Waiting, power and time in ethnographic and community-based research

Introduction

Always wins and losses and waiting… (Personal comment from the field, 2015).

Waiting, often for indefinite periods, is an aspect of community-based research, including ethnographic fieldwork, that remains relatively unexplored in academic writing. Yet understanding its significance has the potential to re-frame relations between researcher and participant. Considered in this way, we suggest that waiting can become not simply a 'gap' between activities, but 'a link between the present and the future' (Gasaparini, 1995: 30). We focus in particular on the power shifts that can occur in those 'spaces between action' that characterise the work of the researcher in the field, spaces that occur when scheduling either fails or is impossible. The power dynamics in such spaces were initially identified by the authors in an exchange of stories from the field, three of which form part of the discussion in this paper.

The three research approaches of our stories are distinctive, comprising both ethnographic and community-based research, in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. They are, however, drawn together through shared experiences of waiting

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while working in and with communities. As such our reflections are relevant to the ever-growing area of community-based research, to the methods of ethnographic research, and to all other forms of research situated between university researchers and their communities.

Community-based and ethnographic research both aim to learn from the voices and experiences of community members. Both require extended periods of time in a community to maintain an open-ended, exploratory and deep engagement with others. Waiting forms an important part of this kind of research. This is particularly the case for ethnographic fieldwork which is variously described as 'open-ended' and including days of drifting and 'nondirective discovery' (Okely, 2012: 22, 23); exploratory and hence requiring protracted periods of time (Atkinson et al., 2001: 5; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 3, 4; Pelto, 2013: 43); and as serendipitous in 'being in the right place at the right or wrong time' (Rock, 2001: 30, and citing Fetterman 1989). Ethnographic methods are further described as 'omnivorous' because one cannot judge until later what is significant (Rock, 2001: 34), and requiring extended field periods to gain a sense of 'the imponderabilia of everyday life' (Faubion, 2001: 39, with reference to Malinowski). All of these descriptions point to a level of uncertainty about the time required, how to spend that time, and the kinds of material that might prove valuable in producing an ethnographic account:

> … the secret, beating heart of ethnographic method remains deeply
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> human: getting out with a voice recorder, pen and pad, writing,
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> negotiating, hanging around, watching, listening, waiting, typing,
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> checking (Hamilton, 2015: 564).

While not all community-based and community-engaged work is ethnographic, these other forms of research share the aspiration of good ethnography to understand others, their needs, aspirations and wishes, through being there and being part of other lives, albeit temporarily. Both ethnographic and community-based research involve extended timeframes, complex relationships and levels of uncertainty or open-endedness that produce periods of unscheduled waiting. These periods, referred to by Gasaparini (1995) as 'interstitial time,' include the long waits at tiny regional airports, the protracted coffee breaks in local cafes while creating busyness on the laptop or reading the local paper, the tired footwork on dusty roads looking for an address in the wrong place, the obligatory chatting with the office receptionist while the elusive principal target has exited via a back door, the quiet time in a hotel between interviews, and the desultory visits to small shops or local tourist attractions while waiting for a phone call or email from an informant. Sometimes an entire field trip will appear to be one long 'interstice' from which the researcher returns 'empty-handed'.

The value of such interstitial time has to date been identified largely in terms of the space it allows for new data or research knowledge to emerge, and in this paper we

review this aspect of interstitial time through the work of Mannay and Morgan (2015) on the 'waiting field', in the context of the pressures on present day ethnographers to minimise waiting and optimise the 'efficiency' of their time in the field. While resistance to these pressures has shown the 'waiting field' to be integral to ethnography, we argue that such times have a significance independent of knowledge outcomes. We explore the experience of waiting as a process engendering self-reflection and self-awareness, then review, from the other side, the ways in which *enforced* waiting has historically been used by government bureaucracies and corporations as a form of maintaining power over those who seek social or economic support.

We then argue that reflective and self-aware waiting can act as a form of power exchange between researcher and participants[1]. We take up a concept of waiting already explored by scholars in other contexts: as something offered, a form of 'waiting upon' the needs and priorities of another. We argue that in the particular context of ethnographic or community-based research, this amounts to a ceding of power that can partially redress current or historical power imbalances between researcher and participant. It can also, as we explore later in this paper, change the nature of the researcher's relationship with others in their world who are suddenly vulnerable.

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[1] The general term 'participant' is used throughout this paper to stand for 'informant', 'interviewee' etc.

First however, we review the 'waiting field' and the ways in which the ethnographic researcher waits, which, we suggest, are similar to the kinds of waiting potentially entailed in community-based research. The stories throughout this paper are drawn from the authors' own experiences in communities in rural and regional Australia, and were the genesis of this paper. There are three stories, one from each author, although to protect participants' anonymity none of the stories is attributed to its author by name.

Escaping the wait: waiting and learning

Ethnography is a process now subject to the efficiency imperatives of modern universities, where methodological instrumentalism based on cost and time efficiencies 'squeezes the unpredictable, the tangential and the creative' (Mills and Ratcliffe, 2012: 152) and 'loses much of what characterizes the ethnographic imagination' (160). Mannay and Morgan note that for new researchers, the practice of ethnography is moving away from an immersion approach that allowed unscheduled space from which new insights might emerge, towards a precise programming in which 'often there is a tendency to neglect the importance of the in-between' (2015: 170). These institutional approaches to ethnography and fieldwork are based on a view of 'chronological time as a container waiting to be filled with … profitable activity' (Bissell, 2007: 280), rather than providing space for the 'open-ended' and 'omnivorous' research activities described above.

However, as the descriptions of ethnographic research in the previous section suggest, there are obvious ways in which waiting may have outcomes of value to the researcher – learning more about fellow researchers during the conversations that fill the time, learning more about place and community during the walking-around-town or waiting-in-a-café times. Rather than the unexpected or emergent, these appear to be a natural consequence of the researcher's being *there* rather than somewhere else. At other times, the unexpected meeting with a hitherto unknown informant, the discovery of a local history book lying on a counter, the sighting of a significant sign or object during a walk, may make special sense of a later (or earlier) conversation. The strategic researcher will incorporate these experiences into their research outputs:

> One cannot force the hearts and minds of other people, or get them to do what we want them to do at the precise moment we want it. We can only wait, and … convert our tribulations into lasting prose (O'Brien, 1995: 182).

Tight and 'efficient' scheduling, designed to optimise the use of time, travel funds and salary, also leaves little room for emergent phenomena that might arise out of the unique conditions of each experience in the field. Paul Carter's argument 'against projects' was that the project discourse, with its milestones and outcomes 'treated as nothing those times (and places) of waiting, idling and dissipation in which what was usually overlooked as formless began to take form' (2004: 47). Gaps in schedules, or

delays occasioned by something that goes wrong – an informant away or sick, the plane or bus delayed, the researcher unwell – may call forth a complex array of events within a community that casts an entirely new light on the research. A researcher's sudden dependence on an informant or community for more than 'data' – for kindness, for physical support, for medical care or for taking charge of an emergent complex situation that is beyond the researcher's ability to manage, has the potential to re-frame and inform the research findings. The events in the following story occurred while one of the authors was in the early stages of developing an oral history project with an Aboriginal community. As the story indicates, the meeting described was almost incidental to the researcher's primary purpose, but provided important insights at a critical point in the (researcher's) main project:

'Hiatus'

> I am sitting in a 'futures planning' workshop, in the town hall of a remote
> and stressed community in red dirt Australia. The other participants are
> community leaders and senior people from other organisations. We have
> all been personally invited by the local leaders to discuss what the
> community wants and how we can contribute to changing things for the
> better. I also have another reason for being here – my research. While I
> will be offering research services that might be helpful to the community
> in reaching its goals, I am here mainly to obtain context for other

interviews I want to conduct with people in the community. I have also tried for weeks to arrange a meeting with one particular community leader who is here today, and I'm hoping that this will be an opportunity to finally make contact.

The workshop is proceeding according to schedule. The noise level has risen since we broke into small discussion groups, but now it falls slightly as we all join together again to share our findings on large white sheets of 'butcher's' [craft] paper. I am waiting for my turn to stand up and present the ideas from my group, when there is a loud interruption. An angry uninvited local resident enters the room and begins to shout a series of grievances that seem both valid and disruptive. The workshop has stopped. We all listen silently to the demands and complaints. My elusive 'target,' – the sought-after community leader – steps forward from the back of the room, and within moments has moved with the complainant and one of the workshop facilitators out into the sunlit courtyard. Our workshop resumes while a just audible conversation occurs outside. We stop again when all three re-enter the room. The leader asks the angry visitor to make a statement of their concerns to all of us, and then invites them to join the workshop.

The person who interrupted has been the focus of attention, but I find myself thinking about the community leader who so quickly stepped forward. The unavailability of this leader during my research program, my many emails that have gone unanswered, phone calls unreturned, are thrown into a new light by the hiatus of this interruption. While a paralysis gripped most of the participants, this leader claimed both the authority and the responsibility to successfully intervene. I know already something about the leader's role in the community, and the expectations upon them; I know for example that this requires their attendance at all of the community's funerals.

It is hard to imagine a kind of busyness that is so different from mine – one in which my program of activities must be a small and barely visible dot in a vast chart of cares, duties and commitments. My frustration and irritation dissolve. In this moment at least, I feel admiration. I am determined that from now on I will do all I can to minimise any stress I might cause this leader, and accept that my research schedule will not be their first priority. I resolve in future to wait.

A breach of the program, and the suspension of 'useful' activities, can demonstrate different qualities of 'the field' and be cause for new reflections by the researcher. Mannay and Morgan (2015: 172) describe the 'waiting field' as consisting of 'spaces

previous to', 'spaces of interruption/disruption' and 'spaces of reflection.' In 'spaces previous to' the researcher is present but waits for the participant to complete other activities, for example household tasks or conversations, before the formal 'research' can begin. These tasks and conversations can themselves be illuminating in what they tell the researcher about the participant's way of life. Such experiences in turn create 'spaces of reflection' for the researcher. The authors note that 'spaces of reflection' are not necessarily demarcated in time from 'spaces previous to'; naming such spaces is rather a way of highlighting that which is 'threatened by invisibility' (2015: 175) in increasingly time-pressed and methodologically narrow approaches to ethnography.

Similarly, intrusions on the research space, for example by telephone calls or family members engaging in disruptive activities nearby, are described as 'waiting ruptures'; they provide a 'backroom view' of complex relationships that were not as evident within the interview process (2015: 177). The 'Hiatus' story above describes one such space of interruption/disruption that opened a view onto complex community relationships.

For ethnographers, these are ways, not of actively and productively filling in waiting time, but rather of valuing the wait as a learning (and hence productive) time. The kinds of waiting described above allow space for the unscheduled to occur and enrich the researcher's ethnographic understanding.

So far we have focused on what happens during the wait, and the value *for work* of new knowledge thus acquired. Sometimes however, the wait has no apparent work value, yet neither is it leisure. Michael Ralph (2008: 16, 23) notes that work and leisure are defined by each other (one pays for the other and each makes the other necessary), but waiting is a third kind of time, a time that also must be filled or endured. Ralph asks: 'how… might we analyze and situate productive activity that lacks exchange value?' (16), and describes the ritualized tea-making by unemployed youth in Senegal as one such way of 'killing time.' Nevertheless, there are ways other than 'activity' – productive or otherwise - of experiencing the wait. In the following section, we focus on the waiting as a process in itself, and the value that may be ascribed to the experience of simply waiting.

Claiming the wait: the wait that is neither work nor leisure

For the one who waits, the experience is always 'at the crossroads not only of the present and future, but also of certainty and uncertainty' (Gasaparini, 1995: 31). A wait with an unknown endpoint creates uncertainty because it is outside the control of the waiter; such waits are the most difficult to endure, as can be seen in Gray's (2011: 421) description of Irish families waiting for emigrants to return: 'the potentially lifelong sense of waiting for an absence to be filled, or for the eventual return of migrants, … is often articulated in contradictory terms as resigned hope' (see also Elliot, 2015). Auyero and Swistun (2007) study residents in a shanty town, waiting for relocation away from

environmental hazards, waiting for constantly delayed medical attention, waiting for always-deferred compensation from companies, and who suffer both confusion and an endless wait that constitutes 'submission to an overwhelmingly damaging reality' (2007: 129). Even where the timeframe is known, waiting without expectation of a specific event ('the state of anticipation… to a certain extent, gives an actor control over the situation,' (Gasaparini, 1995: 30)) can be difficult: 'prisoners wait merely for the waiting to stop, for their sentence to be complete' (Armstrong, 2015: 2).

It might also be said of course that 'freedom from jail' *is* an event warranting anticipation, an event very different from simply 'the end of waiting.' In any case, more than 'nothing' happens during a prisoner's waiting. Armstrong (2015) points out (after Deleuze, 1992) that the waiting of prisoners is a process rather than static, and includes the exercise of a never-ending series of controls by authorities over the prisoner. She suggests that a prison bears similarities to a train station in that not only prisoners but many others wait, pass through and between spaces, and engage in activities regulated by the prison system (2015: 16). Moreover Tamara Kohn (2009) notes in her essay on the art and writing of prisoners on death row, waiting can also be learning:

> Waiting in captivity for death can be seen from the evidence of at least some prisoners as a process through which humanistic and proactive expressions of 'being' and 'becoming' may be discovered through self-education and the honing of new skills (2009: 226).

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In describing the mobilities of waiting – 'the various bodily demands and corporeal attentiveness that waiting entails,' Bissell (2007) notes that waiting may also take the form of *withdrawal* from activity: an acquiescence or 'bowing out' (284, 294). In this 'bodily stillness,' he suggests, there can develop a heightened self-awareness and 'an awareness of one's own body in space' (286). Schweizer likewise notes that the experience of waiting may lead to 'enlarged perceptions … of the strange phenomenon of our own existential enduring' which may also be 'vexingly uncomfortable. We fidget, we pace, we complain, we consult our watches' (Schweizer, 2008: 18).

If we regard waiting – indeed acquiesce to waiting – not as time to be endured but as a valuable experience of our own duration, 'a condition of our being,' then it is possible, suggests Schweizer, to wait 'without object or end' (2008: 128). Gillian Tan's (2009) ethnography of Tibetan nomads describes the chanting and prayers that give their experience of waiting a quality of enchantment; 'moving-waiting-moving' becomes a musical syncopation, 'enabling them to embrace waiting as the necessary complement to moving… [and] heightens the physical senses to a *greater* awareness of time and place' (2009: 74, emphasis in original). As Schweizer notes:

> If we claim our experience of waiting rather than being merely subjected
> to it, we resist the commercialization of time, we own our time, we make
> time matter – we matter (Schweizer, 2008: 128).

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Claiming the wait requires patience of a sort that is more than an acceptance of 'how things are' at a particular time; it is rather, suggests Cordner, an affirmation of the world as a whole, whenever and however it brings about one's waiting (2009: 178). This includes an acceptance of different temporalities, where, as in the following story, the researchers' waiting becomes an integral part of the encounter:

'Too Cold for Hunting: Learning to wait and learning from waiting'

My first ever trip to northern Australia was as a student volunteer on a project to collect bush food stories from Senior Aboriginal women on the edge of the desert. As a volunteer driver I had no responsibility for the aims of the project or its execution. It was a few days driving before we reached the field destination. During the drive I was told of bush food experiences of previous years' work; I was both excited and apprehensive about the coming days. It was to be my first ever ethnographic field experience; new country, new people, new methods. I was peripheral to the negotiations of reminding people who we were and why we were there. It was eventually agreed that we could stay in the community hall to save us a fairly lengthy drive back to town each day. Staying in the community hall meant camping on a bare concrete floor under a tin roof. But we were in close proximity to the people we wanted to work with, and could be available to 'go bush' as soon as the women were ready. We

thought we might go out the following morning, and rose early and readied ourselves to go; boots laced and notebooks at the ready. After an hour or two, one of the Senior Women appeared; politely languid she surveyed us quietly. She appeared to be sensing out the country all around her before telling us that it was too cold to go hunting that day. A brilliant clear blued-skied day ensued and even in mid-winter the temperature nudged thirty degrees Celsius.

And so began a pattern of waiting, and the daily verdict that it 'was too cold for hunting'. Cool nights and fine days passed. Waiting became routine; readying ourselves each morning and waiting to see whether we might go hunting. School children came to the hall in the early morning for breakfast. They'd reappear in a whispering giggling line along the wall in the evening; spying our equipment and asking for the 'compass' to look at the moon. One night all the Senior Women arrived and sat silently along that same wall as a group of drunken men drove threateningly around the community. The women said little as they guarded us, and left just as silently when the ruckus died down. We came to know a pack of camp dogs that were cursed by day and predatory at night. The toilet wasn't working and cockroaches flooded the hall. No plumber would visit

the community; they had been waiting months for it to be fixed. I used my rudimentary skills to repair it and unblock the sewer.

Days of waiting came abruptly to an end; a group of senior women all arrived together and announced that we were leaving. Suddenly there was a rush. We had become languid ourselves in those days of waiting. Whatever mysterious business had been arranged – skin groups allocated to the strangers, negotiations about who would go, and where and what we would do had all been decided in the time of waiting. We simply followed their instructions and directions. The bush tucker experiences were rich, exhilarating and everything we had come for – stories and knowledge generously shared. But the waiting taught us too: we had learnt to wait, to wait without expectation. Waiting allowed important cultural business to take place – people had a chance to understand who we were; see whether we trusted their kids and whether we would follow their instruction. In waiting we learnt too; that Aboriginal people in remote Australia live in overcrowded houses, live in danger and fear, are exploited by retailers, and made to wait months for basic services. In their waiting they are powerless. When we enter that world to understand it, there is an opportunity to reverse the order of that relationship. We had to demonstrate a willingness to wait, to grow comfortable in waiting without

expectation. In return we gained insight beyond that which we came to

find.

In acquiescing to waiting, a researcher may thus undergo changes in their 'affective

relations,' changes that are not necessarily rendered visible in fieldwork methodologies

(Bissell, 2007: 293) but are significant nonetheless. Bissell names some of the potential

affective changes brought about by waiting as 'impatience, anger, aggression,

and…tiredness, fatigue and hunger' (2007: 294). Morgan (in Mannay and Morgan,

2015) notes that her response to a particular interruption was anger, not with the

disrupting of the interview but on behalf of the participant who was being imposed

upon; through such disruptions research 'provides not only ways of seeing others, but

ways of understanding ourselves' (2015: 178, citing Walkerdine 1997). The 'Hiatus'

story of the disrupted community meeting, above, changed the researcher's affective

relations, producing empathy and a deeper emotional engagement with the 'target'

participant. The researchers waiting for bush tucker hunting to begin are forced to

accept control of the timing by their hosts; this timing reflects a deeper difference in

temporalities between non-Aboriginal researchers and Aboriginal people in remote

communities for whom different rhythms determine 'the times for social, religious and

economic exchanges' (Nanni, 2011: 9). In 'Too cold for hunting', it is these rhythms

that 'allow important cultural business to take place.' Differences in temporalities also

manifest in other kinds of research encounters between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

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people, especially where there are, in addition, institutional time constraints applied to fieldwork:

> Non-Aboriginal people are used to asking direct questions in quick succession, to get the answers they need. They will often interrupt one another, sometimes to argue or contradict the speaker, but often just to agree with emphatic statements like 'I know!' This is at odds in a remote Aboriginal community where conversations depend on established relationships, are circular, non-conclusive and vague, and largely negotiated through silence and body language (Prince, 2017).

Following Bissell, the changes in relations that occurred as a result of the experiences in 'Hiatus' and 'Too cold for hunting' were probably unobservable in subsequent interactions between researcher and participants, but a potent consequence of the waiting experience can be a shift towards a less researcher-centric approach to research design, and a more nuanced and reflective set of research findings.

Having examined the ways in which waiting can be claimed as an experience in itself, rather than viewed through its productive potential, we now turn to ways in which claiming the wait can subvert its use by others for the purpose of gaining or maintaining power.

Waiting and power

Waiting historically has been used in various ways to either gain power over an adversary, or to enforce state control. In the business world of mergers and acquisitions for example (Andonova et al., 2013), waiting is a strategy to out-manoeuvre a competitor. This is 'tactical waiting' (Xiao et al., 2012) or 'postponement' (Paglieri, 2013), a resource managed and planned by the waiter (Gasaparini, 1995: 41; Minnegal, 2009: 90), in the same way that a predator or hunter waits and watches for its prey (Tan, 2009: 67; Wearmouth et al., 2014) or commuters delay their departure to minimise travel time (Xiao et al., 2012).

In this paper the waiting we wish to associate with power is the waiting enforced by one party on another. The waiting experienced by researchers in the field, as the previous section indicates, often lies outside the control of the researcher. That said, in a fieldwork scenario where there is no waiting by the researcher, where every minute is booked with interviews and scheduled visits to particular sites for photographs and documentation, the researcher's control of the project can produce participants as passive respondents to a pre-determined set of prompts, beginning with the determination of a time and place for every meeting.

Auyero (2012: 26) suggests that waiting is 'an activity intricately bound up with the constitution and reproduction of submission', and one that remains under-explored. Requiring others to comply with an imposed and/or arbitrary timeframe effectively

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controls the time of the other, and in other contexts has been used to produce enforced periods of waiting. Obvious examples of enforced waiting that are exertions of power include the waiting deliberately produced to create a sense of '*uncertainty and arbitrariness*' (Auyero, 2012: 19, italics in original), as in the case with asylum seekers in detention (Hyndman and Giles, 2011; Turnbull, 2015). In Auyero's (2012) account of benefit claimants waiting in an Argentinian welfare office, where 'poor people learn that they have to remain temporarily neglected, unattended to, or postponed,' (9), waiting is part of 'a successful strategy of domination' (15). Waiting is used by organisations to 'cool out' rejected applicants for jobs or services, creating indefinite delays in notifying applicants in order to 'defeat … their intentions and commitment' (Sellerberg, 2008: 352).

Waiting devalues the time of those who wait, especially of those who wait for extended periods without foreseeable end (Ralph, 2008: 15), with a demonstrable correlation between longer waiting times and lower socioeconomic status (see for example Johar et al., 2013; Monstad et al., 2014; Pardy, 2009). This is waiting as an exertion of state control, pushing to the margins those with no ability to pay:

> … waiting is experienced by social actors as the boundary position *par excellence* of a no-man's land. One waits in limbo because here waiting time is controlled by the nation state. Time is deferred if one is in the queue (Rundell, 2009: 47).

A sense of unjust waiting described in Jeffrey's (2012) study of Indian youth attempting to move from university to employment, lead to political protest to redress the power imbalance between individual and the state. Such protest can be organized within and for the community, as in Jeffrey's case study, or co-opted into formal political processes, as in the case of Senegalese successful presidential candidate Abdoulaye Wade who used disenfranchised rap music artists to spread his message about youth-related political priorities: 'Wade ingeniously made use of the most valuable resource youth possess: their free time' (Ralph, 2008: 12). In a less overt form of protest, the period of waiting can be occupied in forms of resistance such as those described by Salim Lakha (2009), where the migrant waiting to return home either steadfastly remains disengaged with the host culture, or makes strong efforts to remain connected with their own.

Others instead become habituated to powerless waiting, as Auyero (2012: 14-15) notes:

> … waiting appears to be 'in the order of things' for the poor. It is something normal, expected, and inevitable. They are disposed to recognize that they have to wait and thus to submit to it, because that is precisely what they are regularly exposed to.

'Temporal suffering' (Jeffrey and Young, 2012: 641), waiting as a cruelty (Rundell, 2009: 47, 48), and 'chronic' rather than 'acute' waiting (Pardy, 2009: 200) can therefore

act as a catalyst either for political change, or for its opposite, depoliticization, described as 'a disbelief in the possibility of a future self of any value' (Olson, 2015: 522) and 'a disposition of apparent disinterest and inertia that involves an over-reliance on time to make things right and a simultaneous gloom about the eventuation of this possibility' (Pardy, 2009: 195-196). It emerges from an apparently powerless position, where 'constant thwarting of desire and sense of defeat associated with unmet longing can also engender mistrust and paranoia,' and, eventually, shame (Pardy, 2009: 201, 207).

However, Jeffrey's Indian youth collaborating across caste and cultural divides to end their waiting through political action and Ralph's rap artists in Senegal who produced music as social critique during their wait for 'work and hope' (Ralph, 2008: 14) are forms of subaltern agency in gaining some control over the waiting.

Somewhat differently, Maier's (2013) essay on Simone Weil notes that the waiting undertaken by the economically or socially precarious can, at its best, become an exercise in superhuman patience that prevents recourse to extreme worldviews such as fascism (Maier, 2013: 230). If the 'precariat' instead engages in *attentive waiting* they will be able 'to see reality more fully' (227, 231) and begin a new dialogue based on ethical and spiritual strength rather than desperation or fanaticism. This is waiting as a claimed and hence transformative experience that produces Bissell's (2007) self-awareness and non-judgmentalism. The transformation thus produced enables 'trust,

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cooperation, and fairness to emerge organically from everyday communicative life'
(Maier, 2013: 234) as it does for Tan's Tibetan nomads described above.

While such a transformation is the kind of affective change that, as Bissell (2007) notes,
is difficult to observe or describe, in the following section we suggest it is exactly this
kind of waiting that the researcher is able to offer participants in the field as a way of
partially redressing imbalances of power.

Offering the wait

The power relations between fieldwork participants and researchers are always in
question, especially where there is a disparity in social and economic circumstances, or
historical relations of exploitation or oppression between the participant's world and the
researcher's world (England, 1994; Gade, 2001; Hyndman, 2001; Scheyvens and
Storey, 2003; Scott et al., 2006; Spivak, 1988; Till, 2001). Josh Packard (2008)
describes his attempts to engage homeless people more collaboratively in his research
through asking them to take photographs of significant places and use these as a basis
for discussion. He notes that many participants were unable to make sense of the project
because

> [e]xpecting to have one's voice heard and opinion count is a learned skill,
> and years of suppression cannot be overcome easily, if at all. Even a
> research design, method and implementation that seeks to cede as much

power as possible to the subject cannot erase or undo a lack in this skill

set (2008: 74).

Even where the histories or socioeconomic positions of researcher and participant are

more equitable, there is potential for discrepant interests and hence tensions in any

community-based research project. Smyth and Whitehead (2012) suggest that

participants

> … could not be expected to identify strongly with the obligations of the
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> researchers to produce high quality research products. …
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> A corollary of this situation is that the project achievements of
>
> importance to community participants, … may not qualify as a significant
>
> research outcome, even though these may be watershed, catalytic events
>
> for community members (Smyth and Whitehead, 2012: 28).

When power-based tensions arise between stakeholders in a research project, the

institutional and self-imposed pressures on researchers to minimise waiting because it is

wasted time, only make the act of waiting all the more valuable as 'a form of exchange

and power between actors' (Gasaparini, 1995: 35). Just as patience is the embracing of

the world as it is, it is also a path to resolving tension:

> More profoundly, the attitude of patience expresses the full acceptance of
>
> the other's time, which cannot be reduced to our own time and our own

projects or designs. …Waiting refers to the fact that things and people operate in a time which is peculiar to themselves (1995: 42).

This full acceptance is a form of attention to the other. The researcher who waits for the chronically late participant, or the delayed community meeting, is paying attention to those others through being *present in their own waiting*: ''Here I am,' is what we must say' (Schweizer, 2008: 109). By waiting in the field, the researcher acknowledges a relation between themselves and the one who is waited for: 'Here I am, when you are ready.' This 'waiting for' becomes part of the rhythm of activity, like the moving-waiting-moving of Tan's Tibetan nomads, or like a conversation:

Conversations take form as people exchange both words and silences, waiting to hear—attending to—what others have to say before responding (Minnegal, 2009: 90).

Attentive waiting is 'waiting upon' rather than 'waiting for'. In a conversation, one is not simple 'waiting for' someone to finish speaking, but attending to the other through waiting:

Real attention to another is thus what allows their otherness to shape our response to them, rather than our assimilating the other to the patterns of meaning we impose (Cordner, 2009: 169).

This 'waiting upon' is exemplified in our third story from the field:

'Relationships matter most'

I was the lead researcher on a research project that was examining the impacts of an intergenerational mentoring program for marginalised youth. All community partners were passionate about supporting young people in flexible learning schools to realise their potentials. Project team members had been working together for a number of years and met regularly as part of the project consortium. One project team member, a retired patron of the school, had played a major role in getting the mentoring project up and running, and was very keen to be involved as a key community stakeholder of the project.

In the middle of the project, this team member experienced a major health challenge that meant the project was no longer one of his top priorities. He wanted to stay involved but was uncertain when he would be able to engage or where he could contribute. Although he kept saying, 'I don't know what good I am any more', and 'I think I'm losing it', that couldn't have been further from the truth. He contributed so much just from being there, by providing his calm, assured and experienced comments and by providing suggestions for how to keep things moving. I always looked forward to our meetings and valued all that he said. He was a sounding board for me, a critical friend and an essential part of the project team.

When I first heard about his illness, I immediately delayed the research - he and I shared a passion and commitment to the vision and mission of the project and I wanted him to be part of its journey. He had been such an integral player in its inception that I wouldn't have felt right proceeding without him.

So we met regularly while he was undergoing treatment. We'd discuss how he was going and that he had good days and bad, and how some days he just didn't feel like getting out of bed. But he always made time to talk about my plans for the research and what we hoped to achieve. I think this gave him hope that he could still actively contribute to the project despite his need to put time and energy into getting well again. He wasn't used to prioritising himself over others and it caused me to reflect on what a remarkable man he was and how even during his darkest hours he was wanting to support me and the research and to contribute where he could. I will always cherish those conversations because it gave me valuable space to reflect on my colleague's personal circumstances, to be patient in my approach, and to appreciate how relationships matter most in community research. I learned that research matters little if your health is at risk and your future is uncertain. It has a way of putting life into perspective for everyone on the journey.

Upon reflection, waiting for my team member to be well probably even helped to bolster our relationship and our commitment to the project. This commitment was rewarded with the successful completion of the community project despite many external obstacles, and the eventual award of research funding. A community mentoring hub was built at the school and provides a safe place for older and younger generations to come together and share a conversation over a quiet cup of tea. The retired team member remains actively engaged with the school and continues to oversee the mentoring program delivered via the community hub.

This story is an example of Schweizer's 'Here I am' as paying attention to one who suffers (2008: 88-109). In waiting upon a suffering colleague or friend by being present, one exceeds 'waiting for' by being patient rather than irritated or anxious; patience, as we noted above, is 'the full acceptance of the other's time' and its disruption by illness, indisposition or other commitments[2]:

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[2] The attention offered in 'waiting upon' – being attentive to another – needs to be distinguished from Schweizer's 'waiting on', a lingering in place that heightens attention to particular aspects of one's surroundings Schweizer H (2008) *On Waiting*. Oxford and New York: Routledge..

> What matters is that one give one's presence to the sufferer not as an
>
> activity but as the substance of waiting (Schweizer, 2008: 89)

'Waiting upon' achieves more than a transformation of the researcher's affective relations; it also makes the researcher available – 'Here I am' – in an acknowledgement of the other's needs and priorities.

The researcher's waiting is thus always relational: they wait *upon* another's needs and priorities in a way that supports the other to participate, as they also wait *for* the other to make their contribution so that the project can proceed. As all of the three stories here attest, this waiting changes relationships between researcher and participant through a rebalancing of power – either a handing over of power from one to the other, or simply a surrendering of power by one to enable the other's needs to be met. Both kinds of rebalancing require reflexivity on the part of the researcher, and a respect for the needs and commitments of the other that amounts to a willingness to postpone one's own priorities.

Respect calibrates waiting in a different way from what Olson (2015) describes as the moral imperative of 'urgency' – that which cannot wait. Respect allows the researcher to offer their waiting without resentment to others who have historically been forced to wait, whose needs are currently neglected by state and economic apparatuses – like Auyero's claimants at the welfare office who are *not* 'waited upon' – or who otherwise

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occupy a position of subaltern or of suffering. The waiting that pays respect is an act of grace rather than undertaken in the expectation of reciprocal concessions or acknowledgement. Maier (2013) describes grace as a form of 'invitational receptivity' to the other (237) that comes from attentive waiting: 'All our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything' (Maier, 2013: 234, quoting Simone Weil). Attentive waiting allows us to learn from, to claim and to offer the wait as a form of 'loving attention' that allows 'otherness to come upon [us], receptive to taking on its colour and pattern' (Cordner, 2009: 170). This may, suggests Cordner, seem passive, but is rather a responsiveness that amounts to 'negative capability' (2009: 171).

In 'Too cold for hunting' and 'Relationships matter most', the researchers in some ways come to occupy the position of Auyero's applicants, 'waiting for' the participants in some uncertainty and for an indeterminate length of time. However, understood as part of a negotiation, such waiting is a reversal of one of the mechanisms of power historically employed against the vulnerable or the subaltern, while also enabling the researcher to embrace the waiting as an integral part of the research process. As these stories suggest, the other participants may also wait, but their waiting runs a separate course, puts on hold a different set of priorities, and as Smyth and Whitehead (2012) note, may be formed in anticipation of a different set of outcomes.

The power at play between researcher and participant/collaborator in the stories above is not only about the research project but operates at a broader social and political level.

To cede or gain power in this context is to pay or obtain respect; it is an exchange that (tacitly, and with grace) acknowledges the different interests and historical relations that inform both the research process and each interaction between the researcher's world and the world of another.

Conclusion

The researcher drives the research program, but it is often the researcher who must wait, for the interview to begin, for the research questions to be answered, for the research program to advance to the next step. The wait may be fruitful for the researcher, as Mannay and Morgan (2015) suggest, by providing opportunity to obtain new 'data' or reflect on events to date. Then there is Bissell's (2007) and Carter's (2004) form of waiting, that becomes an experience without 'work' outcomes, one that the researcher has to accept and even embrace for its own sake. For some, the waiting is an opportunity to change the balance of power between researcher and participant. The obverse of 'enforced waiting' as an exercise in control (Auyero, 2012) can be seen in the three stories from the authors of this paper. While the three of us work in different disciplinary and geographical areas, our stories have in common not only an embrace of waiting, but waiting seen as a form of respect and ceding of power to another – the participants. This may involve the acknowledgement of different temporalities that historically have been suppressed through, for example, the colonial project of Aboriginal assimilation in Australia (Nanni, 2011: 7; Perkins, 2001: 99). For non-

Aboriginal researchers, unlearning colonial temporalities, through an acceptance - even an embrace - of waiting, may serve to partially redress such embedded histories of oppression. It could be argued further that, in the light of increasing interest in community-based research, that is, research that works *with* the community, the first lesson for such researchers is: 'above all, be prepared to wait.'

A wait ends in the convergence of researcher and another in time and space; by waiting reflectively and attentively, by subverting 'the schedule' to the moment, subverting impatience to an acceptance of the 'world as a whole', the researcher opens up the potential for this point of convergence to occur in a more equal and respectful space. The waiting is not simply a space between actions, nor at the margins of work in the field or community; waiting is at the centre of the work and throughout all of it. It is a necessary duration, a patterning of time, power and grace in which researcher and another construct and share their space.

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