

Social Anthropology

Completed MA Theses

2021

[Blanch, Shannon](#) (2021) *Doing death differently? A digital ethnography of Aotearoa New Zealand death talking communities*

For many people, talking about death may seem unnatural. However, for the death talking community, death is a normal topic of conversation. Death talking is part of a growing global movement of ‘ordinary’ people using online and offline spaces to talk openly about death, share resources, and share personal experiences. Through the use of digital technologies, such as social media, conversations about death span geographical divides meaning that online death talking groups have an international presence.

In New Zealand, the death talking community uses Facebook pages and offline groups, often Death Cafés, to talk openly about death. Facebook provides a relatively accessible space for community members to discuss alternative ways of doing death, dying, and grief in a supportive group of like-minded people. This digital ethnography provides an insight into the New Zealand death talking community and answers how, and why, New Zealand death talkers created online spaces of conversation on Facebook, and what conversations about the death process were made possible through the use of Facebook and through offline meet-ups.

My findings show the value of a community when pushing against normative conversational boundaries in what is perceived as a death-denying ‘western’ society. My findings also show that the death talking community is frustrated with the death practices they are currently experiencing, and are turning to death practices of cultures they romanticise in search of a more ‘natural’ and fulfilling way of doing death. In the search for this ‘natural’ deathway, New Zealand death talkers give authority to the personal experiential knowledge of community members as equally, or even more valid than the professional knowledge of ‘experts’. For New Zealand death talkers, Facebook and other death talking spaces offer people ways to reclaim control and authority over their death, dying, and grief processes.

[Glen, Jayden M.](#) (2021) *The Funny Side of Being a Maori Comedian*

Stand-up comedy is a genre of performance that can provide a discursive space for negotiating social and political issues. Typically reliant on autobiographical content, embodied performance, and audience engagement, ethnic, racial, or cultural identity can play a significant role in stand-up comedy performance. Literature on the role of ethnic identity in the practice of New Zealand comedians has been limited to date. This research therefore focused on exploring the experiences, values, and practices of contemporary Māori stand-up comedians through a qualitative, ethnographically-informed, and mixed-methods approach. This included semi-structured interviews with five male Māori comedians, alongside an analysis

of their set material (i.e. scripts and transcripts), presentation of self in their on-stage performances (through live and recorded shows), and off-stage professional branding (including social media pages, posters, and professional profiles). The analysis explored findings from each of these areas to show that Māori comedians adapt their practice around awareness of the ethnic makeup of specific audiences, and craft on-stage characters accordingly. Māori comedians embody the roles of “pride comedians” using comedy as a medium to resist harmful, racist, or stereotyping narratives. For this set of participants, this specifically involved performances focusing intersectional elements of their identity in relation to structural issues. The comedians examined used the epidictic quality of stand-up to change perceptions of the Māori community by the wider Pākehā (New Zealand European) population, as well as to engage in dialogue within their own communities about what it means to be Māori today.

Green, Jordan (2021) *Māori Instagram: The Social Media Lifeworlds and Decolonising Practices of Rangatahi Māori*

In a growing corner of the internet, rangatahi (young) Māori are finding and creating a place to gather, to discuss, and to explore their indigeneity. As a member of this community, the following thesis explores my own personal and research journey, alongside the rangatahi of Māori Instagram, by way of digital ethnography and supplemented by semi-structured interviews with three influential ‘leaders’ within this community. Kaupapa Māori methodologies were considered thoroughly throughout this process, and in relation to my positionality, which led to a strong autoethnographic component. This became particularly appropriate as Ihumātao occupation coincided unexpectedly with the beginning of my data gathering in late July, 2019. What emerged from this month of digital fieldwork and interviews, was an ethnography that explores what it means to be Māori for the diverse, dispersed, yet digitally connected rangatahi of Aotearoa, New Zealand and abroad. This includes considering the contexts and histories of colonisation, historical trauma, and urbanisation alongside the transformative possibilities of digital practices of decolonisation through Instagram. These practices incorporated relationships with the land and technologically-facilitated activism which I have termed e-kaitiakitanga. They further included the utilisation of Instagram’s dialogical affordances which enabled rangatahi to discuss personal and collective identity in relation to tradition, authenticity, and modernity, resulting in new adaptations of tradition through fashion and personal expression. Lastly, the transformative potential of Instagram as a socially constituted ‘place’, which I theorise as a ‘digital marae’, was seen in practices of connection and vulnerability, that in turn supported decolonisation and healing. The thesis then concludes by highlighting the agency of these community leaders in continuing the intergenerational struggle of dismantling colonial ideology, and in doing so, healing the disconnection lived and experienced by those I spoke with, by myself, and by so many other contemporary Māori.

Robins, Erena I. (2021) *Refugees: Narratives of fear in Germany and the USA*

The 'refugee crisis' of 2015, prompted in part by the sheer scale of those fleeing the conflict in Syria, elicited mixed responses from the public, media, and governments of Germany and the USA. Narratives of fear arose within various clusters of both societies, with xenophobic and racist sentiments directed towards the bodies of refugees. I argue that these narratives are created and sustained by a collective cultural emotional residuum of fear that exists in certain silos of the societies of Germany and the United States. Fear is accretive - it extends and perpetuates itself. The narratives of fear that surround refugees in both nations between 2015-2019 stem from cultural fears that have been built up over generations. By examining key political and social moments within the histories of each nation, I suggest that these fears take on certain patterns and topoi, which dictate responses to cultural and social 'others' throughout time - and that reactions towards refugees represent the latest 'other' created and targeted by these fears. The historical narratives examined all arose at times of vast social and cultural change. I argue that these narratives of fear of refugees are an expression of the uncertainty created by the dissolution of 'traditional' boundaries and identities experienced within neoliberal globalisation, and are a symptom of the movement towards nationalism and right-wing populism across the globe. It is suggested that fear has gained such traction within certain pockets of both societies, because shared emotion provides sites of belonging, within a system where many struggle to belong.

2020

Chatfield, Emily R. (2020) *Healing the Anxious Self: An Ethnographic Exploration of Undergraduate Student Experiences of 'Having Anxiety'*

Mental health is a topical issue in Aotearoa New Zealand, with national statistics showing that many New Zealanders will experience mental illness during their lifetime. Much of the public discourse relates to depression and suicide, yet anxiety – which is often comorbid with depression – is more commonly experienced and can also be a source of great suffering. This research investigates the experiences of undergraduate students who identify themselves as 'having anxiety'. I interviewed six undergraduate students at the University of Otago and one counselling psychologist who has worked extensively with undergraduate students, to form an understanding of what it means to 'have anxiety' while studying at university. The research showed that, as with all mental and physical illnesses, students construct personal narratives around their anxiety, incorporating both memories and aspirations. For them, 'having anxiety' is a psychosomatic experience. It can affect their sense of self and their ability to meet the cultural and academic expectations of 'being a student' at the University of Otago, which can also cause further anxiety. Yet these anxious students had found ways to manage their anxiety, using biomedically-recommended treatments, such as therapy and medication, developing personalised strategies, and cultivating supportive relationships, to move them towards an idealised version of themselves. Embedded in their illness narratives are cultural ideologies, reflections on biomedicine, and

ingrained beliefs about what it means to be a 'normal' person. If rates of mental illness are to decline in Aotearoa New Zealand, personal illness narratives must be listened to, to ensure the optimal healing for each individual.

2018

[Franklin, Peter](#) (2018) *Faithful Physicians: Discourses of Professionalism in Christian General Practitioners in New Zealand*

In the past thirty years there has been an increasing focus on the spirituality and spiritual care of patients as they experience illness. During this peak of interest, the spiritual experiences of physicians and how it influences their practice has been largely neglected.

Discourses of Professionalism are narratives that determine what is the archetypal behaviour and performance set out for physicians to achieve. Such discourses are products of their time. This thesis inspects the intersection of discourses of professionalism, as they are negotiated with discourses of personal faith in Christianity, and the physicians' own personal identities in faith.

The findings of this thesis show that the ten Christian physicians interviewed understood their role as medical professional first and Christian second. This revealed an intentional faithfulness of these Christian physicians to respond to the reason that patients has sought them out for medical treatment, while still upholding their faith but simultaneously appreciating that they were not paid to be 'professional Christians' such as chaplains are expected to be.

The value of this thesis is that it reveals new and current contending discourses of professionalism in New Zealand's medical climate, as well as serving to be a further contribution to the emerging field of the Anthropology of Christianities.

2016

[Bailly, Hannah](#) (2016) *An Exploration of Health Perceptions and Practices among South Asian Descendants Living in Dunedin, New Zealand*

Drawing from critical medical anthropology, post-colonial theory and case-study interviews with nine people of South Asian descent living in Dunedin, this research asks whether there may be a greater demand for medical pluralism than currently exists in the New Zealand health care sector.

Among differing cultures are diverse ways in which health and the body are understood. With South Asians among the fastest growing migrant populations, New Zealand is increasingly becoming a multicultural nation. Yet western biomedicine remains the dominant form of health care available. An exploration of the perceptions, experiences and health practices of participants in this research reveals explicit and tacit knowledge that has been passed down through generations. Their narratives reflect a pluralist approach to medicine where traditional remedies are often used as first choice for general health concerns and biomedical treatment is sought for more serious conditions.

While most participants are not adverse to biomedical treatment, many indicate a preference for 'natural' remedies they perceive to be safe in comparison with pharmaceutical drugs. Some express concerns about what they consider to be a loss of traditional knowledge around health; this they attribute to the high-pressure demands of a modern lifestyle. The use of home remedies provides effective and empowering strategies to attend some of their health concerns, and may be contextualised as a means to negotiate biomedical authority. Traditional health practices are for some an integral part of the diaspora experience and, in the interest of multiculturalism, such concerns should be reflected in the New Zealand health care sector.

2015

Aikman-Dodd, Pounamu Jade (2015) *Unto the Breaking Dawn: Finding Meaning and Relevance in Marae in 21st Century New Zealand – An Eastern Bay of Plenty Case Study*

The marae, an institution spanning hundreds of years and tens of generations, has experienced innumerable transformations as the fabric of society has been woven, unravelled, and restitched throughout the encounters of history. Tethered within two kin communities of the Eastern Bay of Plenty, this thesis examines how marae, as communities of kin interlinked by genealogical matrices entwined within specific landscapes, navigate the challenges of twenty-first century New Zealand. Through this process, this thesis examines how these kindred communities find meaning and relevance in their respective marae as they negotiate the struggles of living in contemporary society. Written primarily as an ethnographic account, supplemented by my own personal perspective, I argue that a marae is its people and a reflection of the wider issues in society. Moreover, marae are part of their wider environment instilled with ancestral meaning, and are evolving landscapes of knowledge into which the experiences of living kin are continually incorporated. The main concern identified for both marae was of the irregular return of kin due to historic and contemporary variables, such as urbanisation, education, and employment. I assert that in order for marae to remain relevant in the face of an increasingly dislocated descendant community, innovative and entrepreneurial ways of thinking must be employed to reinvigorate them in an organic manner, to see marae prosper as enduring symbols of kin identity.

Scarth, Bonnie J. (2015) *Contextualising 'vulnerability' and the process of informed consent: bereaved participants' perspectives of taking part in 'sensitive' qualitative research.*

This thesis set out to elucidate how bereaved persons from three different thanatology studies experienced the research process. A key question pertained to whether or not they perceived themselves as vulnerable in the context of research ethics review. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were carried out in the South Island of New Zealand with sixteen bereaved persons. Participants were recruited through word of mouth or via researchers from the previous studies¹. Interviews were thematically coded using grounded theory. In addition to the notion of bereaved persons as vulnerable,

research ethics issues such as participant recruitment and the consent process were explored. Participants did not view themselves as ‘vulnerable, but instead reported finding their experience of research as positive. Many cited therapeutic benefits from taking part in research, either from the interview itself, which some found ‘cleansing’ or ‘healing’, or from reading other participants’ comments in the write up. Some participants also reported enjoying altruistically contributing to the ‘bigger picture’ of bereavement research. Meaning-making and seeking memorialisation and symbolic immortality for their deceased loved ones were other reported benefits. Participants had few issues with the signed consent process – indeed some were comforted by signing the consent form – but a number of participants reported that the participant information sheet (PIS) was too long and complex, and voiced their ideas as to how this could be improved. A key finding in regards to the recruitment of bereaved persons for research participation was that none measured their readiness for taking part in interviews by the number of months or years that had passed since the death of a family member. Instead, significant events and anniversaries relating to their deceased loved one was more important to their grief process and their readiness for research participation. Moreover, participants were adamant that they could decide for themselves when they were ready to take part in research and that they did not need an ethics committee to decide for them. For this reason, they felt that researchers should be allowed to invite bereaved persons into research at any time. Participants were clear on how they wanted to be approached by researchers: sensitively, without pressure, and with a transparent agenda. Finally, most participants reported that they appreciated seeing the results or write-up from research, even when many could not understand it by virtue of complex academic language. While some said that they would prefer a more simple report of the results, the majority appreciated the transformation of their narratives into a format that they perceived as more powerful. Participants felt that by combining their narratives with other bereaved voices and transforming them into this more powerful form, then they were more likely to be heard. They hoped this process would instigate positive changes in society in relation to death and grief and these changes that they anticipated will be discussed in the body of this thesis.

2013

Wilson, V. J (2013) *Between Gifts & Commodities: "Op Shops" in Dunedin, New Zealand*

This thesis is a study of how a specific set of exchange relations is constructed, perceived and utilized. The research was conducted within and between specific second hand shopping sites – opportunity or charity shops in Dunedin. The research process included interviews and the transcription of these for data relating to consumers and their behaviours. Field notes were taken and provided a wider context for the research. I conducted the interviews with participants approached in the course of taking field notes. The results from a historical postal questionnaire were collated and added depth to details of the shoppers, the locations of and

changes in physicality of the sites. I used a body of literature relating to consumption and consumers.

Although there are large tracts of information on capitalist consumption practices and habits the literature on second hand consumption is still a relatively small body of work. While opportunity shops appear as part of industrial/ capitalist society the means of both production and labour could be contested as being outside of capitalist based exchange forms.

The basic formula for capitalism is negated in the structure of a charity shop. In all of the sites studied all goods/ stock are donated – profit is then immediate on the sale of the items. The value put on goods by both the managers and the consumers within these spheres of exchange is in contrast to the value of new goods. Thus I looked at how ‘op-shops’ fit within the formal and informal frameworks of acquisition. A new challenge uncovered in the Dunedin sphere of opportunity shops is the instigation of “retail charity” shops. These sites have been opened with the express concern of making profit rather than raising funds for local and national charities.

The thesis discusses how these key changes have been promoted by the managers, and how they echo world-wide changes in the charity retail sphere. My results show that opportunity shops have a specific niche in modern capitalism. They constitute a form of recycled consumption – where consumers’ re-value the remains of mass overconsumption. The thesis is about both the economic and social lives of opportunity shops in Dunedin.

2012

[Clift, Kristin](#) (2012) *Glimpses of Eternity. Sampled Mormon Understandings of Disability, Genetic Testing, and Reproductive Choice in New Zealand.*

On the 4th of September 2010 the South Island city of Christchurch, New Zealand was struck by a magnitude 7.1 earthquake. The earthquake caused widespread damage, but no loss of life. In February the following year a smaller, but shallower earthquake occurred, leading to 182 fatalities and further destruction to the city's infrastructure. This thesis is centred on the narratives of 36 residents of Christchurch city after the earthquakes. Through the lens of social capital theory neighbourhood social networks are examined in the post disaster context. Previous research in this field emphasises how relationships established prior to a disaster enhance recovery. However, in Christchurch the vast majority of participants had minimal contact with their neighbours before the disaster. Here it is suggested that the desire to maintain one's own, and others, privacy has played a role in this. In the wake of the earthquake neighbours were almost forced to help other neighbours, and relationships developed through bonding over joint recovery tasks. The longevity of such relationships is questionable; 10 months after the initial earthquake participants reported a decline in community engagement and maintaining privacy was again reinforced as a social norm. This research argues that although the forms of social capital present in the residents' relationships changed, the bonds created during the disaster period may be stored as a kind of reserve in the form of 'weak-ties', which could be called upon in future times of need.

Stallard, Kirsten (2012) *Neighbours and Social Capital in the wake of the Christchurch Earthquakes.*

This research explores the narratives of seventeen members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in Southern New Zealand as they explain the meaning of disability and prenatal genetic testing, and its ethical and spiritual significance within their lives. Qualitative interviews were conducted with participants who were careworkers, parents of children with disabilities, and people with disabilities. This thesis analyses these narratives of life with the experience of one or several impairments, and the LDS doctrine of the spirit's journey explained against Frank's (1995) outline of illness and disability narratives. The narratives related by the participants reveal a spiritual model of disability, which is then compared to Beatson's (2004) models of disability. The faith-based approach to viewing these issues, which the LOS participants describe, reveals a unique disability cosmology. For example, most participants believed that a spirit is autonomous and chooses in the pre-mortal existence to live out life with a disability. Additionally, LDS doctrine teaches that in the resurrection, all bodies will be made whole. Thus, disability is only a temporary condition in the eternal scheme, and this eternal timeframe through which the participants viewed disability is a strong point of contrast with most contemporary models of disability. Furthermore, many participants rejected prenatal genetic testing in their own family life because of their spiritual understanding of disability. However, when speaking to the wider social and regulatory environment surrounding genetic testing, participants expressed a range of ideals displaying varying degrees of opinions from extremely averse to hesitantly supportive of people's rights to engage in prenatal genetic testing.

2012

Scotfield, Jeffrey Miles (2011) *The Promotion of Place: Immigration Policies, Citizenship and Economic Reform in NZ.*

This thesis examines three distinctive phases of immigration policy in New Zealand. This includes the early European settlement of New Zealand characterised by the emergence of a local citizenship existing within a larger supranational pan British identity. The second phase is the post World War II period where 'New Zealand Citizenship is established legally and the idea of the 'nation was actively promoted. The third phase is marked by the reforms carried out during the 1980s by the Fourth Labour Government, which has helped transform the ideological and regulatory environment that immigration policy occupies. Incorporating mixed methodologies and ethnohistory, this work persistently crosses the boundaries between history and anthropology. Incorporating the approaches of these two disciplines through critical engagement with law politics and economics this research integrates information obtained through interviews with public servants, in addition to archival material whereby documents are treated as a forum of material culture just as much as repositories of truth and polices.

Fogel, Ron (2009) *Spirituality, Culture and Place: The Rainbow Temple in NSW, Australia.*

This thesis is about the Rainbow Temple in Byron Shire, NSW, Australia. The diverse belief systems and the symbolic behaviours practiced by people who live at the Rainbow Temple constitute a particular identity assigned predominantly with what I call “Rainbow culture”. This culture is derived and constituted from the Rainbow Tribe gatherings practiced all around the world. The Rainbow Tribe (or the Rainbow Family) is an international affiliation of individuals who share common belief and identity systems, who gather periodically and intentionally to practice exclusive rituals and ceremonies. This study shows that the Rainbow Temple functions as a multi-cultural sphere and encapsulates various cultural and religious properties that cohere to and as associated with those exhibited in Rainbow Tribe gatherings.

Initially, according to its founder, the Rainbow Temple was not meant to have an affiliation with the Rainbow Tribe, but over time the Temple has evolved an association with Rainbow culture. Participants and informants recognize the Rainbow Temple as a “gathering” sphere or as a “centre” for Rainbow Tribe spirit, and attribute meanings of sacredness and inviolability to the Temple. I will examine these attributes and claim that they are part of a larger context.

To portray a viable ontological reality and explain the cultural occurrences in the Rainbow Temple, I have relied on three streams of knowledge. First, I have investigated similar recorded cases and relevant theories about identity systems, new religions and New Age spirituality. Second, I have gathered the descriptions, comments and reflections of the people who live at the Rainbow Temple. And third, I have considered my own experiences with the Rainbow Tribe and my fieldwork at the Rainbow Temple.

While on the surface, the cultural occurrences at the Temple seem to be a mishmash of ideas and practices, in this thesis I argue that there is a consistent ideology behind the confusion. I examine the foundations of some of the cultural processes and the symbolic behaviours which constitute Rainbow culture and Rainbow identity.

George, Mary (Molly) C. (2009) *Forty Years in Aotearoa New Zealand: Identity, Home and Later Life in an Adopted Country.*

New Zealand settlement began with waves of Māori settlement, then, in the last few hundred years, colonizers and opportunity-seekers have come from many countries. After World War II, New Zealand government actively sought ‘suitable’ migrants to power the economy. British continued to be the strongly favoured group, however, policies expanded to include dozens of nationalities. Over 400,000 people migrated to New Zealand between 1945 and 1965. In this research, I have made contact with members of this diverse group. Twenty-two immigrants were interviewed for this study. Having arrived as young adults in the twenty years after World War II, they have now been in New Zealand for forty to sixty years and are now between fifty-nine and eighty years old. They come from a variety of backgrounds in twelve

different countries. They can all be considered 'white' immigrants in relation to New Zealand's indigenous Māori population and other non-European immigrant groups such as those from Pacific Island nations or Asia. This thesis avoids a 'snapshot' approach that is frequently used to record only the charismatic 'leaving' and 'arriving' stories. It also argues against the assumption that decades of continued residence, particularly for white immigrants in a white-majority nation, imply an 'assimilation' of cultural identity. Assuming instead that this is an incomplete picture, this thesis asks questions: Where is home and how do they define it? What role does their homeland have now? How has their national identity changed? Are they still treated as foreigners? Do they still think of themselves as immigrants? Do they have a sense of what life would be like as an older adult in their country of origin?

Considering the migration experience over many decades, this research utilizes a narrative approach, speaking with those who have lived this experience and made sense of it in their own lives. Viewing the interviews as strong, empirical data, this thesis stems directly from what the participating immigrants told me. Utilizing the methods involved in grounded theory, data was collected and analysed without a preconceived theory in mind. Three themes emerged in intense analysis of eleven of the interviews: Identity, Aging, and Concepts of Home. Chapter Two focuses on the immigrants' experiences of identity as it relates to their respective homelands and New Zealand. This chapter addresses identity negotiations over time and identity management in the context of post-World War II New Zealand. Chapter Three considers concepts and experiences of home: the changing role of an immigrant's homeland, the simultaneous development of New Zealand as home of the 'everyday' and the effect of globalization and transnationalism on these experiences of home. Chapter Four looks at later-life experiences and concerns as an immigrant. The creation of continuity from their arrival through to the present is also considered. A consistent undertone quietly but undeniably runs through these categories and ties them all together: The passage of time. This undertone is addressed throughout this thesis with the concluding suggestion that there is a negotiation of gain and loss over time for a long-term immigrant.

Niederer, Julie (2009) *An Ethnographic Study of the Staff of the Salvation Army Bridge Centre, Dunedin.*

This thesis is an ethnographic study of the staff of the Salvation Army Bridge Centre, Dunedin. The Bridge Centre is an Alcohol and Drug rehabilitation facility in Dunedin. The contents of this thesis discuss several concepts which add together to equal the staff's experience of their job. Based on fourteen interviews with case workers and residential supervisors, this is a qualitative thesis and employs an abductive research strategy, grounding the contents of the six chapters in the interview participant's everyday worlds. Chapter one and two lay a foundation for the rest of the thesis discussing in detail the Bridge Programme which the staff facilitate, and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, one of the four cornerstones of the Bridge Programme. The Twelve Steps are important to discuss as they involve concepts such as the necessity of a spiritual experience and of being conscious of a Higher Power. These are ideas the staff can have trouble teaching. By

discussing such ideas as Victor Turner's liminality, Talcott Parsons' Sick Role and the third part of Arnold van Gennep's ritual process (incorporation) this thesis understands the staff's experience as strongly affected by the client's experience. One major influence in this experience is the concept of volition. Some clients are admitted to the programme by the court system under the 1996 Alcohol and Drug Act and therefore do not choose through their own desire to participate. This concept in turn can lead to resistant clients and tricky moments, the title of the fourth chapter. There are tensions and contradictions throughout the thesis, one major tension is the staff's life experience, some are recovering from addiction themselves while others are not, some are highly trained while others are not. Part of this tension is the staff's legitimate authority in the fifth chapter. This thesis understands the staff trying to treat clients as individuals when the larger framework of the Programme and the institutions funding the Programme seem to see it more as a way to control one deviant aspect of society.

Oxley, Rebecca (2009) *Listening to Stories of the Bizarre: Personal & Shared Lived Experiences of Postpartum Depression.*

Officially labelled a 'mental health condition', postpartum or postnatal depression (PPD/PND) affects ten to fifteen percent of all parents in contemporary New Zealand society (Mental Health Foundation 2002: 5). This thesis explores the experiences of living with such a diagnosis for five families and eight individuals now living in the eastern South Island. It attempts to detail the personal and joint realities of PPD within the central context in which it occurs – the family; an area that has been neglected in the literature. This research is qualitative in nature and consists of eleven interviews and participation observation of three couples, interviewed together and separately, and two women who felt they had no 'significant support person'. It details how PPD is subjectively conceived of, focusing on the distressing processes of realization, recognition and reasoning along with the many possible 'triggers' of what sufferers' term a 'bizarre' sickness. The confusion in these understandings is further elaborated by discussion of the 'uncertain lifeworlds' of the participants, living lives which have been 'biographically disrupted'. PPD is somatically attended to through stigma, temporality karma and the dominant motif of health 'care', and the informants' experiences sit in uneasy tension with New Zealand's mental health policies based on 'sick role' ideals. This thesis also illuminates the local gendered ideologies of parenting that have influenced experiences of PPD. These are linked to the active positioning of identities as 'hero' and 'victim', suggesting that specifically gendered somatic modes of attention to PPD exist. Contrary to contemporary public health campaigns which attempt to de-stigmatize the experience of diagnosed mental illness, this study suggests PPD is something that is not easily recovered from, is difficult to express and takes many years to come to terms with. It remains something to try to make sense of and to somehow integrate into one's life history; only after this is accomplished many true healing commence.

Wards, Ian (2009) *The Collecting of H.D. Skinner: A Cook Islands Case Study.*

During his tenure as Ethnologist, and later, Director of the Otago Museum, H.D. Skinner assembled the largest Cook Islands collection of any museum in

New Zealand. This thesis argues that these collections were not passively assembled, but were rather formed as the result of a complex web of human interactions, motivations and emotions. The Museum's Cook Islands collection and its associated correspondence are examined in a case study of how relationships between people, mediated by objects, guide the mechanics of collection development in the museum environment.

This analysis is situated within a contemporary academic discourse where museum collections are being re-evaluated, not only to determine the role of colonialism in collection development, but also indigenous agency and the socio-political filters applied consciously or otherwise by western museum collectors. In conjunction with the role this collecting played in the history of anthropology, the relationships between people and things is examined through analysis concerning the political value of objects in differing social contexts.

Within this academic framework, Skinner's motivations in encouraging and persuading others to send objects to the Otago Museum are discussed. These motivations were manifold, ranging from the influence of his father, through to his distinct visual approach to object morphology. Skinner's studies at Cambridge are discussed, with their important role in cementing his typological, comparative approach to anthropology. This perspective is shown to be a key impetus for Skinner, who saw museum collections as the most important scientific and educational resource for anthropology.

Skinner's use of New Zealand's colonial infrastructure in Polynesia is also a key focus in this analysis. Much of his collecting was done by proxy through agents in the 'field'. These agents ranged from the senior ranks of the colonial administration through to isolated commercial traders. The motivations and obligations Skinner fostered amongst these disparate individuals to donate or sell objects to the Otago Museum receives in depth assessment. Drawn out in this analysis is the involvement of indigenous Cook Islanders in the collecting process, the culture of gifting in the Cook Islands and how it influenced the assemblage of these collections.

Three modes of collecting are examined: purchase, donation and inter-museum exchange. All three modes illustrate the argument that museum collection development is not a passive process, but multifaceted and politically charged.

2008

Baer, Nathaniel S. (2008) *Dietary Narratives: an inquiry into experiences of living with cancer in contemporary Dunedin, with a focus on the role of dietary modification as a response to illness.*

This thesis employs a narrative analysis approach to study illness experiences of people living with cancer in contemporary Dunedin. The specific focus is on the commonalities and differences in understanding and experiencing dietary and lifestyle modifications as a response to illness. An additional focal point is to examine the relationship between personal actions and illness experiences with those of contemporary constructions of biological citizenship. To enable this analysis, extended-length open-ended interviews

were conducted with twelve people living in Dunedin who were diagnosed with cancer between 1985 and 2007. The topics covered included dietary and lifestyle beliefs, practices and experiences before and after their diagnoses. The contents of the narrative interviews were then reviewed and an analytical framework relevant to the informants' stories was developed. The participants often articulated similar understandings and experiences of dietary and lifestyle change in their own lives as they negotiated sites of productive knowledge. Tellers of 'Who I Want to Become' narratives discussed initiating major dietary and lifestyle changes subsequent to diagnosis; alterations often made in one fell swoop. Tellers of 'Who I Always Have Been' stories described why they maintained the same practices as before their diagnosis. Narratives of 'Reluctant Phoenix' stories told of their moderate interest in diet and lifestyle change and their inability or unwillingness to make large alterations. Regardless of how individuals engaged sites of knowledges, the encounter with a multitude of beliefs pertaining to the importance of dietary and lifestyle change for people living with cancer was inevitable for all and was often a dramatic experience. Of additional significance was that many informants discussed aspects of illness experience which related to contemporary theories of biological citizenship, including the desire for personal change through self-action, possibilities as well as problems associated with the availability of mass amounts of specialized knowledge, and the potential for making collective demands on the status quo through increased participation in novel biosocial collectives. These findings suggest that the infrequently used approach of gathering focused illness narratives by interviewing can be insightful and full of rich detail which may be missed by other approaches to narrative research. Sharing these 'details' may become more important to narrative researchers as the environment of biological citizenship increasingly makes life actions such as dietary modification central to illness experience and the expression of civil rights.