative subject of experience and between being viewed as a survivor-subject: as someone whose capacity to produce knowledge is hyphenated with their traumatic experience.

Anthropologists have especially analysed trauma as a political expression, and how violence and its articulation in global discourses produce forms of subjectivity and subjectification. Fassin's work with into violence and trauma argues that "humanitarian testimony constitutes a truth ordeal" (2008: 554). By this, he indicates that psychiatric processes of identifying those who experience trauma contributes to the forming of victim subjectivities and political subjectification. Similarly, Das interrogates the instability of the term 'violence' and demonstrates "what is at stake in naming something as violence" (2008: 284). Das demonstrates the centrality of gender and sexuality to re-interpreting violence's potential, as well as underscoring its potential to "make and unmake social worlds" (ibid.). Elsewhere, she argues that "anthropologists cannot take comfort in any simple notion of innocent victims or the work of culture as a pre-given script" (2003: 304) and must instead attend to the everyday forms of violence, remaking, and remembering. This serves to resist both "the official amnesia and downright acts of making evidence disappear" (ibid.), and contributes to recognising and listening to the ways that people "affirm the possibility of life" following and alongside violence (ibid.). Naming something as violence and as someone as a 'survivor' is therefore a politicised and political process, informed through psychiatric modalities and producing particular forms of subjecthood.

It is fundamental in teaching and research that we do not epistemologically ringfence those who have experienced trauma. Chatzipanagiotidou and Murphy's (2020) work with Syrian artists living in Turkey considers the link between artistic practices and refugee voice. They found that while art could certainly be an empowering medium, "*in order to* have this empowering potential, artistic projects of this kind produce further conditions of silencing and silences at the public, private and inter-subjective levels" (Chatzipanagiotidou and Murphy 2020: 476, emphasis in original). This hyphenation of those who have experienced trauma – for example, 'survivor-artist,' 'survivor-participant,' and similar – calls to mind wider work into epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007). This work examines the impacts of denying a person's capacity as a narrator of knowledge, and the credibility they are accorded as a speaker. Although we may quickly identify that the way a police officer interprets a person's statement may relate to wider forms of prejudice and oppression, it can feel that we are slower to recognise the impacts of hyphenating survivor (or 'victim') forms of knowledge and expertise. While trauma-informed approaches may therefore provide a support platform through which to consider the needs of those who have experienced trauma, they do not resolve issues of agency and voice in experiences of teaching and research. Anthropology can therefore contribute to understanding and deploying trauma-informed approaches through its methodological contributions, and to its commitment to engaging with participants as dignified human subjects whose experiences have value. In the remainder of this article, I describe the process of compiling the Special Issue and map out the contributions of the author submissions.

The Emergence of This Special Issue

This edition initially emerged from my motivation to generate discussions around trauma-informed practice in anthropology. This sense was enhanced by the recognition that many other disciplines have engaged in these discussions for more than two decades. This is all the more surprising as anthropological research and teaching proceed from a commitment to recognising peoples in other cultures, at other times, or with other lived experiences, as full human subjects, and in its commitment to not causing harm to research participants. Asking people to relate violent events, speaking with people about violence, and teaching about violence, all have the

capacity to both inflict harm on those we work with, and deny them the agency to be in control of the research or taught materials and its outcomes. To develop trauma-informed practices is therefore also a commitment to take seriously the concern of enhancing accessibility and inclusion, and reducing the structural and immediate harms that might be caused by our work.

Alongside my own concerns, in the lead-up to this Special Issue I had many conversations with others working on trauma who anecdotally related a host of well-intentioned but misguided attempts to deploy trauma-informed practices. One colleague who told me about attending a session on trauma at a major international anthropological conference. At the outset, the facilitators assembled attendees into a large group and each person was asked to share their most traumatic experience. It is difficult to think of a less trauma-informed approach, and I couldn't help but wonder how the facilitators of the session could hope to deal with any experiences that people shared? How could they be equipped to support the needs of those sharing the most harmful moments of their lives? What safeguarding and support was in place? And how could they possibly justify asking people to share this publicly? I can only imagine that participants murmured a few challenging events, but likely kept many experiences private. This is one of many examples of practices masquerading as trauma-informed, but should more closely be seen as merely trauma extractive.

By contrast, I have spoken with many colleagues separately who have developed their own independent strategies for supporting participants and students coping with trauma. It can almost be overwhelming listening to the dedication of individual academics whose commitment to students extends far beyond contracted hours. While being mindful that they are not therapists, they provide considerable emotional, social, and political scaffolding to help students hold their challenging experiences. Working in neoliberal and highly politicised higher education contexts, they have found ways to demonstrate their allyship and their emblematically anthropological orientation to a deep listening to and experiencing of the contemporary world together. Although they did not follow a formal trauma-informed approach, these inspiring colleagues showed the benefits of curating a nurturing and mutually respectful relationship with the students and participants they work with. Such relationships seemed characterised by shared recognition of vulnerability and a dismantling of what Freire famously depicted as the banking model of education (1968).

Teaching Anthropology was the first venue that I wanted to approach with this topic. The diversity of academic, teacher, student, and disciplinary voices was refreshing. Similarly, the commitment to balancing intellectual insight with practically oriented learning for the classroom invigorated my own practice, and made me begin to interpret the role of the classroom as an integral part of our wider academic geography rather than a distinct – if not even parasitic – role to be performed rather than improved. The Editors have been central to the ethos and progression of this Special Issue, and the tone and drive of the journal continue to inspire critical reflection and creative engagement.

In preparation for this issue, we held a virtual workshop in which we could meet each other and share and develop emerging themes. Once we had entered the virtual space, it was apparent that there were two clear themes emerging from contributors: one the overlap between decolonisation and trauma-informed approaches, and the other around trauma-informed teaching and research. These two themes evidently share considerable overlaps, and it seems that if they were a Wenn diagram the central shared area would be far larger than the outer areas sharing no common ground. To be grounded in trauma-informed approaches is, paradigmatically, to be committed to facilitating access to knowledge and to decentering knowledge practices. At the end of the workshop, Thandokazi May treated us to an extremely powerful and emotional performance, that seemed to speak across orientations to knowledge and insight.

This issue is therefore the product of many ongoing conversations that began long before the call for papers, and will extend long after these appear in the journal. While each article appears with a discrete authorship, many if not all contributors would recognize the fundamental role played by participants, colleagues, and family and friends in generating the insights and orientation of their work. Each of us in our own way have been learning from others surrounding trauma-informed approaches, and I would want to resist the professional siloing of those who are trauma 'experts' from those finding new ways of articulating knowledge they may already possess. This Special Issue emerges from the recognition that many anthropologists are working with trauma in different ways, and there are considerable opportunities for shared learning and knowledge sharing.

In 'Engaging with Trauma,' Emanuela Borghi draws on her ethnographic work with trauma survivors. This article critically reflects on how trauma-informed approaches might be embedded in the research process. Borghi

examines how anthropology might "reduce the epistemological and methodological gap existing between 'real life' and 'scholarship' in understanding trauma," and offers her own methodological approaches to working with survivors of considerable violence (this Issue, p71). This work also demonstrates the role that ethnographic listening might play in complementing and leading to improvements in therapeutic engagements.

Experiencing trauma can lead to the development of a new sense of self. Kotsira explores this in her addition on 'environmental trauma,' in which she discusses her fieldwork with the community of Chóra. Her research coincided with a deluge causing landslides and the loss of livelihoods and homes. Equally challenging was the impact of experiencing one's surroundings as becoming increasingly hostile. As the community wrestles with trying to recover from the previous natural disaster, they also attempt to a new realisation of increasingly extreme and frequent disasters in the future. This 'environmental trauma' is becoming a more common experience to many across the globe, and anthropology "needs to be ready to address such challenges" (Kotsira, this Issue, p84).

Naidoo and Shaikh offer an important reminder of the cultural specificity of trauma nosology. Specifically, they examine the application of Western trauma ideologies in the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and C-PTSD in South Africa, which can leads to poor therapeutic outcomes for those whose cultural backgrounds does not reflect Western paradigms. They demonstrate the importance of understanding the different cultural interpretations of articulating pain and distress, and the importance of cultural awareness and appropriateness in diagnosing and considering treatments for trauma distress. Participants reported better outcomes in treatments where the therapist was attentive to cultural specificities. Such work demonstrates both the strength of anthropological approaches in supporting therapeutic improvements and highlights the importance of culturally informed understandings of trauma.

Procter, Spector, and Freed contribute two submissions in which they explore the tensions between methods training in anthropology, fieldwork, and trauma. Using Pollard's 'Field of Screams' (2009) as a launch-point for critically considering improvements to fieldwork training and experiences, and particularly if a closer understanding of 'trauma' might facilitate a deeper understanding of what ethnographers bring with them into fieldwork, what they might experience during fieldwork, and what these experiences might leave them with after departing the field. Procter *et al.* conducted a survey with 43 anthropologists based at UK institutions at different career stages and found that many were exposed to traumatic experiences, which had direct impacts on their mental health and wellbeing, and also impacted their academic work. While there was a greater understanding that difficult experiences would lead to longer term challenges – and many had developed positive coping mechanisms – nonetheless considerable work remains to effectively prepare and support anthropologists before, during, and after fieldwork. Importantly, Procter et al.'s second contribution builds on these initial insights to develop a 'teaching brief' around embedding methods to diminish possibilities for trauma in fieldwork, and how to effectively prepare students departing for the field.

Ostendorf and Muhr similarly reflect on the lack of preparation for fieldwork they were given in their ethnographic training. They recount an instance of being shown how to protect oneself from a bomb explosion, but little guidance for how to work with vulnerable participants. They advocate for further spaces in which PhD students, supervisors, researchers, and institutions can interact more openly to discuss issues relating to vicarious trauma, risk, and vulnerability in research.

Alongside our research contributions, anthropologists also frequently grapple with the difficulties of how to teach challenging topics. Weston's reflective piece draws on more than two decades of teaching across issues relating to violence, human rights, and anthropological controversies. He conducts a thoughtful and engaging 'archaeology of the memory stick' to consider how his approach to discussing potentially traumatising topics has changed. Central to his developing teaching approaches was a demonstrated commitment to student-centred pedagogy, and viewing course development as an iterative practice to be engaged in with students themselves. Content warnings became spaces for unpacking all of the teaching and learning. Each lecture or seminar is delivered in a different economic, political, and social context, and this piece celebrates the opportunities offered by working together with students to think through and in response to challenging topics. This is explicitly not about circumscribing anything considered 'challenging,' but about facilitating students' access to topics that might have impacted their lives.

Brown's contribution develops her reflections on trauma-informed pedagogy. She outlines a teaching philosophy that acknolwedges the difficulties of engaging with challenging topics while supporting and empowering students

to feel in control of their learning. Her piece also develops an awareness that we do not teach in a political, economic, or social vacuums, and indeed many will teach in contexts that are adversarial – if not totally hostile – to minoritised communities based on gender, ethnicity, race, or residency status. Students bring these contexts into the classroom, and are forced to orient differently to the types of material we teach in anthropology classes. Brown's article is also a brilliant example of the importance of knowing our students and remaining vigilant for distress but also opportunities to push slightly further.

While the majority of the submissions to this Special Issue came from social anthropology, Buck offers a nuanced and considered contribution from biological anthropology around decolonising human remains used in teaching. She reflects on the development of a module on 'Decolonising Anthropology,' and what trauma-informed approaches might contribute to these discussions. Alongside navigating individual students' personal responses to engaging with bones and skeletons, she also considers the importance of decolonising how these remains are thought of – where these skeletons came from, their particular biographies, and wider geographies of skeleton and human remain archives used in anthropology teaching.

The contribution from May and Santos explores the tensions between Western knowledge systems and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS). They reflect on teaching a course titled 'Transcultural Approaches to Wellness and Wellbeing' at an English-medium South African University, in which they specifically tried to centre AIKS. They developed an understanding of ancestral knowledge as offering its own form of pedagogy, and took students to visit an indigenous healer in a local homestead. This trip broadened students' understanding of what constituted academic pedagogy, and contributed to a critical reflection on inherited assumptions to Western knowledge systems.

Saleh's piece on 'teaching with the windows open' draws together the themes of this Special Issue and take it in new directions. She gives a thinking-through of the pedagogic, ethical, and personal challenges of teaching in traumatic environments, and in navigating colonial and anthropological pasts. How can the contemporary discipline continue to remain coherent when it can seem so removed from the challenges of students, participants, and our own lives? How can it continue when its origins can feel so steeped in colonial roots? Ultimately, Saleh finds inspiration in the different collectives deploying anthropology to understand a complex world, and:

> …to salvage, with a window wide open to the messiness and collective labors involved in ethnographic encounters. [Anthropology] remains a patchy, imperfect, fraught political project. But such kinds of collectives seem to suggest that anthropology flourishes in patchy and piecemeal ways elsewhere other than in the university" (p19-20).

Without wishing to sound a trite note after recognizing the complexities of the entanglements of trauma and everyday life, I am inspired in the hope that anthropology has something of considerable value to offer in understandings about how lives can be lived well following violence. Complementarily, trauma-informed anthropology has the potential to offer something of value to the discipline, in both emphasizing the power of the methods and orientations we curate in relation to social worlds, and in our commitment to really listening to what others are telling us.

Conclusion

This Special Issue builds from the work of a wide range of academics, students, participants, and many others in different disciplines and careers, to recognise the necessity of trauma-informed practices for facilitating inclusion and supporting the needs of those with whom we work. The impacts of trauma can reverberate across the lifecourse and throughout a person's relations, and as researchers and teachers and the many other hats we wear throughout our lives we ourselves can have a further impact. Our impacts can be to leave someone feeling further isolated and ashamed (and this includes ourselves), or it can be to facilitate new forms of collaboration and support that enable people to feel seen and heard. 'How' and 'what' we do in anthropology can be equally – if not more – important as 'why' we do it, and as the submissions to this Issue indicate we have powerful toolkits at our disposal to recognise others as dignified subjects, and practically demonstrate that we hear and value what they have to offer.

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