

University of New Hampshire
University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository

Anthropology Scholarship

Anthropology

4-13-2017

“My Mother Got Annoyed”

Casey Golomski

University of New Hampshire, Durham, casey.golomski@unh.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.unh.edu/anth_facpub

Recommended Citation

Golomski, Casey. (2017). "My Mother Got Annoyed." *Annals of Global Health*, 83(2), 405. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aogh.2017.03.002>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Anthropology at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthropology Scholarship by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.

“My Mother Got Annoyed”ⁱ

01 Casey Golomski, PhD

KEYWORDS suicide, translational medicine, demography, women, Uganda

“My mother got annoyed”
and killed herself in Karamoja—
an oblivion in the savanna.

It is one respondent’s story from the field—
anthropological demography—
echoed by Sandra Gray,

a death diced
as a data point.

We might think

annoyances are some small things,
they rub the wrong way—
but to self-kill? Is it irritability?

That’s more behavioral,
kindled developmentally
or traumatically.

Categorically,
Gray wrote, the suicide
is linked to loss or dispute.

She was beaten by her husband who raids cattle.
Husbands here carry Kalashnikovs to battles
over animal husbandry.

From this, the day before her suicide,
the respondent said, her mother had a swollen side.
She had miscarried.

To be a senior wife and mother is a hollow honor
among violent husbands’ others wives and mothers,
who want meat and the milk of life.

Despite theories of acquired suicidal capability,
her death is a minority
in Karamoja. Mustafa

Mirzelerⁱⁱ, like Gray, says “to be annoyed” is
a common translation of a common phrase
that also means “bad person.”

Ghost of the plateaus, a note
nicked in pencil, a life dulled
and a death captured

in an imperfect register—
“my mother got annoyed”—
a catastrophe
one cannot unread.

From the Department of Anthropology, University of New Hampshire, 308 Huddleston Hall, 73 Main Street, Durham, NH 03824, United States.
Address correspondence to C.G. (casey.golomski@unh.edu).

ⁱ This poem is based on panel discussions and a quote from a paper by Dr. Sandra Gray presented at the 115th American Anthropological Association’s meetings in Minneapolis, titled “My Mother Got Annoyed: Ethnographic Discourse and Narratives of Suicide in Karamoja.”

ⁱⁱDr. Mustafa Mirzeler, an anthropologist specializing East African folklore, shared this translation after Dr. Gray’s presentation.