

Workshop Scribbles, Policy Work and Impact

Anthropological Sensibilities in Praxis at an FASD Workshop

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ABSTRACT: This article reports on a workshop that was held with frontline workers in Canada and discusses the role of anthropological sensibilities as they inform research, community engagement and policy outcomes. The workshop brought together frontline workers to discuss foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, a complex and lifelong disability – one that often raises social-justice concerns. The goal was to facilitate a space in which participants could share their experiences and potentially bring about better outcomes for people living with this disability. The article focuses on the workshop in relationship to anthropological sensibilities, anchored in lateral research practices, with attention to poly-vocality and relational ways of understanding, all of which inform our practice and potential impacts. This article critically analyses the role of applied research as it is informed by other disciplines and concurrently constrained by different forces.

KEYWORDS: anthropology, Canada, community-engaged research, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, impact, policy, social justice

Icebreakers and Table-top Liners

The workshop ended early. A ‘pleasant surprise’ we were told by participants. As the room emptied, we surveyed the remains of the day – paper cups, programmes and abandoned business cards. It was the second day of a two-day event focused on foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) that targeted ‘frontline’ workers. Now, we had one hour until the closing reception. Moving around the room, we decided that the waste from the workshop would have to wait until the next morning. What could not wait, I noted to my research assistant, was the collection and storage of data – ‘data’ that would be later transformed into reports and recommendations. In addition to completed surveys and notes from student volunteers, a quick scan of the room revealed another cluster of material we would need to collect.

Under the spilled cups on each table was blank newsprint that served as tabletop liners. Cut into eight-foot long strips, the newsprint paper lined the tables that filled the room. Upon the paper, spaced approximately every eight to ten chairs, a prompt had been written: What are we doing now? Pens and markers had been placed on each table and participants had been asked to write responses on the paper at the start of the workshop. This prompt served as a small ice-breaker, the goal of which was to cluster participants into small groups and produce informal discussions at the start of the day – to break through the perception of being one of 200 people there to listen. The day was going to involve some listening but also a lot of discussion, the ice-breaker served as the first of many invitations for participants to share and contribute to the discussion.

Walking around the room at the end of the day, I could see that the newsprint served as a repository of



ideas and sentiments. Participants had scribbled on the tabletops throughout the day. These scribbles needed to join the more formal types of data that had been collected. I explained to my research assistant that we were carefully going to roll up all the sheets of newsprint to review later. 'Even this?' she asked, exhausted, holding up a piece of the paper that included a doodle of an iPhone. 'Yes', I explained because between the doodles, spilled food and coffee-cup rings there *might* be other scribbles – nuggets of insight from participants. Like the various items of material culture we collect in our research I gathered the rolls of paper together for analysis. I did not want potential insights discarded with abandoned business cards and empty coffee cups. We carefully folded up dozens of feet of newsprint. We later used these insights alongside survey results and student's notes to write the Final Report and Recommendations. The Report and Recommendations were released in Fall 2014 and have since been taken up by policy-makers, justice officials and frontline workers.

This article is a critical reflection on an event that I hosted in Canada in the Spring of 2014 at the University of Regina. Sponsored by three provincial ministries including health, justice and social services, alongside police, campus and health funders, it brought together so-called frontline professionals from across the province of Saskatchewan to discuss FASD. Entitled 'FASD at the Frontline: Dialogue and Strategies for New Outcomes', the workshop was informed by my own research working with police, justice officials and advocates. In this research I identified a critical lack of communication between agencies that frequently work with people who have FASD. As FASD is often a stigmatised and marginalising disability, lack of communication between workers can further affect the lives of individuals living with the disability. To address this lack of communication I hosted the workshop, the goal being to open up lines of communication as miscommunication and misunderstandings can have life-altering outcomes.

This article is about the anthropological sensibilities that informed the workshop, and the ways in which to consider the impacts of such an event. I use the phrase 'anthropological sensibility' to mark the diverse ways that anthropologists not only frame, but also investigate social problems. Of course, a workshop that brings together professionals including government researchers might have the appearance of para-ethnography (Holmes and Marcus 2006, 2008), and while I take inspiration from the types of collaborative practices that might emerge in these professional workshop spaces, I am also cautious of the potential

'normative effectiveness of expert para-ethnography' (Lea 2012: 189). In the case of this workshop, I want to put aside questions about how, or in what ways, it appears to be para-work. Instead, I want to look at how anthropological sensibilities anchored in lateral research practices include a focus on poly-vocality and relational ways of understanding all of which inform our practice and potential impacts. As these are hallmarks of the discipline, I will highlight the material practices and actions that emerge from such a sensibility (like collecting the newsprint) as they critically informed the outcome and analysis of the event itself.

Many anthropologists are committed to lateral research practices such that we seek out diverse (and often divergent) voices and experiences. In my work, bringing together a wide range of frontline workers was critical, as was having a diverse group of presenters, from child and youth workers to judges and community advocates. Taken together, this served to illustrate that everyone in the room was an expert in some way. Pushed further, by taking each of these perspectives as equally valid, I illustrated a central tenet of anthropology while also undertaking the increasingly important task of policy engagement. Whereas the latter (policy engagement) might be understood to have impact, I will argue here that the latter was not possible without the former (seeing all perspectives as equal), and the former is important to our discipline.

In contributing to this issue on impact, I will focus on the ways in which anthropology can make unique policy contributions because of the particular engagements we host and the voices we amplify. In my case, a workshop with frontline workers was what informed a cluster of policy documents that were released – a group of workers became experts and their voices are informing policy. As part of the analysis, I will discuss some of the constraints of doing such work as it relates to funding and research pressures. And while I will highlight the anthropological sensibilities that informed the workshop, I will also discuss how a wide range of other practices and traditions informs our sensibilities and methodological engagement. The article will discuss the potential for anthropology to contribute to policy but will also offer a reflection on the Canadian context and political sentiments of the current administration that largely rejects the role of social science research and critical inquiry. As will be discussed in the next section, there are many social-justice issues that must be considered when discussing FASD. This article offers one way in which to address the social-justice issues through a community-engaged research project that mobilises findings to policy-makers with a goal to bring about

much-needed changes in the lives of those living with a life-long disability.

What is FASD?

I want to provide some background on FASD and the current political climate within which this workshop was hosted as it relates to the need for a commitment to poly-vocality and relationality in research. FASD is a non-diagnostic umbrella term used to describe a range of conditions that can be brought about by maternal consumption of alcohol. Alcohol is a teratogen, meaning it is toxic to the developing foetus. When alcohol is consumed during pregnancy it can result in a number of diagnosable conditions such as foetal alcohol syndrome, partial foetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorders, and alcohol-related birth defects (Paley and O'Connor 2011). Though the effects of FASD are often not visible, it is nevertheless a lifelong condition and individuals experience it on a spectrum, with some affected differently than others.

Impacts of FASD can include learning and comprehension problems (Malbin 2004) and lifelong physical challenges. Additionally, individuals can experience secondary issues such as difficulty in school (Koren 2011), contact with the foster-care system (Parkinson and McLean 2013) and can be at a higher risk for contact with the justice system (Fast and Conry 2009; Popova et al. 2011). As FASD is a highly stigmatised condition, there is a need for innovative prevention, diagnosis and intervention programmes. Accordingly, prevention and intervention programmes need to be attentive to the role of stigma in the lives of mothers as well as those living with FASD (Salmon and Clarren 2011) – anything less threatens further to marginalise a group of people who always already experience stigma related to their disability.

FASD has become an interdisciplinary field of research that includes health, social and behavioural sciences, law, medicine and education. This interdisciplinary field of research is replicated when discussing the fields of workers involved in FASD client management: health, social work, justice and education specialists. As a life-long condition, FASD not only impacts the lives of those living with the condition but also impacts on the lives of women in terms of prevention practices and protocols (Armstrong 2003; Drabble et al. 2011) that can get swept up in the moral panic of alcohol consumption (Armstrong and Abel 2000) – all of which can have racialised and gendered components.

Anthropological research points to the ways that FASD can follow a 'racialised script' in the areas of treatment, care and management (Oldani 2009) in countries like Canada. Research and policy frameworks have placed uneven attention on FASD within Aboriginal communities (Hunting and Browne 2012) resulting in both racialised intervention and prevention policies but also particularly gendered outcomes for Aboriginal women who find themselves the primary target of intervention (Salmon 2011). Some call for a holistic, gender-based analysis of FASD (Poole 2011) in which practices are developed on the ground to meet individual women's experience living with addiction and/or FASD (Rutman 2013). And while rates and prevalence vary widely (from 1–5% of the overall population), the apparent rise of FASD in settler-states such as Canada should raise questions about the need to frame FASD *relationally* to include discussions about the role of addiction as it relates to ongoing practices of structural violence and legacies of colonialism when applicable.

Relationality, Voices and Context

Attention to relationality has long been part of the anthropological tradition in that we don't see people, objects, phenomena and the like as isolated. Rather, we see and/or seek out relations between things in the world such that the social and political are understood as intertwined. Indeed, as anthropologists we often highlight the webs of interconnectedness (for an example of the historical interlaced with the contemporary see Nelson 2009 and Nguyen 2010; for the centrality of objects within broader contexts see Hayden 2003 and Taussig 2004; for the environment relative to the construction of subjects see Fortun 2001 and Petryna 2002; for survival techniques relative to ethnicity, class and gender see Bourgois 1995 and Aretxaga 1997). As Biehl has illustrated, the world of mental illness cannot be extracted from the economic and the political spheres as the reader learns about poverty and illness through the eyes of one woman and her vocabulary of marginality and social abandonment (Biehl 2005).

Alongside relationality, poly-vocality is central in anthropology. This is seen in practice when the researcher, often embedded in a community, will gather the stories of the many rather than seeking out one voice to serve as the authority. By engaging in this practice, anthropologists are better equipped to deliver complex, and at times contradictory, stories about an object, phenomenon or event (see for example different

understandings of bureaucracy and the state as outlined by Gupta 1995; different experiences of police policies in Garriott 2011; understandings of disease in Mol 2003). These practices relate back to an overall commitment to embracing the different ways individuals and communities know and see the world – a commitment that influences how we conduct our research and analysis. For example, recognising other ways of being beyond Western ontologies demands that more-than-human actants are taken seriously not simply articulated as ‘beliefs’ (de la Cadena 2010; Kohn 2013). Similarly, there has been an expansion of innovative collaborations with a wide range of knowledge producers (see for example Fortun et al. 2014) and new modes of co-authoring in which participants from our research become authors not simply voices within the text (see for example Smith and Mwandime 2014).

These anthropological practices and sensibilities do not operate in a disciplinary vacuum. For example, anthropology contributes to, and learns from, the various fields that deploy participatory and collaborative research methods. A clear example of this generative, interdisciplinary engagement can be seen in Montoya and Kent’s article (2011) that details a community health project in California. The authors start with an overview of the tenets of community-based participatory research as outlined by the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences. The authors then build on this method established in the health sciences to give it a bit of an anthropological spin. Calling for ‘community-driven’ versus ‘community-based’ research, Montoya and Kent make the case to infuse research with a dialogical component such that expertise can be co-constructed through collaboration. This further push in lateral researching practices lines up well with Cornwall and Jewkes’ (1995) argument that the myriad practices of participatory research often have one shared element – a desire to shift the ‘location of power’ in the research. And while anthropology might be a bit later to the game, we nevertheless are offering meaningful contributions to discussions of methods and the politics of the methods we chose. In this article, I hope to contribute to these interdisciplinary discussions by highlighting the sensibilities that inform our discipline and therefore our engagement.

Returning to the workshop and the question of relationality, voice and context, I began my introductions that day by recognising that the event was being held on Treaty 4 Territory.¹ This gesture served to mark the event was taking place within particular histories and contexts. And when thinking of relationality, this context and the current moment in Canada

cannot, itself, be divorced from the workshop as the research project occurs in a country that is embroiled in the legacies of colonialism and ongoing forms of structural inequality. It is a country and context in which the Prime Minister has issued a public apology for programmes of colonialism – for example, residential schools – but this apology is set within the metaphorical language of closed chapters in history. This treatment serves to mark oppression as historical, something *from* the past and *of* the past (Coulthard 2014; Stewart 2011). In this framing, a national story is told in which colonialism and racialised, structural violence are no longer operational. While FASD is not limited to Aboriginal peoples, when an Aboriginal person in Canada has FASD there must be a consideration of these broader structural and historical issues. But as a closed chapter, there are challenges in discussing colonialism and historic trauma even when their legacies are evident.

Further to the context, the Harper Administration’s commitment to a ‘tough on crime’ agenda is predicated on the notion that crime is on the rise and that a tough response will effectively address this issue. This approach is both empirically incorrect and not supported by sound research (Cook and Roesch 2012). It places an emphasis on incarceration over care for those who are often the most marginalised people (including people with cognitive disabilities) filling the prisons in Canada. And while those with FASD might be at higher risk for contact with the justice system, there is a need for creative approaches when there is contact – as victims, witnesses and perpetrators. There are many who are committed to the alternative justice practices but these efforts can be curtailed with agendas that seek to maximise punishment.

A final layer of context that must be added involves the current relationship the federal government has to scientific research. Namely, the rejection of sound research, as there are reported gag orders in place to silence government scientists on the topic of climate change, and an explicit general rejection of social science as a mechanism to address social injustice. This phenomenon was captured famously when the Canadian Prime Minister indicated that it was ‘not the time to commit Sociology’ in response to a fellow politician commenting about the potential underlying issues associated with an act of so-called terrorism in 2013 (for further discussion see Matthews 2014); a sentiment that was repeated again in 2014 when Prime Minister Harper counselled Canadians to understand the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women as a crime and not a ‘sociological phenomenon’. Seen this way, Canada is experiencing a time period of hostility

towards critical voices including those in the social sciences. Indeed as Matthews (2014) points out, ‘committing sociology’ is language that evokes criminality rather than knowledge and understanding. Accordingly, it is much more important that as anthropologists we exercise our trade in the social sciences in the name of social justice to draw attention to the divergent contexts associated with structural inequality.

By purposefully selecting a diverse group of presenters and finding people with different voices and experiences in the area of FASD, the workshop was transformed into a location in which presenters and participants could focus on the contexts surrounding FASD. For example, FASD was discussed in relationship to the aforementioned contexts such as: broader historic issues, systemic racism and justice reform. Concurrently, participants raised additional contexts including: the challenges of living in rural and isolated locations, the disproportionate access to resources based on geography, and the need to integrate services. In short, by committing to poly-vocality – to the different ways of knowing and understanding FASD – the workshop became a space for presenters to discuss the relational contexts of FASD which, in some cases, necessarily involves a conversation about colonialism and the ongoing forms of structural inequality in Canada.

Sensibilities that Decentre

In this article, I am making the case that an anthropological sensibility can be informed by lateral organising and research practices. This involves a commitment to different ways of knowing as we seek out participants that will help us best understand an issue or phenomenon from their particular lived experience, rather than privileging formally identified experts. What can this look like in practice when we apply our trade?

For the workshop, I brought together what was seen by some to be an eclectic group of speakers. From my vantage point, I saw a need to have some judges and legal experts as well as community workers and others whose lived experience formed the basis of their expertise. Prior to the event, this involved coaching community workers to agree to present and convince them that their ideas were as valuable as others on the panel – even the judges. Setting the agenda also involved telling ‘experts’ that they had as much time as those without a formal education. Giving everyone equal time on the agenda caused frustration for some. I was reminded that if I removed some people from

the schedule this would allow for more time with a few less speakers. I had to point out politely that less time *and* more voices was my intent.

By organising this way, some power structures within the field of FASD were decentred and the dichotomy between those who are formally educated and those who are not was also ruptured. Creating a space where workers were experts meant they were given an equal space to contribute to the conversation. This meant that much-needed discussions took place, which included discussions about labour conditions including the fact that community workers are often precariously employed and that their role in the field of FASD is undervalued – yet the work they do in the fields of mentoring is seen as highly valuable, a contradiction not lost on the workers. Seen this way, the praxis of valuing all perspectives (a hallmark of anthropology) also created a space in which lesser-discussed critiques could be raised (like precarious employment). All of these ideas were later captured in the Final Report and Recommendations, which were sent to policy-makers. These documents have since been distributed to libraries and health clinics and emailed to hundreds of workers and stakeholders across the province. By decentring expected expertise, different voices were amplified in a discussion about FASD.

Community organising can inform various types of lateral methods. Graeber (2004) highlighted this in his work when discussing attention to collaboration, working together and seeking out solutions in the interest of mutual aid. The FASD workshop highlighted that a wide range of individuals can come together and collaborate in the interests of those most in need of mutual aid – the marginalised and stigmatised in our communities. It also served to remind the diverse audience that the lived experience of workers and advocates produced expertise that was as valuable as professionally trained experts, and that all sides had much to learn from one another.

From Sensibilities to Praxis

Concern -> Research -> Action

I first became interested in FASD during my dissertation fieldwork when I was told at a police workshop that FASD was a risk category for crime. I was troubled by a medical condition becoming part of a discussion about criminal risk factors. Following my dissertation, I decided to turn my attention to FASD and formulated a project that would focus on police understandings of FASD, where they acquired those

understandings, and the implications and outcomes of these understandings on frontline practices.

In 2013, my research team interviewed thirty-four police officers and twenty-six community organisation workers in a cluster of communities across the province. During the interviews, officers identified FASD as a consideration in their work and many believed that individuals with FASD had disproportionate contact with the justice system. Officers also expressed frustration at a lack of resources to address FASD in the community. Interviews with community workers revealed similar levels of frustration and a need for new strategies and access to resources. What was striking for me, as a researcher, was that police and community workers were expressing the same concerns around the need for hands-on strategies to work effectively with people that have FASD as well as resources to assist in that work. And yet, there appeared to be little collaboration between the community organisations and policing agencies despite their contact with the same individuals with FASD. Analysis of the interviews, alongside discussions with professionals and colleagues, led to my resolve to host the workshop, to allow for an exploration of the shared strategies and frustrations, while bringing these sectors together with other justice professionals. I saw the workshop as but one step that was part of a larger project to bring about better social justice outcomes for those living with FASD – one path towards that goal is to put frontline workers in dialogue as they execute much control over the lives of individuals.

Action -> Analysis -> Knowledge Mobilisation

In planning the workshop, my research team engaged in consultation with key stakeholders to assess the utility of such an event and to see if this would yield appropriate outcomes for these groups. These insights were carried over into the planning process. The organisation of the workshop itself (breakout sessions, the need for ice-breakers, room organisation, etc.) was informed by my own ethnographic research acquired from previous fieldwork (Stewart 2011) working with police as they hosted community workshops seeking to get communities involved in crime-prevention projects. I tried to draw on the strengths of these workshops while also disrupting some practices that included: privileging expert voices, delimiting conversation, ignoring broader structural issues. I recalled that free events bring out participants, and fundraised so the event could be held at no charge for interested frontline workers and seats were reserved for students to participate as part of their professionalisation into the fields of justice, health, social work and nursing

(deans helped with financial support for this event). To make the event as accessible as possible, moderate travel scholarships were also made available. The event included certificates of completion (for some this was an important part of professional obligation to secure time off work) for the half-day training provided by a member of The Deputy Child Advocate's office who just happens to be a trained anthropologist. All events were held on campus.

Approximately seventy-five people attended the training session. The workshop had well over 200 participants including professional and government staff, frontline workers from justice, health and community organisations alongside volunteers, and managers. Also in attendance were judges, the Minister of Social Services, the President and students of the University of Regina, and the Executive Director from a national research organisation. In allocating only ten minutes to each of the speakers and creating equal time for discussion and breakout sessions, the intent was to illustrate that everyone had something to share. And share they did.

In between clusters of fast-paced panels, there were two sets of moderated discussions. These breakout discussions were divided up first by sector (police, social services, community workers) and then by region (rural/isolated, medium and urban areas). Each was guided by paid facilitators who were given a number of organising questions to lead the discussion with the group. Questions such as:

- What is the biggest challenge you face in your work when it comes to working with individuals who have FASD?
- Based on the presentations today that discussed regional collaborations, what programmes etc. could be helpful in your work, and what are the limitations and barriers to implementing these programmes and practices?
- What research needs do you have in your sector?
- What would be helpful if you had access to research resources from one of the universities?

The participants were allowed to choose which questions they wanted to work on in their groups. Student volunteers took notes in the room about the discussion. The sessions served to recognise the unique characteristics of specific professions and geographies. Participants were able to share their frustrations and strategies to address these unique challenges with a group of people they might not otherwise come in contact with, yet nevertheless had so much in common with. Feedback on surveys and during the workshop

itself indicated that participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with others, in part because these encounters revealed that they were ‘not alone’ in their frustrations. As one participant commented, ‘We are all on the same page rural wise (we need more resources)’. Saying one is on the ‘same page’ here indicates that no matter the sector, people working in rural locations recognise the disparity and are attempting to deal with this in their own ways. The workshop and breakout session created a space for networking and to strategise about such challenges.

The agenda was created to include long breaks to allow for one-on-one discussions and networking. Although many people sat with the person they travelled with or with someone they knew, the set-up of the room (with long rows of tables) and the breakout sessions (focused on discussion) forced people to come in contact with one another. From that first prompt on the newspaper, ‘what are we doing now?’, there was an invitation to talk and learn from one another and most people seized the opportunity (see Figure 1). By the end of the day, there was an exchange of phone numbers and business cards.



Figure 1: The newspaper paper served to invite participants into a discussion. But tucked away between comments and scribbles was evidence of frustration. Here, a critique that focused on the effects of government spending and cuts.

By the end of the day a workshop about FASD included discussions about other necessary and related topics including the following items taken from survey responses:

- Housing for youth
- Lack of awareness, funds
- Lack of opportunities to get training/education
- First Nations/Colonization
- Truth + Reconciliation

- Lack of awareness/empathy towards children w/FASD in foster system
- Slow response time to get services and jumping through hoops to get services
- Lack of coordination with other sectors, e.g. collaborated meetings b/w schools, care providers, social workers
- Legal system is not conducive to work with people with disabilities
- Workload limits ability to focus on special-needs clients.

The diverse feedback highlights the wide range of contexts that must be accounted for when discussing FASD including courtrooms and foster systems alongside fallout of colonialism. These are the relational contexts we think about as anthropologists – the challenge is to bring people into conversation so they can discuss these contexts together as they strategise about solutions.

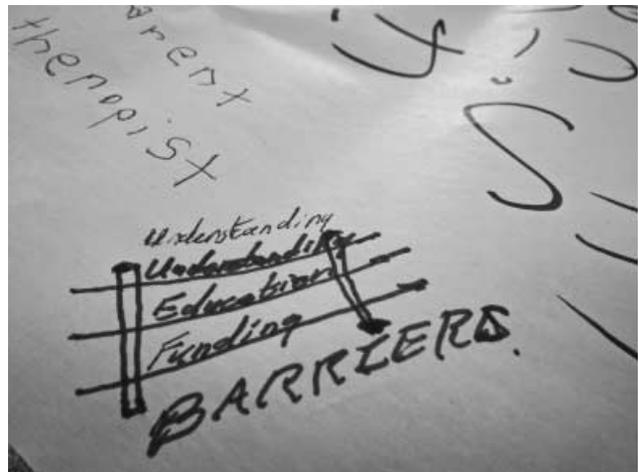


Figure 2: On this corner of the newspaper, a participant creates a visual that serves to illustrate some of the challenges facing those with FASD. Here, barriers—in understanding, education and funding—are experienced on multiple levels and can significantly affect those living with FASD.

For the Final Report we transcribed all of the survey results, as well as the notes from the facilitated sessions, and the newspaper paper (see Figure 2). We analysed these alongside the students’ notes from the facilitated discussions and presentations. The intent was to code the material and to draw out recurrent themes that would allow us to highlight insights from all of the participants (those that presented formally and those that shared their ideas in the discussions) and bring these ideas to policy-makers. The goal was a final report in which participants would see themselves. We then sought assistance from those with

more policy experience so that the final report and policy recommendations² would have traction with policy-makers – what some would call ‘impact’.

Impact and Broader Considerations

An edited volume focused on ‘impact’ offers a chance to think collectively about how impact is framed and valued by researchers, institutions, policy-makers, interlocutors, students and the public. Developing this article allowed me to think through the anthropological sensibilities I bring to my work and the potential to deploy these sensibilities when engaged in policy work. In so doing, it also reminded me of the various moments of discomfort I experienced when planning the workshop as I felt compelled to ‘sell’ the event and myself as a researcher to secure the needed funds, arguing that I was mobilising my research findings to ‘put research into practice’. This is not inherently problematic; it can produce future expectation for so-called tangible applications of research. And while my community-based research is directly engaged at this level with workers and policy-makers, many of my colleagues do not work in this way – and will not work in this way, which must be respected. Applied work with policy engagement can be seductive³ but there are traps built into this seduction and therefore we must tread carefully.

How we engage in our research and the constraints in framing our research engagement is an increasingly explicit discussion to have in the field. In her recent article focused on the role of anthropologists in service-user health research, Goberman-Hill (2014) highlighted the ways in which this type of engagement has come under scrutiny. This model of research now demands stakeholder engagement as codified into manuals and health-research practices and yet the research is itself under threat of being devalued because of the involvement of these same stakeholders. Goberman-Hill argued that this poses a particular threat for qualitative and anthropological research – given its history of co-produced knowledge(s). Thinking through this cautionary tale from Goberman-Hill, I want to return to Montoya and Kent’s (2011) community-driven research. Their project required community members become researchers and be involved in all aspects of the project from design to analysis. This is precisely the type of arrangement about which Goberman-Hill expressed concerns because of the potential for it to be devalued as consultation, not research. Whether thinking about funding requirements that demand stakeholder involvement (as outlined in Goberman-

Hill 2014) or because one wants to ‘shift the locations of power’ (as outlined by Cornwall and Jewkes 1995), the constraint remains. There is the potential that the research is itself devalued because the *subjects* of the research are not treated in traditional ways – they are being included in new and potentially threatening ways. As researchers, we find ourselves enmeshed in a time in which there are many reasons (be these political choices, funding requirement or a desire for innovative research methods) to involve stakeholders directly in our research, but the potential for new problems must also be noted and reckoned with.

Collaboration is not new to anthropology nor is it new to other fields, rather what is new is the shifting terrain of constraints and politics associated with collaborative and participatory research practices. There is an idealism that fuels these forms of methodological engagement and, like Goberman-Hill, I find it ‘hard to argue with these as ideals ... given the long history of collaboration and partnership in anthropological research’ (2014: 34). Accordingly, there is a need to think (and write) about the challenges of collaboration because the stakes can be high. Goberman-Hill’s article is a cautionary tale in many ways as she points to the potential for research not to be taken seriously because of the collaboration – a double-bind if ever there was one as health researchers are compelled to collaborate as part of the research grant and yet the very requirement could render the research invalid in some eyes.

Another potential element of constraint is that the pressure to address ‘real-world problems’ can imply funding models that ask the grant recipient to diversify their knowledge mobilisation practices so that they will broadcast to broader audiences outside of academia. This might involve writing opinion pieces, articles for trade magazines or more popular presses, blogging and the like, yet many researchers lack interest or skills in social media and writing for magazines. As these diverse dissemination practices become codified into performance review and funding requirements there comes a question of what it means to do meaningful dissemination. For example, when KT (knowledge translation) and KM (knowledge mobilisation) projects appear more routine than creative they may be delivered with flat enthusiasm. Engaging with a broader audience should not be treated like a checklist or perhaps a list of bullet-pointed items that one ticks on a box to satisfy a requirement. As Strathern (2006) points out, when items are reduced to bullet points the list is emptied of meaning. Building on this idea, Jacob (2011) notes that the list is not ‘generating meaning or analysis’ (Jacob 2011: 28). Taken together, if the man-

date of broader dissemination practices means they become perfunctory this can undo the intent. If the goal is to make scholarship more accessible to increase research impact, then dissemination demands creativity and should afford opportunity to think differently.

As applied researchers, there are myriad ways we can think about and aspire to produce impacts through our work – some of which we might not see or recognise as impact. For example, I recognised that my research findings would have little to no impact on frontline practices through traditional scholarly dissemination, so I hosted the workshop as a way to mobilise some findings from my work that indicated a need to open up lines of communication between sectors. I thought if I could bring together workers from different sectors they might hear one another and there could emerge the potential for change in understandings, practices and policies, and the comments indicated that the workshop provided the collaborative space I was hoping to facilitate. The policy recommendations that came from that workshop are still being operationalised. From my perspective, I see this as a successful strategy that is potentially impacting on practices.

In preparing this article, I asked some of the people I work with (those in the justice and community sectors) to describe the impact (if any) of the workshop. I was told that recent trainings for judges and lawyers were influenced by the workshop. They took ideas from the workshop and translated them into other professionalisation workshops. I was also told that a provincial initiative on FASD was catalysed by discussions at the workshop. Accordingly, its impact resonates as the conversation continues in sectors that might not otherwise have dedicated time to the topic of FASD. Hosting events of this nature are exciting opportunities to engage with a diverse group of participants and speakers, but hosting comes with an obligation.

In hosting the workshop, I was deeply concerned that 200+ people were going to travel from all around Saskatchewan (some even came in from neighbouring provinces) and might leave the event thinking it was not a productive use of their time and financial resources. I was relieved when we received early and positive feedback from participants. The greatest relief came with the surveys, and notes scribbled on the newsprint paper, as participants indicated the value of the workshop because it presented an opportunity to learn but also network and access perceived power-brokers like judges, researchers and police officers. This had impact that I cannot measure but is nevertheless apparent. For reporting purposes on my campus and to my funders, the policy outcomes and

peer-reviewed journal articles are the primary objects upon which impact is measured. However, for me, the impact is also seen in comments such as these that are taken from the surveys and comments on the newsprint:

- I was unaware that the town I lived in has great programs!
- It was an amazing day of training. All of it.
- Breakout session was helpful and full of info.
- Need for workshops such as this one!
- We all struggle together and alike.

Comments like the first and last one on this list are echoed in my research notes when I heard police and community organisations articulate similar concerns and struggles inside the same community. As the researcher, I was the outsider. My job was to host and facilitate a discussion that I thought was being called for in my research findings. I also knew that funds for training about FASD were critically low and so I offered a free training to assist with professionalisation. The workshop, in the end, turned out to be one part knowledge mobilisation, and one part facilitated networking space. Taken together, it was an experiment but one that proved successful based on the surveys *and* scribbles found on the tabletop liner.

Conclusion

When I organised the event, I was not thinking about policy recommendations. Rather, I was trying to think if the event *could* have an impact on frontline workers by bringing them together to discuss their work with one another and, ideally, finding new ways to do their work that might positively affect those living with FASD. In the end, I think it was a success, in part because of the sensibility that informed it. I started the article with a discussion of the table-top liners because it became an object that might otherwise be thrown away, but as anthropologists, we collect a wide range of information and data including strange pieces of material culture. The rolls and rolls of tabletop liners from that workshop became the strange piece of material culture that I gathered and then poured over looking for another layer of additional insight from participants.

From the collecting of the tabletop liners to the choice of speakers, the workshop reflected my own anthropological sensibility. I wanted a wide range of voices to discuss FASD in its various contexts and relations. And while the event was directly informed

by my research findings when working with justice professionals and community workers, my primary role at the workshop was to act as a facilitator to help transport ideas between groups of people. The event created a space for a divergent group of individuals to gather together and talk about the work they do to promote good practices but also to raise concerns and frustrations about the lack of resources and the need to see FASD within a broader socio-historic context in Canada.

Whether sitting in the audience or presenting, one thing was certain that day: for eight hours, over 200 people sat down and talked about FASD and how they address it in their particular fields and communities. That, in and of itself, has an impact on FASD as a highly stigmatised condition that results in health inequalities and other social injustices. Dialogue and action are key to bring about new practices which might help foster better outcomes for those living with FASD. For that to happen, there needs to be spaces created to have these discussions. This is impact. I cannot quantify it and I cannot be sure ever to replicate it again, but it inspires me to think about other ways to disseminate my research and to seek out the role of facilitator to help move information between sectors. By contributing to this issue on impact, I hope this article contributes to broader discussions about the politics and constraints of this type of research method and practice.

In this era of late-neoliberalism and austerity, the social sciences are embroiled in a fight to be seen as relevant in the 'real world'. Accordingly there is a need for critical spaces that discuss concepts like 'impact' so as to open up dialogues about how research is being reframed and constrained by funding and publishing expectations. This critical space can also allow for reflection on these constraints relative to our own politics and sensibilities. In so doing, we can expand and contribute to discussions about research and methods across the disciplines while thinking collectively about key issues in our field and the various practices and strategies that we are deploying both strategically and politically.

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Notes

1. Regina Saskatchewan is located in Treaty 4 Territory. This means it is ceded territory and part of a treaty agreement between the First Nations people of the region and the state. The treaty was brokered between Queen Victoria and Saulteaux and Cree First Nations in 1874. The treaty exchanged the territory of these First Nations for payments and annuities. The treaty is understood to exist in perpetuity. While critics are quick to point out that Canada is often failing to deliver on its treaty promises across the country, the treaties are seen as a governing document that dictates right and responsibilities of the state to the First Nations peoples in Canada in exchange for the expropriation of land.
2. To access the final report and recommendations please visit the project website at: fasdresearchproject.com.
3. I would credit Patty Lather with this notion of seduction. At an event in Winter 2015 I was fortunate to share the stage with her as we discussed the notion of impact in our work – she cautioned the audience (and myself) about policy seduction that sucks researchers in. Seduction here is when we become infatuated with policy work that takes much time but often delivers little satisfaction in the form of tangible outcomes.

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