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Perspectives on Undergraduate
Research & Mentoring

Mentoring in Global Contexts: Embodying Feminist Ethnography in South India

Amy L. Allocco, Ph.D., Elon University, U.S., aallocco@elon.edu

Anya Fredsell, 2018-19 Fulbright-Nehru Student Research Fellow in India, A.B., Elon University, U.S.

Background: Mentor-Mentee Relationship and Institutional Support

Faculty Perspective: Dr. Amy L. Allocco

At Elon University, a private, midsized liberal arts university where I joined the faculty in Religious Studies in 2009, Undergraduate Research (UR) is a significantly valued and well-supported activity. As one among the [high-impact educational practices](#) linked to students' cumulative learning and deepened engagement (Kuh 2008), UR is fully enfranchised (cf. Elon's [Teacher-Scholar Model](#) explicitly includes mentoring; House, 2017), supported (e.g., via compensation for credit-bearing UR courses), and celebrated (cf. the robust slate of presentations featured annually during the daylong [Spring Undergraduate Research Forum](#)) at the institutional level at Elon. Moreover, UR is a central component of my department's identity and commitment to excellence in undergraduate teaching: senior faculty have participated in consultations focused on defining and describing UR in Religious Studies and published on these topics (Huber, 2013; McNary-Zak & Peters, 2011) and began mentoring me into related practices by the end of my first year at Elon. While the benefits of UR for students are well-established and –attested, and I recognized mentoring excellence as beneficial for and indeed essential to my development as a teacher, I did not anticipate the impact that the mentoring relationship I developed with one student, Anya Fredsell, would ultimately have on my own research and scholarship. I describe how our mentoring relationship has influenced my current fieldwork and research project in my closing reflections at the conclusions of this essay, where I describe the ways in which Anya's participation in my ethnography in South India catalyzed new questions, generated fresh insights, and shaped my thinking about collaboration and reciprocity in fieldwork. While these commitments – alongside reflexivity, context-specificity, shared authority, a focus on lived experience, and an attentiveness to power dynamics, the politics of representation, and the intersections of gender with race, class, and other identities – are key characteristics of feminist ethnography (Skeggs, 2001) and have long been central to my research process and writing practices, I found that working with Anya in South India offered a unique and powerful opportunity to both model and reflect on these values and approaches.

I worked with Anya across all four years of her undergraduate studies, on a carefully scaffolded ethnographic research project focused on yoga traditions and authority in India and the United States. Anya was admitted to Elon as part of a selective fellows cohort that entails UR, and so she matriculated knowing that she would carry out a research project as part of her undergraduate trajectory. After mentoring her in an initial semester of UR I encouraged Anya to apply for Elon's [Lumen Prize](#), our most prestigious research honor, which is awarded to just 15 exceptionally promising students annually to support outstanding research projects. Anya developed a compelling research proposal and was granted a Lumen Prize, which supports two years of faculty-mentored UR

and provides generous funding. Her designation as a Lumen Scholar thus allowed Anya to take the research project she would have undertaken as part of her fellows program to the next level and, by extension, supported my own development as a mentor. Through lunchtime programs and other informal discussions about mentoring with more experienced faculty members, the Lumen program deepened my own mentoring skills and helped me cultivate several valuable new habits and strategies. These experiences, coupled with the opportunity to co-lead two communities of practice on mentoring UR in global contexts sponsored by Elon's [Center for Research on Global Engagement](#), challenged me to reflect on and interrogate my mentoring practices, to be even more intentional in framing mentoring relationships, and to focus on aligning my mentoring process with desired research outcomes. Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder define a Community of Practice (CoP) as "people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (2002, p. 4). The two CoPs that I co-convened here at Elon aimed to support the development of research projects focused on mentoring UR in global contexts over the course of an academic year via monthly meetings during which members presented on in-progress projects and discussed selected articles that the group read in advance. During these interactive sessions participants with varied levels of experience shared successful research strategies and approaches; brainstormed about research and logistical challenges; discussed project design, measures, and assessment; and offered insights, advice, and ideas to one another. In addition, my role as a co-leader of the South Asia Research Group at Elon (SARGE; see Vandermaas-Peeler, Allocco, & Fair in this issue) has encouraged me to extend my skillset to blend instrumental guidance with psychosocial support in order to effectively mentor – and encourage peer mentoring in – a multidisciplinary research community.

Student Perspective: Anya Fredsell

My academic relationship with Dr. Amy L. Allocco began on my first day of college classes at Elon University, when I enrolled in her Hindu Traditions course. She soon introduced me to a world of diverse, often conflicting voices that compose religious traditions in South Asia, along with some of the many inspirational scholars who conscientiously amplify them. Our mentor-mentee relationship began a few short months later, when I invited Dr. Allocco to coffee and, after discussing my interests in yoga and India, she offered to mentor my first two credits of UR the following semester. Beginning with primary yoga texts, my research expanded into a four-year ethnographic project titled "Constructing and Performing Authority in Yoga Traditions: An Ethnographic Approach" that drew secondary literature into conversation with ethnographic fieldwork and interviews carried out in Georgia, North Carolina, and South India. This project included twelve credits of UR, hundreds of hours of participant-observation, and more than 60 interviews, and culminated in eight conference presentations as well as two articles accepted for publication. Throughout this process, Dr. Allocco has been consistently present in her role as a professor, mentor, and scholar, offering constructive feedback and advice, and communicating constant encouragement and motivation.

A Scaffolded Project: Anya's Research Timeline

- Spring 2015: Enrolled in 2 credits of UR: Yoga Texts and Traditions
- Spring 2016: Crafted a research proposal and awarded Elon's Lumen Prize
- Summer 2016: Participated in "Jaina Yoga," a three-week course in North India led by Dr. Christopher Chapple, director of the Yoga Studies program at Loyola Marymount University
- Fall 2016: Enrolled in 2 credits of UR. Conducted preliminary fieldwork at a yoga studio in Greensboro, North Carolina
- Winter 2017: Participated in a three-week "India's Identities" study abroad course in South India led by Drs. Amy Allocco and Brian Pennington through Elon University
- Spring 2017: Enrolled in 2 credits of UR. Presented papers and a poster at four undergraduate conferences, including the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR)

- and Elon's Spring Undergraduate Research Forum (SURF)
- Summer 2017: Conducted independent fieldwork over four weeks in Chennai, India and three weeks in Atlanta, Georgia
- Fall 2017: Enrolled in 2 credits of UR. Submitted papers to conferences and journals, and applied for additional research funding.
- Winter 2018: Enrolled in 2 credits of UR. Conducted one month of fieldwork in Chennai, India with Dr. Allocco.
- Spring 2018: Enrolled in 2 credits of UR. Presented papers at four additional conferences, including the regional American Academy of Religion meeting (SECSOR) and the Southeast Women's Studies Association (SEWSA).

Innovative Mentoring: Research Contexts and Approaches

There are many models of mentoring, and various ways in which mentors can support undergraduate student researchers across global contexts. I am fortunate for Dr. Allocco's commitment, adaptability and creativity as she mentored me in varied circumstances, including both local and global contexts. Under her guidance, I pursued a project that was both ambitious and feasible due to the intentionally coordinated set of experiences and products we envisioned. Indeed, the Elon Statement on Global Learning (Center for Engaged Learning, 2017) aptly demonstrates the importance of scaffolding projects over time, contending that, "Prior travel, language study, pre-departure classes, courses that explicitly address global learning, and involvement with multiple cultures, among other activities, have been shown to affect both students' perceptions of readiness for global learning and their actual experience during study away." At all stages our work together was guided by this scaffolded approach and these commitments, whereby successive preparatory experiences built upon a foundation of coursework and deep reading into the academic literature relevant to the project, and ethnographic fieldwork in global contexts followed methodological training and formative practice opportunities in local communities.

We initially applied for research funding from the Lumen Prize while Dr. Allocco was on research leave and sabbatical in India and I was studying abroad in South Africa, planning our phone calls to work on my proposal around time differences. Upon our return, I conducted preliminary ethnographic research at a local yoga studio in Greensboro, North Carolina and Dr. Allocco provided feedback and guidance during weekly meetings. To gain familiarity with the Indian landscape, I participated in two academic courses in India, one of which was co-taught by Dr. Allocco. These study abroad opportunities introduced me to local people, politics, and religious traditions, and helped me develop connections and friendships that endured throughout my later research. In the context of our course together, Dr. Allocco gave tours of the Hindu goddess temples that are central to her own fieldwork and invited her friends and research contacts to give lectures and share meals, thus inviting her students into her research world on the ground in South India.

During winter and summer breaks I conducted fieldwork in Atlanta, Georgia, and then embarked on my third trip to India for a month-long stint of solo fieldwork the summer before my senior year. Whether we were states apart or separated by continents, Dr. Allocco communicated daily through text messages and phone calls to recommend new leads, answer my many questions, and suggest research strategies. In preparation for my independent field research in India, Dr. Allocco equipped me with all sorts of tips and methodologies. For example, she recommended that I carry a small notebook to write everything down and engage in everyday activities that do not always seem directly relevant to my project. She encouraged me to be courageous enough to ask questions, committed to following out leads, and willing to take advantage of every opportunity. I practiced these strategies daily, achieving some more successfully than others. With Dr. Allocco's unyielding support, I tentatively conducted my first interviews and ambitiously navigated familiar and unfamiliar fieldwork sites.

While some research guidance is best communicated during meetings or over the phone, other mentoring occurs within Elon classrooms. During my four years at Elon, I took seven courses with Dr. Allocco, which each in turn provided me with important insights and knowledge, and contributed to my own fieldwork and research. Among the most memorable were WGS 300: Current Controversies in Feminism, the capstone course for my Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies minor, and REL 460: Ghosts, Demons, and Ancestors in Asian Religions, a Religious Studies special topics seminar. In the capstone course, we discussed feminist standpoint theory, and how "whoever creates knowledge has the power to shape values and political agendas" (Lorber, 2012, p. 197). Standpoint theory not only emphasizes the impossibility of truly "objective" research, but also underscores the ethical implications inherent in any research undertaking. Just as "the personal is political," a phrase leveraged by many feminists to broaden the scope of inquiry and evidence, so Nelson (2006, p. 156) argues "the professional is also political," to advocate for feminist scholars and scholarship. Dr. Allocco's feminist commitments to shared authority, collaboration, reflexivity, and learning with and from others' perspectives are at the heart of her professional career, from the courses she teaches to the students she mentors, and from the feminist methodologies she employs in the field to her ethnographic writing about her field research.

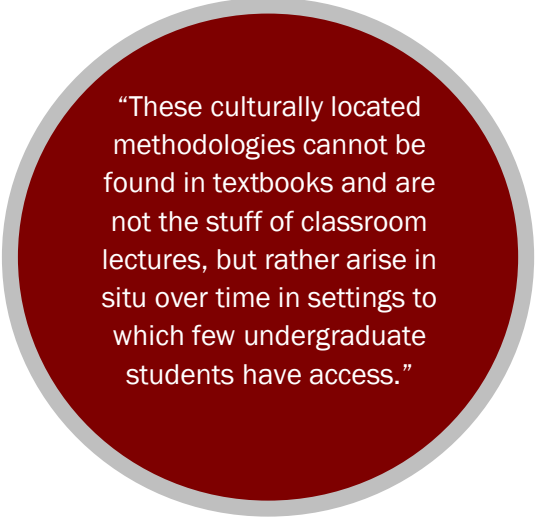
In *Ghosts, Demons, and Ancestors*, we began to apply ideas of standpoint theory as we analyzed and critiqued academic literature. I became fascinated by the scholars themselves and their research methodologies as I learned about different researchers' unique personalities, abilities, and positionalities. In the context of religious traditions in India, we discussed how one author declined to publicly eat food offered by low-caste people, out of fear of being shunned by his high-caste informants (Sax, 2009). Such considerations of cultural behaviors and community relationships hint at the dynamic nature and context-specific imperatives of ethnographic fieldwork, which demand that scholars identify and act in accordance with the realities of their research context. From my seat in Dr. Allocco's classroom, I began to think about the positionality of the scholar, and came to better know my own identity and responsibilities as a researcher.

Learning by Example: Mentoring on the Ground

While Dr. Allocco effectively communicated various methodologies from researchers' positionalities and relationships with participants on the ground, these somewhat abstract ideas became truly accessible and comprehensible when Dr. Allocco demonstrated how they play out in context in South India. My senior year, after three periods of study and research in India, I decided to pursue one final stint of fieldwork during our Winter Term. Dr. Allocco and I collaboratively applied for additional grants so that we could go to India together for the month of January to observe and participate in each other's research projects and conduct fieldwork alongside one another. There I arranged my own research in yoga contexts, where Dr. Allocco accompanied me and offered feedback, and I in turn tagged along on her fieldwork ventures focusing on Hindu rituals to honor deceased relatives. While I expected Dr. Allocco's direct guidance on my own project to be most beneficial, I soon learned that simply following her around and observing her approaches, which had developed over decades of research experience, was the most powerful form of mentoring that I could have received.

Before our first overnight village ritual, Dr. Allocco told me to pack a small bag with water bottles, snacks, and clothes that could get smudged, stained, and dirtied. That afternoon, we had plans to give a presentation at the U.S. Consulate in Chennai, India's sixth-largest city, representing Elon University to prospective students. Wearing neatly pressed and hand-printed Indian garments which she described as her "presentation outfit", Dr. Allocco authoritatively discussed statistics, campus climate, and academic standards to a room of well-educated and globally minded students. I mention clothing here not to center Dr. Allocco's physical appearance in her intellectual work, but as an illustration of her ability to move seamlessly across social contexts. I observed how Dr. Allocco

carried herself and interacted with others differently in universities, temples, and homes, among people from various backgrounds and social locations. Her intuitions about what to wear in certain settings, as well as how to address others, what sorts of questions to ask, and how to politely decline a second mountain of rice at lunch demonstrates the sort of context-specific knowledge that Dr. Allocco accumulated over years in the field. These culturally located methodologies cannot be found in textbooks and are not the stuff of classroom lectures, but rather arise in situ over time in settings to which few undergraduate students have access.



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After leaving the U.S. Consulate that afternoon, we met our taxi driver to travel about an hour out of the city to a village. After many stops for directions and some off-road driving, we eventually arrived at the home where the ritual would take place. Dr. Allocco excitedly located the room where her fieldwork friends, the ritual specialists who had invited us to the village, were preparing the deities, flowers, and food offerings.

The adornments, music, camphor smoke, dialogue, and dancing that enlivened the ritual were fascinating and extraordinary. More remarkably, amidst the ritual bustle and intricacies, Dr. Allocco’s friendly and reciprocal exchanges with the ritual participants surprised and delighted me. She reconnected with her ritual specialist friends, asking questions about their families and work and showing them pictures of her own family and home, demonstrating the feminist ethnographic position “that we can know much more, and much more honestly, if we give of ourselves a little, if we are warm, receptive, and accepting” (O’Reilly, 2009, p. 67). Dr. Allocco did not obscure her own identity and stories in her position as a researcher but instead engaged in lively conversations that often erupted into laughter. She cheerfully interacted with family members, neighbors, and village goat herders, none of whom had she previously met. The family graciously invited us to eat, sleep, shower, and participate in their home and family rituals, as if we were part of the troupe of ritual specialists. We exchanged sweet smiles with grandmas and cuddled small babies. Neighbors invited us into their homes to share snacks and to use their bathroom, since the house where we were staying did not have one. Many of these interactions were only possible through Dr. Allocco’s impressive Tamil language skills, as most of the people we met did not speak much English. Dr. Allocco often explained shared jokes or bits of information with me in English, and spoke about me or translated things that I said into Tamil, thus bringing me into the bilingual conversations. As fascinated as I was by all of the new people I met, I should not have been surprised that they shared similar curiosity about Dr. Allocco’s and my stories. We were the strangers in their homes, after all, not the other way around. Through casual interactions that were rarely structured as formal interviews, we learned about the ritual participants’ jobs, relationships, ambitions, and challenges.

Commitment to Feminist Methodology

By building collaborative and convivial relationships with her research participants, Dr. Allocco demonstrated feminist ethnography, a research process that unfolds as “a conversation, a relationship, between two or more people, in which one learns about the other through interaction and experience” (O’Reilly, 2009, p. 68), in action. The time she took to listen to and get to know her informants both empowers them to shape the research process and reduces potential opportunities for misrepresentation when she transforms her notes and recordings into conference papers and publications for academic consumption. While questions about the possibility of conducting truly egalitarian and reciprocal fieldwork that adequately accounts for power dynamics and privilege both

in the research process and written products have long vexed feminist ethnographers (Abu-Lughod 1990; Behar & Gordon, 1995; Stacey, 1988; Visweswaran, 1994) and scholars continue to interrogate the promise and vulnerabilities of feminist ethnography (Davis and Craven, 2016; Schrock, 2013), Dr. Allocco remains convinced of its potential for reducing hierarchy, establishing intersubjectivity between the researcher and researched, and facilitating interaction and collaboration as well as enfranchising authenticity, reflexivity, and reciprocity in the research process. Nevertheless, while feminist ethnography seems to have come into its own as methodology, plenty of non-reflexive or misrepresentative fieldwork practices still exist in the field of Religious Studies. This past year at the annual American Academy of Religion conference, I listened to a panelist berate his (female) informants for engaging in what he thought to be ignorant, uninformed, and wrongly appropriated practices. This scholar demonstrated how researchers can impose their own ideologies onto other people's lived experiences, thus muting insider perspectives. Dr. Allocco's ability to locate herself in the field as a friendly and honest researcher with an openness to and respect for vernacular practices and beliefs addresses problems in academia regarding the politics of representing others who occupy different worlds.

Adaptability in Academia

The opportunity to conduct research on the ground with Dr. Allocco was significant and unprecedented for two reasons. First, I am one of few scholars who have ever witnessed the rituals that Dr. Allocco studies in rural parts of Tamil Nadu. These rituals occur on the margins of dominant Hindu culture and are little known and under-researched. I fully appreciate how important these rituals and her carefully nurtured fieldwork relationships are to her, and so I am incredibly grateful that Dr. Allocco trusted me to observe and participate in her ethnography. Second, students participating in their professors' research projects is not the norm in the humanities. Glasco (2013) asserts that while collaboration and co-authorship is a common UR model in the sciences, it is almost unheard of in the humanities. Religious Studies professor Huber (2013) confirms that UR in many humanities disciplines is a relatively new practice and that student assistance in faculty research and articles co-written with students "are simply not part of our field" (p. 1). The existing research model in the Religious Studies Department at Elon University, where UR thrives as a central component of our department, demarcates faculty research and UR as separate entities. While students are driven by their own creativity and ingenuity, and hold significant ownership of their projects, which Shanahan, Ackley-Holbrook, Hall, Stewart, and Walkington (2015) uphold as one of the salient practices of undergraduate mentoring, there are few opportunities for students to engage in their professors' scholarship. Because Dr. Allocco and I had carefully developed and maintained a productive, respectful, and communicative mentor-mentee relationship over three years of working together, and due to her vast experience with various modes of global mentorship, we were able to carve a new pathway towards collaborative, globally engaged humanities research during our month together in South India.

Creativity in Future Undergraduate Research

Although I acknowledge that not every humanities professor has the capacity to mentor students in global contexts and recognize that financial and other support structures are necessary to make such mentoring experiences possible, I would encourage direct collaboration among faculty and students whenever possible and hope to see more instances of mentoring in global contexts. While Dr. Allocco has taught me many things throughout our four years of undergraduate mentoring – during weekly meetings, over long-distance phone and Skype calls, and in the classroom – it was in the actual *doing* of research alongside Dr. Allocco on the ground in South India that I was able to observe and truly appreciate feminist methodologies. It was in this phase of the mentoring partnership that the importance of establishing, nurturing, and maintaining fieldwork relationships and striving to ethically represent others' traditions and experiences came into clearest focus and these lessons took on a human dimension.

Over four years of teaching, advising, and ultimately inviting me along on her fieldwork in South India where she invested herself in mentoring me in a global context, Dr. Allocco has become my role model for who I hope to be as a future professor, scholar, and mentor. As I prepare for further research as a Fulbright Student Research Fellow in Chennai, India this coming year and will pursue graduate degrees in South Asian religions upon return, I will use the methodologies that Dr. Allocco teaches and embodies in the classroom and on the ground in India. I plan to engage in conversations *with* South Asian communities rather than just *about* them, all the while developing lasting and reciprocal relationships in South India and fostering global awareness and understanding in academic classrooms and communities in the United States.

Redefining Relationships: Expanding the Role of the Mentor

Faculty Perspective: Dr. Amy L. Allocco

Working with Anya, a very capable and high-achieving student researcher, was a pleasure and a privilege at all stages of her development, but it was the final phase of her UR project that revealed new possibilities in and dimensions of the mentoring relationship to me. In particular, it was when we spent the January of Anya's senior year together in Chennai, South India, my long-standing research site, and participated in one another's fieldwork that I realized that the parameters of our mentoring relationship had shifted and the boundaries blurred, and that we were traversing new terrain. This new landscape was characterized not only by my customary intentionality about the mentoring relationship but also by the risks that these novel mentoring activities entailed, as I was demonstrating new forms of trust in my mentee as I invited Anya into my most intimate and crucial fieldwork relationships. Indeed, here I experienced a new kind of collaborative learning-mentoring relationship and felt it extending "into realms more personal" (Huber & Lanci, 2011, p. 35) than I was accustomed to as I shared my fieldwork contexts and contacts, as well as my research questions and perplexities, with Anya.

Little research exists on ethnographic UR in diverse religious communities (but see Brackett, 2011; Elliott, Hyndman, Larkin, Scarboro, & Woolf, 2018; Gregg & Scholefield, 2015) or on the challenges and benefits of bringing student researchers into the field (but see Mullen, 2009 on the characteristics of and approaches employed by mentors who go "above and beyond" in educating their protégés and the role of risk-taking in the practices of "alternative mentors" in the context of mentoring novice research administrators and graduate students). In addition, I did not have colleagues to guide me in this precise sort of global fieldwork apprenticeship model. While there were several obstacles that needed to be surmounted (e.g., developing a successful proposal, accessing funding, and managing other professional and personal responsibilities, among others) in order for us both to be able to dedicate the month of January to this collaborative fieldwork undertaking in India, Anya and I agreed that the opportunity was worth the investment of time, resources, and energy. Bolen and Martin (2005) remind us that, "Since undergraduate student research abroad can lead to improved linguistic competence, cross-cultural skills, cultural competence, and disciplinary knowledge" (p. 16), faculty should promote such experiences and assist students in overcoming barriers that might prevent them from completing them. Indeed, we embarked on this month of mentored field research in India with the knowledge that Anya had recently applied to graduate programs in Religious Studies and would be conducting future ethnographic research in India as she progresses toward a dissertation and academic career. Especially (but not solely) because of her intended path, I was convinced that there would be immense learning potential in Anya *seeing* me conduct fieldwork, rather than just having me describe it, and in *hearing* me employ my Tamil language skills in research contexts that we would otherwise not be able to meaningfully participate in. At this juncture, I hoped to inspire Anya by actively modeling the ethical research practices and embodying the feminist ethnographic methodologies and commitments (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Skeggs, 2001; Wolf 1996) that we had

engaged over our years of coursework together in direct, contextual ways. I had not, however, given adequate thought to the ways in which this advanced research student, who had now conducted independent fieldwork of her own in South India and had developed into a near-colleague, would make significant contributions to my research with her probing questions, thoughtful comments, and insightful reflections.

After spending the academic year 2015-2016 in India on a research leave and sabbatical dedicated to an ethnographic project titled “Domesticating the Dead: Invitation and Installation Rituals in Tamil South India,” which investigates the repertoire of ritual relationships that some middle- and low-caste Hindus maintain with their deceased kin, this was my first opportunity to conduct follow-up fieldwork. I was hopeful that in addition to advising Anya about her own research in situ and in real time and accompanying her to some of her interviews, that I might be able to record additional rituals associated with my project and offer Anya the opportunity to attend two-day ceremonies about which she had learned in my Ghosts, Demons, and Ancestors seminar. Indeed, January is an ideal time to observe and participate in both the annual rites to honor and seek generalized blessings from deceased relatives known as *pūvāṭaikkāri* (“the woman wearing flowers”), and the occasional, elaborate invitation ceremonies in which ritual drummers summon the spirit of the departed, convince it to possess a human host, and beg it to “come home” as a protective family deity. As Anya describes above, we were fortunate to gain access to several of these rituals and joined the ritual musicians for overnight stays with the sponsoring families in different village settings for each. It was in this context that we approached the status of true intellectual collaborators and were authentically engaged in a dialectical process of co-inquiry.

Co-Inquiry and Reciprocity

A single example from our recent field experiences will make the contours of this process clear. In one village Anya and I sat in the shade of a spreading banyan tree, waiting for the ritually inauspicious period of the morning to pass so that the ritual proceedings could resume. While I used the time to write field notes about the dialogues with the dead that featured in the previous night’s ceremony, Anya braided my hair and peppered me with questions about murky elements of the ceremony. Her queries forced me to identify the discrete elements of the ritual process and to articulate my own interpretations of their meaning and logic in ways that I had not done previously. In response, Anya shared her readings of the social and gender dynamics at play in the field context and ventured her own analyses of several ritual elements, catalyzing an exciting give-and-take. She also took the opportunity to draw this ritual into comparison with two others that we had witnessed

together and engaged me in a wide-ranging conversation about their similarities and differences, drawing me into a higher-order interpretive process that I would not have embarked

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on at this stage without her prompting. Our robust conversation inspired me to jot Anya’s provocative questions and worthy evaluations in my field notebook, along with the preliminary insights that emerged from our comparative exercise, to be considered more fully later. It stands as just one example of the opportunities for collaboration in the mentoring process, particularly when the setting shifts away from campus environments, with all of their established patterns and attendant hierarchies. Here, in this global research context, co-inquiry gave way to co-creation of knowledge, and my own mentoring practices edged even closer to fully embodying my feminist commitments to shared authority, reflexivity, and reciprocity.

This single scene bears out Huber and Lanci's (2011) claim that mentoring holds benefits for scholars' research agendas, along with their argument that mentoring can be a transformative practice for the mentor and mentee alike because of its potential for collaboration and "the transformation of students into scholars and teachers into collaborators" (p.34). Here, in a global context where I had been studying and conducting research for more than twenty years, I was suddenly exhilarated to be learning directly from my student. It took going to the field with my UR mentee for me to realize that I had never before conducted collaborative fieldwork, never had an English-speaking interlocutor who shared my own cultural framework and referents in these Tamil-language settings, and thus never had a real-time conversation partner with whom to dissect the complexities of Hindu ritual performance. These moments of shared discovery, exchange, and reciprocity were, indeed, transformative for me. They have both expanded my thinking about the possible dimensions of a mentoring relationship and inspired me to see my research project from new angles.

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