DOING
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

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BHAJI ON THE BEACH: RELATIONAL ETHICS IN PRACTICE

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Light comes to us by the sensibility. Without visual sensibility there is no light, no movement.

Robert Delaunay, *Light* (1912)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the relational ethics of how meaning is made through the reflexive process of judgments about existential life positions which create moral identities by our actions in the world. I will examine how this moral identity can emerge through using stories as a "social (re)membering". It is in the act of social remembering, recognition and regret where Freud (1962) and Nietzsche (1994) argue that morality acts as "*the ethics of care*" and as a societial mechanism of obligation. Morality serves to legitimatize the social structures and institutions of co-created roles and expected behaviours. The individual develops ways of being to compensate for frustrations and uncertainty. Nietzsche (1994) explores this tension between the psychological need and the rationalizion of behaviour as

moralised actions and sees this experience as the individual's attempt to impose one's will within a socio-economic context.

I will attempt to explore relational ethics by examining the performative aspects of teaching relational ethics through interpersonal relationships between self and other. I will use the self story narrative form to consider ethics through responsibilities and obligation. I am suggesting that stories emerging from culture can be explored to further our understanding of the complex nature of relational ethics.

My experience of teaching relational ethics was as a visiting faculty member at the Centre for Ethics at a Medical University in an Indian city. My teaching and research have emerged through years as an anthropologist and psychotherapist collecting stories through refocusing from a subjective perspective and through the lived experiences of others. Stories of fact emerge through relationships and are written through experience before being presented as *ways of doing, writing and reading as lived experience.* From my experience and training as a clinical/medical anthropologist and as a psychotherapist I was aiming to suggest that ethics is relational and is enhanced when we reflect on our relationship with each other, noting our similarities and differences dependent on culture and context.

The notion of discovery is, for me, the search for authenticity and resonance of the lived experience as a recognition of the relational space, be that the decisive moment or what anthropology recognises as the "*ethnographical moment*". The use of photography is to illustrate what Leavy (2009) suggests is a created series of photographs which hold an embodied meaning between the self, the image, and the other as a dialogue. Ethnography through a sequence of photographs (cultural artifacts) is a method of exploration through a sense

of "being there" (Hannerz, 2003) as the observer becomes the biographers of "that there" fiction. The socially constructed sense of self and other is transformed through the ways of relating to a object/cultural artefact in space by the meaning made by the individual; the space between "this" and "that" is made sacred through social interaction; and a possible interpretative process and experience are dependent on and modified by the individual interaction between one another in time and space. Therefore meaning is defined through (moral) action and its (social) consequences. Geertz (1974) identifies the epistemological notion of the gaze between intersubjective space, of "experience-near", and "experience-distant" when tracing and deciphering meaning or reality. For Benjamin the capturing of the photograph represents, that strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance (Benjamin, 1979: 250).

I will explore how reflexive and relational practice around the making of relationships between two or more people through teaching and learning can be through the meeting between expectations and obligations of difference and (in)difference which can become diverse realities. The recognition of difference is about bringing into awareness a relational moment in which knowledge and belief of the observing subject becomes the observed object.

THE (AUTO) ETHNOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

I found the (auto) ethnographical approach most useful for describing and examining my experiences in India. Autoethnography is the relational self-story which Ellis and Bochner (2000:742) express as "(auto)biographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through

language, history, and ethnographic explanation". It has been through the use of the self as an ethnographical resource in my writing that I have found a way of relating and understanding others and to be therapeutic for me and others. It has also given me a psychodynamic insight into culture, which has produced the social identity with which I meet the world. I have been negotiating the crossing of disciplinary boundaries between psychogeography (Debord, 1996) and ways of knowing. As an academic in clinical anthropology and in my academic writings (Siddique, 2011) I often find myself in the role of academic tourist (Pelias, 2003) that is, the temporariness of relationship within or between different cultural contexts. I use autoethnography to express myself as a form of resistance to soporific professional bodies and institutions as I like to find spaces and have moments of creativity to engage more fully within culture. Autoethnography can be used as an "aide memoire" for relational ethics on the existential life position informing the representational authority in culture. As a qualitative inquiry method it brings to our senses the taking of responsibility for ourselves as witness and our inter-subjective experience of being seen in culture. The cultural identity is experienced as fragments as experienced through convergence of the "decisive moment" and the "ethnographic/decisive moment" in movement and performance, articulating subject/object relationships to inform identity.

I learnt from this experience of academic tourist turned native about the relational ethics of responsibility in the writing of research and the performance of teaching. The individual cultural experience of travelling between cultures offers a licence for an interpretation of reality to create a fiction using the "anything goes" paradigm of cultural relativism. I use this methodological approach because its takes into account my

responsibility as an author writing a personal account of the aesthetics of the diversity of India through the writing of text. It gives the opportunity to capture the performance of fragments of identity and relational ethics when writing experience as research and a sense of authorial power when writing in the English language within a colonised narrative. But once I was transcribing the imagery and my experiences into text I realized that I was mistaken in thinking that by using this methodology of the self-story was being relational and equalizing. Regardless of where I have come from (being there to being here) I thought I was creating a mutuality of same difference. But actually what is most present on the page was myself . I have movement on the page and the others are fixed and I had to question the rationale for my being there and I had to acknowledge the limitations of ways of relating. My experiences in India have been trying to negotiate an account of a collective assemblage of different experiences. I am aware that whenever I have been talking about myself there are others present in the background or foreground but they are silent. Yet they are part of the cultural fabric. The challenge for me as an autoethnographer is to keep that relationship present on the page.

SETTING THE CONTEXT OF MY EXPERIENCE

The word *bhaji* in the original article titled *Bhaji on the Beach* (Siddique, 2015) was chosen because of its several layers of meaning. Firstly *bhaji* can be the deep fried spicy South Asian patty made of a combination of mixed vegetables, eggs and flour. Also the word *bhaji* is the Hindi/Urdu word for sister or any female older than yourself. The title is also a reference to the film *Bhaji on the Beach* (Syaland Chadha, 1993) which tells the story of a cluster of British Asian women who embark on

a day trip to see the "Blackpool Illuminations" — an annual lights festival, which began in 1879 when the orginal eight arc lamp display phenomenon was described as "Artificial sunshine", and which has developed into a well known and very popular British spectacular event held annually each autumn in Blackpool, England with illuminated scenes of topical events. The film reminds me of my childhood outings with the extended family. Both the film and my own experiences over the course of time unfold different layers of relating and relationships, based on differences and similarities, values, beliefs and assumptions illuminated, similar to the Blackpool Illuminations. Dependent on the perspective of the participant or observer (self or other) I found this analogy of multiple meanings of the word *bhaji* and the latter's layered interpretation relevant to my experience at the Centre in India where I was teaching.

Stories, like *the Bhaji on the Beach*, come from a cultural context and help me make meaning of my experience. The stories we tell in relationship with each other or about others always seem powerful. Levi-Strauss (1982) found a mythical quality to stories which he suggested made each story quite fantastical and unpredictable and often becoming a myth in itself. Each story is from a cultural system of symbolic interaction which says something about the story-teller as well as the story itself. It is the listener who is responsible for holding in mind the paradox presented in the story to make meaning from putting together existing theoretical and practical knowledge; this in turn can create a new story with a different understanding of how we can be in the world. Bhabha(1994) suggests that "The significance of this narrative splitting of the subject of identification is borne out in Levi-Strauss's description of the ethnographic act. The ethnographic demands that the observer himself is a part of his observation, and this requires that his

field of knowledge — the total social fact — must be appropriated from the outside . . . [T]he subject has to split itself into object and subject in the process of identifying its field of knowledge" (p. 215).

I spent my initial week at the Centre of Ethics exploring the technical-rational practices of practitioners from different teaching disciplines at the university. As a clinical anthropologist it was a fascinating ethnographical journey into the symbolic structure of the life-world everyday practice of a hospital in a Central Indian City. The Centre of Ethics was established in 2011 and resides at the heart of the university campus where the teaching facilities are blended with hospital wards and outpatient services. The mission of the Centre is to embody a sense of ethical responsibility and practice to promote values of care and respect for all.

I was surprised on completing my first teaching session in a classroom, where the computer presentation as much as the air conditioning cut in and out, to find myself staring into the eyes of suited and sari dressed individuals who looked like me and yet weren't like me ; all I recognized was the differences between us. I realized that I was repositioning the audience of Indian medical professionals from being the observed to the observer in the lecture theatre. I realized that my presence and performance was re-cast as the object of the professional gaze and I was observed and given meaning; this meant I had to negotiate a space between the "eastern" collective and "western" individualistic ways of being.

Malhotra (2011) suggests this phenomenon is an act of recognition of the reversal of gaze. He argues there is a move away from the binary opposition of the western gaze to that of the "dharmic" point of view of pluralism which "... hopes to set the terms for a deeper and more informed engagement

between dharmic and Western civilizations" (p. 2). There is now an acknowledged shift from the Judeo-Christian narrative of world making which has confered a liberal Western domination through the educational ideology of Enlightenment presuppositions embedded in the art, social theories and scientific methodologies. I was identifying myself with this Western outlook as a first generation Pakistani muslim woman and then coming into relationship with others who looked like me but do not experience the world as I do. In India I felt objectified as "other" at times — silenced and transformed by myth and geography. I recognised that my values and belief systems were at odds with theirs as I found it hard to engage the pragmatism of the Dharmic frame of reference (Malhotra, 2011). During our dialogical practices of dancing around awkward questions I recognised the reliance on the reflexive act of authoring experience through guaging awareness, measuring influence and co-creating the intersubjective texture that invited relationship with me, the "other".The collectivist culture of India I found myself caught in was that of my life position being embedded within the context of difference and (in)difference. I was with them and not with them. Our appearance made us look similar and different in those first moments. The spontaneous and nervous laughter around me in the lecture theatre indicated to me an ethnographical moment of acceptance even as "I am not", while simultaneously indicating some embarrassment and discomfort by both them and myself.

SELF PORTRAIT

I am not an Indian (in the contemporary sense), I am not married (in accordance to the cultural institutions and expectations of kinship relationship and marriage customs), nor a medical doctor

(conforming to the ethnic sterotypes informing ideas of orientalism and romanticism) or from a caste they were familiar with. Sterotypes acting as character types in the story (individual) and myths (collective story) "provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction" (Levi-Strauss, 1972). Each culture grouping narrates their own set of contradictions, in a particular assemblage such as cultural artifacts act as knowledge.

My family came from just outside the second largest city Faisalabad in Pakistan. My parents came to England in the 1960s to get better educational and work opportunities, then moved to Scotland because the Highlands reminded them of Kasmir. I see myself now as a British Pakistani.

It was in the difference of our backgrounds that I realized my writing and teaching (as a clinical anthropologist) built on the exploration of different health and healing systems across a range of cultural contexts. I was invited to this university to explore the different techniques and processes practised in a range of clinical settings within hospitals or rural indigenous community clinics. In effect what emerged in the lecture theatre were interactions between the audience of academics, clinicians and postgraduate students with very different psychosocial schemas of understanding of care.

RELATIONAL ETHICS

My work at the Centre was to engage in dialogue within a medical context and explore the beliefs, perceptions and behaviours in situated, negotiated and categorized relationships of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and disability to give meaning "*how we should live*" and "*how we should relate to each other*" (Geertz, 1973). It is in the relating which identifies our interdependency and how our decision-making process forms our moral reasoning which is negotiated in dialogue with others. It is that

dialogue that informs the cultural context we find ourselves within, between or outside. A good example of the complexity of relational ethics is based on sharing the story from Tan's (2006) novel entitled, *Saving Fish from Drowning* of:

> A pious man explained to his followers: "it is evil to take lives and noble to save them. Each day I pledge to save a hundred lives. I drop my net in the lake and scoop out a hundred fishes. I place the fishes on the bank, where they flop and twirl. 'Don't be scared', I tell those fishes. 'I am saving you from drowning.' Soon enough, the fishes grow calm and lie still. Yet, sad to say, I am always too late. The fishes expire. And because it is evil to waste anything, I take those dead fishes to market and I sell them for a good price. With the money I receive, I buy more nets so I can save more fishes."
>
> (Tan, 2006:1)

This extract is culturally determined with the man making moral choices and actions that may impact on others as well as themselves. It fits with their Buddhist cultural interpretation but can be confusing to the outsider. The imagery of the story helps to draw the outsider into the moral frame but is easily misunderstood. For me this story of the pious man mirrors my experience in the lecture theatre. It holds the tension between the individual story and the reader. That process of finding and recognising each other is where the ethics emerge. Those values, rights, morals and principles sit within a particular culture.

The Centre invites people from a diverse range of academic and practice base to develop this dialogue. The Centre of Ethics philosophy is based on an appreciative inquiry methodological approach that has emerged as a developmental response between the participants and facilitators. They have moved beyond relying on text and choose instead to engage in embodied knowledge that embeds within the individuals and

their existing shared cultural understandings; this knowledge is communicated through language and socialization. In the act of embodied knowledge the medical practitioner contextualizes learning through understanding that meanings are negotiated and action is orientated through how they interact through the environment and interpret their actions in relation to others.

During my time with the University community I was left wondering how to go beyond technical rational knowledge gained from a specific discipline and how to transform oneself into a reflexive practitioner. Relational ethics is enhanced through reflecting on our role and our impact on others through the professional roles and social identities that shape our activities as social actors (Habermas, 1988). It is our actions, behaviours and professional identities that are shaped by culture. We are dependent on social conventions, expressed through language, which is culturally dependent. This gives rise to the need for understandings and misunderstandings which is unique to our individual frame of reference. According to Berger and Luckmann (1991) social reality, within the medical domain of hospital, may be considered as an "objective reality". There is an alternative understanding that the reality is social constructed. There is a diverse range of social construction philosophical and theoretical positions. However, the key characteristic is that most communities essentially hold and generate knowledge through ways of relating (being, thinking, feeling and acting). The member of the social or professional group act as "knower" who according to the social construction position actively constructs and makes meaning which informs the cultural norms i.e., social constructs or relational ethics and governance and is unique to that community through relating and other discursive practices. It was Burke (cited in Dirks, 2002) who said of india's central symbol of caste: "In that Country the laws of religion,

the laws of the land, and the laws of honour, are all united and consolidated in one, and bind a man eternally to the rules of what is called his caste" (p. 3).

Caste remains embedded in relationships of power mythology in the way Levi-Strauss (1972) describes it as a way of being able to bear the contraditons and the human suffering of India's diverse community. The organization and structure can give shape to contemporary social identities which are recognizable as a group whilst the human agency of the individual remains contested with the reproduction of modernity through the decaying colonial institutions; these are being replaced by slum clearing in favour of retail culture in the form of rising credit card debt and highrise sweatshop global economics. A new form of caste system has emerged based on telecommunications and the e-economy. My experience has been that caste remains the central symbol of a divided India. This concurs with Boo's (2012) comments from her experiences when working and living in the slums of Mumbai. It is hard to see how the hierarchies of oppression can be dismantled when the very cultural artifacts, myths and rituals act to (re)cast gender roles, familial relationships and communal life are coloured by duty and obligation — perhaps even collusion. I wonder if the professional education's love affair with relational ethics may be an opportunity for hope?

The objective of the Centre of Ethics is to critically reflect "how things are" and "the way they are" and by deconstructing and demythologising the various elements that make up the societal fabric as regulations, legal systems, codes of practice, and roles within public and private institutions (Durkheim, cited in Shaffer, 2006). These operate as possible formal and informal sanctions in the form of rules and laws of shaming, blaming, control or exclusion from the institution. So when we tell stories

we are participating in what Heidegger (1982) speaks of as "being in the world". Meaning is made from the context and conditions of "being in the world with others" through the process of engaging with a sense of oneself as a reflexive encounter. In doing so, the binary opposition, in between subject and object becomes blurred as seen from the western perspective. Within the Indian context ethics is seen differently, for instance, the Vedanta philosophy of non-duality of ways of being in the world. According to Schrodinger (2012:89) "consciousness is never experienced in the plural, only in the singular. Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown; that there is only one thing and what seems to be a plurality is merely a series of different aspects of this one thing, produced by a deception, which in India is called Maya".

When we become more reflexive we are better able to contextualize the set of consequences that inform the technical-rational knowledge which becomes the life-world. However, within the medical setting of the teaching hospital it is hard to identify a single logical-positivist worldview because what is operating is a range of competing ways of world making. The switch from one way of seeing a situation is quite quickly negotiated in terms of professional status, caste system ranking, gender and age amongst other perspectives. It is in the emoting through movement, and the choreography of gestures that give meaning to the epistemological transactions that give meaning through words and images. As a clinical anthropologist and a psychotherapist I am fascinated by the layers of meaning which come through the interactions and transactions of the individual's storytelling. Working in clinical settings I see the spiritual, cultural and social aspects in relation to the medical presentations requiring healing. I think that more understanding of the cultural backgrounds can contribute to the healing process.

The Centre for Ethics approach resonates with my own philosophical ethos of researching, teaching and supervising about working within a relationship of transparency and mutuality to be a co-creator of knowledge. I witnessed a mutiplicity of social identities through everyday perfomative practices of work, prayer, belief systems, values and attitudes. Friere (1996) suggests that these issues of potential oppression and discrimination could be addressed through dialogue and acceptance which can be therapeutic. This can be seen as the analogy of a dance where we match energy, movement and expression to arrive at an understanding of the world and our place in it. Relational ethics can offer the liminal space to question reality, to cross borders and find authenticity.

When undertaking any kind of fieldwork within a medical setting as a clinical anthropologist we are ultimately exploring how healing systems and processes are explored through various indigenous philosophies and how myths inform, distort and omit information, based on socio-economical, religious and political grounds. My lecture was underpinned by the argument made by Kondrat (1992), who suggests that "when the practice world is viewed primarily as a derivative of the technical, servicing its research needs and providing a market for its products, the metaphor evoked is one of colonization" (p. 251).

The discussions after each lecture session centered on the life world (Husserl, cited in Moran, 2012) of being Indian and practising medicine and healthcare practices that are heavily influenced by western values. The participants spoke about the shifting power dynamics between practitioner and practitioner, practitioner and patient, patient and family, family and practitioner. The mix of the lecture audience of consultant doctors, hospital administrators, psychiatric social workers, clinical lead nurses and senior members of the clinical teaching

faculty facilitated a real sharing of different professional experiences. We were able to acknowledge that the experience of working within clinical settings was enhanced by reflecting on our practice and what we bring to working with others and what we take away from that experience.

SNAPSHOTS

The weaving of experience with the thick description is textured; it is a case of recognizing betrayal and resilient mythology to engage in the activity of meaning-making. We can draw a single story and yet we need to consider what of the many other possible storylines are hiding in plain sight that we do not seem to take into account. The situation and the people around are equally part of our story as much as we are part of the story of theirs. By the mere naming of things in relational terms we create relationships of distance and proximity between self and other. The self-story is an assemblage of the layers of interpretation of images, memories, values, symbols and socio-historical circumstances. In this instance I have chosen to evaluate through the lenses of aesthetics and the expression of a reality through the medium of photography (Singhal *et.al.*, 2007). The photographs act as cultural artifacts of the ethnographical/decisive moment.

The photograph as a snapshot (De Duve, 1978: 113) "indicates that life outside continues, time flows by, and the captured object slipped away". This ethnographical/decisive moment is a recognition of liminal space between spaces, places, cultural artifacts and identities if the ethnographer like "the photographer is to have a chance of achieving a true reflection of a person's world — which is as much outside him as inside him — it is necessary that the subject of the portrait should be in a situation normal to him" (Cartier-Bresson, 1952: 16). The

imagery is a story for it is the relationship between the subject and the observer which makes the picture-story. Uniting the fragments of the raw material of life washed ashore across the sequence of photographs and seeing it as a ethnographical moment of an unfolding process implies it is imbued with meaning through the observer's interpretative narrative weaving time and space of the "spontaneous encounter" (Cartier-Bresson, 1999). In the encounter is the moment of realisation how a process of making meaning can be the relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998). Sense making through the image or art which "can be like a passionate kiss, but also like a gunshot or a psychoanalyst's couch"(cited from Assouline, 2005). Relational Ethical tensions are made and unmade in the practice of everyday research's relationship between reflexivity and ethics in practice. The relationship unfolds within intersubjective/in between space of separation, transition, and incorporation (van Gennep, 1960) demarcating the sacred and profane through movement.

VIGNETTE

On my first day I accepted an offer from the University Support manager and her colleague to go to the local beach even in 30 degrees heat. On the beach the locals wandered along the waterline with their ice-creams and fruit and children in tow among the camels and stall holders. I was struck by my two Indian companions and how they reminded me of the oil and canvas painting by the Scottish artist Jack Vettriano (1992) entitled "The singing butler." In this painting the viewer is drawn into the gaze of a couple in evening dress and ball gown dancing on the wet sand whilst the Butler and Maid spun around the dancers. The sun is shining on the party whilst on the horizon is a potential storm.

These three photographs that I took using my iPhone (above) captures all of the energy and excitement of the painting. I consider the three images as a literal and relational triptych folding, enfolding and unfolding, divided into three

Photo 1: Unfolding

Photo 2: Enfolding

Photo 3: Refolding

spaces, and a movement that holds the observer and the observed. And yet it speaks to me of the relationships we often find ourselves in. "We men and women are all in the same boat, upon a stormy sea. We owe to each other a terrible and tragic loyalty" (Chesterton, 2014: 135). As society moves from western-centric to techno-centric the emerging Asian relational ethics may offer an opportunity to explore relationships through trust and respect, finding communality in difference. The (re)casting of individuality crossing spatial boundaries of collective time, seeking connection across the three moving images the unfolding and enfolding of relationships as something that Rogers (1961) refers to as indivduals moving from fixity to fluidity, from stasis to process (p. 131). An experience which resonated with me on that beach that day was in terms of how the individual recast their individuality. Clement (1996) identified that individuality is a product of ongoing interactions between a person and her or his social

environment and that respect for individuality need not threaten a sense of community (cited from Fisher,2006).

As in the photos on the beach, the two figures in the public spaces similar to the two figures in Vettriano's (1992) painting of the singing butler performed their individuality through (re)casting ways of relating. In their daily life, they were the the University Support Manager and her colleague and on the beach they were freer and their movements were like dancing. They were momentarily transgressing their cultural obligations. It seemed that the two people were no longer in their professional roles and caste but were at ease with each other. They became oblivious to my presence as I was outside the frame by taking the photograph.

The movement in the sequence of photographs can be experienced as the ritual movement associated in Indian dance. The ritual movement as a repetoire of religious practices, sacrifices or spiritual transformations through decisive moments in guise as a secular cultural artefact. The beach is a culturally designated site of contemplation, worship and recognition which Turner (1977) refers to as a liminal space; a staging for a performance where tourists and the locals witness a drama.

The dynamic poises of the two figures in the photographs allows the observer to experience the movement through stillness within movement. It reminded me of the image of Shiva Nataraja, from Hindu mythology in which the ecstatic dance of destruction laying the foundation for the creation symbolizes the eternal cycle of birth, life, and death. I am reminded in an instance of the interconnectedness of self, other and objects (such as the images captured in the photographs and descriptions in the text) as essential human encounters. By unfolding, enfolding becomes a process of relating. It raises endless possibilites and configurations of self through deepening

engagement between lived exprerience and ways of knowing.

DISCUSSION

This transgression of professional and personal roles was also what I was witnessing at the hospital in the liminal space of the lecture theatre. For individual practitioners and support staff from the teaching hospital attending medical ethics seminars and workshops, identity is evolved by the roles and responsibility each performs within the community of learning. Each person negotiates his or her interactions through a range of professional and social roles. The workshop session was attended by twenty men and women; at different stages of their medical, social work, academic or administrative career. The Centre offered a space for engagement through the participant's unconsciousness or conscious acts of performing "Selves" which encapsulated role, status and gender. Each transaction was shared with the precision of a gesture from an Indian classical dance Kathakali (Kerala) or Bharatanatyam (Tamil Nadu) with the invitation to meet without focusing on a particular intention or outcome. The facilitator of the workshop was a woman who presented herself in a traditional *sahvar kameez* dress with a blazer style white cotton doctor's coat and was a medical doctor and ethicist. I realised that identity was situated in roles and positions taken up as each person entered the room to participate in the performance, much like the couple on the beach photographed earlier in the week of my visit. The aesthetic quality of the degrees of informal interactions served to seek out like-minded people and those with similar values in order to form alliances and to increase a sense of formalising the unwritten rules of the day to reduce unpredictability of blaming, shaming and scapegoating.

As the session moved from introductions to activity I could see that individuals began to scan the room looking for potential

relationships and resources to offer. The next step was to share stories about each individual's own practice. In doing so, a range of information and emotions were expressed. The storytellers were asked after the participants' inputs on what they understood and to offer their own interpretation. Instead of a range of distortion and negativity what each storyteller did, often out of awareness, was to respond as if in dialogue with each individual comment – as if in some sort of cosmic dance. I was surprised as I expected hostility and for the individuals to feel judged but I guess that was my sense of a western ego at play. What I was witnessing was the relational self which through storytelling found acceptance and, at times, challenge of the integrity of the characters' actions within the story. The progression of the narrative was accompanied by nodding, touching and raising of hands amongst the listeners which offered recognition of interrelatedness. For me the social fact, or the fact of the construction, is that through our cultures we operate as a relational and ethical self when we allow ourselves to see aspects of ourselves in the other. In doing so we are participating in a cosmic dance that enacts the interplay between the social persona of self and other through ethnographical moments of attachment, empathy and identification.

CONCLUSION

Ethics is a way of relating which involves the interplay of perceptions of self and the other within and between relationship making. It is through these relationships that we make meaning of the environment and the situation we find ourselves in. Relational ethics offers a language for witnessing and taking responsibility for the experiences of suffering for the marginalised other. It is in the recognition and acceptance of difference and acknowledgment of the spaces in-between

ourselves (Siddique, 2011) that we are better able to tolerate the discomfort in order to build greater resilience in a changing world. Relational ethics can offer another perspective to ethnography to inform our degrees of belonging through a multiplicity of social identities and voices. My work at the Centre of Ethics has given me an opportunity to dialogue with those who find themselves within or between an ever changing and challenging environment.The relational perspective is about a dance of uncertainty. The dance is always behind a veil of culture. Relational ethics occurs as movement between the individual and the collective as in the sequence of photographs on the beach. However, the veil of culture from time to time can distort or conceal and the more the light tries to illuminate the more layers of meaning are exposed.

Acknowledgements

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