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Chai and Conversation: Crafting Field Identities and Archaeological Practice in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we present examples from four research projects in India that were influenced by the values and ethics of decolonized and participatory research, and shaped by engendered perspectives. Each project built on earlier experiences that forced us to critically examine the ways we engaged with participants, crafted our field identities, and formed relationships. Using insights from linguistic anthropology and attending to intersectional inequalities and the construction of epistemic authority, we showcase how conducting an ethnography of communication and employing tactics of intersubjectivity influenced archaeological outcomes. We argue that close attention to context of communication, identity expression, and intersectional inequality enhances intersubjectivity, a necessary ingredient for successful participatory archaeology projects. [participatory research, listening, identity, ethnography of communication, India, intersubjectivity, intersectionality]

Introduction

Participatory methodologies in archaeology aim to balance decision-making powers among researchers and stakeholders, sharing the production of knowledge about the past. Like decolonized archaeology, participatory and collaborative methods deliberately challenge the hierarchical nature of archaeological field projects, and center local communities and stakeholders (Atalay 2012; Colwell and Ferguson 2008; Franklin 1997; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008; Silliman 2008). Such projects increasingly recognize that stakeholder communities are not monolithic homogenous groups and that existing hierarchies shape participation by archaeological team and community members—and by extension, project outcomes (Agbe-Davies 2010; Atalay 2008; Greene et al. 2003; Marshall 2002; McDavid 2008; Pyburn 2011). As research teams themselves are complex and stratified, conflict and tensions can emerge, thwarting the potential for rich analysis (Agbe-Davies 1998; Bolnick et al. 2019; Claassen 1994; Clancy et al. 2014; Nelson et al. 2017). Systemic marginalizing often hinders the inclusive aspirations of many archaeological projects and prevents the development of trust and shared understandings among community members and outside members of archaeological teams.

To address these issues, we bring to the practice of field research a feminist approach that acknowledges the intersection of identities and inequalities within a broader social context. We emphasize trust and equity by paying close attention to team and community dynamics, engaging in thoughtful communication, and examining our own developing field identities. The approach we describe here is influenced by Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) foundational work on intersectionality, as well as work by her contemporaries (e.g., Anzaldúa 1987; hooks [1984] 2000; Collins

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2009; Lorde [1984] 2007) who bring a multi-dimensional approach to highlight the ways that gender and race compound, leading to marginalization (see also Cho et al. 2016; Collins and Bilge 2016; Hancock 2016; McClaurin 2001). We draw on these analyses as well as related anthropological and archaeological approaches (Battle-Baptiste 2010; Franklin 2001; McClaurin 2001; Visweswaran 1994) to reflect on the way field identities are developed and employed in heritage practice.

We present below examples from four of our research projects in India that required us to critically think about the ways that we built trust and constructed mutual understanding with project participants and local community members. Each project built on earlier experiences that were differentially shaped by our identities and were collectively oriented toward the values and ethics of decolonized and participatory research. As we built relationships with people across our projects, we prioritized developing trust and understanding across the communities where we worked. To do this, we focused on communication and the careful construction of our own field identities. We learned to pay attention to the context and texture of speech (as it varies across communities) and to the ways that conversations shift when different people are present. We identified codes that people use as they contribute to conversations, and took note of what remained unsaid among other details. We were deliberate with our own speech. We connected to community members by underscoring how and when we were similar or different, as well as how and when we were authorities or were not. Together, these embodied methods provide a powerful vehicle for building trust and understanding across archaeological projects operating within heterogeneous communities.

Participatory and Decolonized Methods in South Asia

In recent years, a postcolonial critique of South Asian archaeology has led to an examination of the ways archaeological knowledge is produced in that region (Chadha 2010; Chakrabarti 1997, 2000, 2010; Coningham and Lewer 2000; Gullapalli 2008; Lahiri 2000; Rizvi 2008; Singh 2004), which in turn has led to an increase in decolonized, collaborative, and stakeholder-focused methodologies. For example, Rizvi's (2008) field survey project in Rajasthan systematically engaged local decision makers including village councils, landowners, and other stakeholders as a way to disrupt the colonial tradition of collecting data and surface collections without seeking permission from landowners. This approach engages workers intellectually too, including them in the interpretation of artifacts, landscape, and local histories, as well as traditional methods of craft production. Such methodologies forefront listening more attentively to local laborers, in contrast to approaches derived from the colonial roots of archaeology.

In her survey in Gujarat, Khandwalla (2004) hired local residents to help collect field data and provide historical narratives. As the residents learned that she was interested in these stories, they began to participate by sharing information about collected artifacts and known sites. Some projects have instituted more intensive collaborative approaches. For example, Jamir's (2014, 484) project at Chungliyimti in Nagaland (northeastern India) systematically involved community members in the development and implementation of an excavation, as well as experimental archaeology. Jamir found that this collaborative approach challenged his preconceptions of the local archaeology that stemmed from reading the archaeological literature and resulted in new and more complex understandings of the local archaeology. Menon and Varma's (2019) work at Indor Khera explicitly engaged the community, particularly schoolchildren, as a way to make the archaeology more relevant locally, and to encourage archaeological preservation. Such efforts have great potential for bridging communities with international, national, and local institutions including World Heritage Sites (Kenoyer 2008; Weerasinghe and Schmidt 2019). Importantly, international collaborations are most successful when teams pay attention to researcher dynamics (Boivin et al. 2008).

Archaeologists who undertake this type of work face the challenge of building trust with communities and ensuring that the project is inclusive of all people who wish to participate. As project teams are made up of individuals who bring different backgrounds to archaeological projects, they all envision and engage with the material past in different ways. These differences can be acute among researchers and can substantially affect research outcomes (Battle-Baptiste 2010; Franklin 1997; and see Fryer, this volume). Gender, as a component of stakeholder identity, influences all aspects of archaeological projects, from project design to fieldwork to analysis and publication (Conkey and Gero 1991; Conkey and Tringham 1996; Gero 1996; Nelson 2016; Wylie 1991; Specter 1991; Wright 1996). Gender intertwines with many other aspects of researcher identities in important ways, shaping the outcomes of research (Battle Baptiste 2011; Conkey 2005; Dowson 2006; Odewale et al. 2018; Rizvi 2008; Voss and Schmidt 2002).

Gendered perspectives on the past meld with other varied viewpoints and interests within communities as well (Marshall 2002). As community participants size up outsider research teams they recognize and respond to seniority, gender, nationality, ethnicity, race, caste, age, family status, education, etc., and not always in the ways that the research team sees themselves (e.g., Fryer, this volume; Hart, this volume; Rizvi 2018a). As archaeologists form relationships with community leaders they perform similar assessments and consciously and unconsciously decide which individuals best represent various communities. These interactions are also shaped by perceived and performed identities and status as well as individual personalities. Building trust requires drawing on the strengths of all researchers and utilizing creative strategies for fostering participation based on our unique and emerging diverse identities.

Chai and Conversation

In the early stages of our projects, community members wanted to get to know us better just as we wanted to get to know them. They wanted to find out about our projects just as we wanted to learn about their perspectives on the past and share what we were learning about the archaeology of the region. While traditions vary in different regions, the offering of a cup of tea ("chai") was a frequent gesture that allowed us to take a break and forge connections with community members. Such interactions are critical to building relationships and fostering a "slow archaeology" that provides space and time for rich discussions on heritage, research, preservation, and action (Atalay 2007; Pyburn 2009; Rizvi 2017; Shackel and Chambers 2004). Sharing chai is analogous to participating in community events. Whitney Battle-Baptiste (2011) argues that during excavation seasons, attending local church services and barbeques enhanced her connection to the community and the archaeological research. She writes, "this was all to just figure out what this place was and what it meant to the Black people who lived around the museum. Those conversations changed the way I saw the work I was doing on the site on a daily basis, but it also gave me the strength to continue when being at the Hermitage got difficult" (Battle-Baptiste 2011, 74). Such events provide the opportunity for archaeologists to listen deeply (Schmidt and Kehoe 2019). The ritual of sharing a cup of chai is

> counterintuitive if you operate in a Western, capitalist, efficiency-driven mindset, but in fact, has proven to be one of the most efficient ways to work in most of the world, including the West. Drinking tea is both a metaphor and an action. It is about respecting the person sitting in front of you as a person first; it diffuses the instrumentalization of relationships so prevalent in a capitalist economy. It sets up reciprocity, social networks, and in some cases extended, fictive, academic/research kin. (Rizvi 2018a, 47)

As a child is sent to fetch some milk, the fire is built up, and the tea is set to boil, time is created to talk about many things. These moments are seldom given much value in results-driven models of research, and are often viewed as leisurely breaks from field work rather than an important component of field work itself. "Slow archaeology" requires prioritizing these conversations over data collection. But given the funding and time constraints of many research projects, particularly for students and early-career scholars, slow archaeology can be easier said than done. Despite financial constraints and promotion requirements, we suggest an ethos of slow archaeology can be adopted in many projects, precisely by acknowledging the nuances of communication and identity formation that occur during such chai breaks.

Although we worked in different regions, conversations often turned to regularly repeated topics: family, life in the United States, why we were/were not married and with/without children, how the local economy was faring, and important local concerns—most notably, the shrinking availability of water. Through this chit-chat we found common ground and identified points where we agreed and disagreed or had similar or different experiences. We were also able to establish our expertise and authority as archaeologists while recognizing the historic and material knowledge and experiences of community members. As we drank chai (or coffee or coconut milk) in courtyards and kitchens, we noticed that communication styles, like the questions that were asked, changed with the composition of the group. In Rajasthan, home visits often elicited the pulling together of chairs and cots that were offered to the most senior and most influential participants, men, and the visiting researchers. Women, young men, and children stood or squatted on the ground. Chai was also offered in order of deference with some visitors not receiving a cup.

As many houses had open door policies, neighbors would come and go, so often several people would gather around to chat. During these conversations we found that all participants—researchers and community members—employed a variety of linguistic techniques including code-switching, silence, and indirect address. These and other forms of vocal and embodied communication emphasized affinity, conveyed disagreement, or communicated messages that built on performed and perceived identity including broader aspects of personhood such as gender, class, caste, age, and language. Such behaviors indicated to us that we needed time for prolonged and repeated conversations about mundane topics so we could get to know each other. This also included discussions about archaeology and heritage to allow all participants to fully express and listen to the intentions, concerns, and desires of both researchers and village residents. These informal moments over chai led us to more intentionally employ lengthy conversations with varying group compositions as a part of our practice.

Ethnography of Communication: Context over Content

We build on Pyburn's (2009) argument that archaeologists should carry out an ethnography in an effort to understand communities and project participants, by further arguing that participatory archaeology requires undertaking an "ethnography of communication" (along the lines of Hymes 1964). Good collaboration requires attention to the nuance of language and word choice. Archaeologists who utilize a second language in the field sometimes miss the subtle differences between similar words. For example, Rizvi (2018b) explains that Emirati Arabic differs from Arabic spoken in other regions and non-native speakers do not always catch small differences. Even when working in one's first language, word choice can resonate in ways that create distrust. In the North American context, loaded terms that archaeologists use freely but that many Indigenous people contest include "abandoned" and "discovered," for example (Watkins 2006). Similarly, in historical archaeology the use of "slave" versus "enslaved African" signals one's position on historical matters and resonates differently among different communities (LaRoche and Blakey 1999; see also McDavid 1997 on discussion of terms for territories). In plantation archaeology, eschewing common terms like "slave quarters" or "cabins," in favor of "captive domestic sphere" or "homespace" shifts the perspective of analysis from plantation owners to the lives of those who labored there and the full landscapes they inhabited (Battle-Baptiste 2011, 94). Using certain words shuts down conversation, since "descendant communities and indigenous populations argue that words bring with them an implied judgment already made" (Watkins 2006, 105). Such words can be directed at archaeologists as well. For example, Hart (this volume) discusses how avocational participants in a New England excavation used the term "ladies club" to downplay the expertise of the women archaeologists.

Beyond word choice, good collaboration requires recognizing patterns of communication, and looking at the actual mechanics of interaction: who speaks when to whom (and who does not speak, when, and to whom), as well as how people speak and take turns, when certain voices and potential conversations are foreclosed, silenced, or ignored, and where certain conversations may or may not be held (see also Watkins [2006] for discussion of direct and indirect communication using Gudykunst [2005] and Hall [1976]). As Schmidt and Kehoe explain, in collaborative approaches, "listening is much more than speech entering one's ears" (Schmidt and Kehoe 2019, 2). Listening deeply allows us to recognize the complex and implicit ways that participants signal assent or dissent, agreement or disagreement, comfort or discomfort with the direction of conversation even when their words denotationally suggest otherwise. Such analysis also includes a recognition that the context and presence or absence of individuals or groups shape discussions in fundamental ways including the content of the conversation and the texture of speech (García 2019; Yates-Doerr 2019).

Gender is one significant factor to attend to when examining discourse. Gendered speech may include differences in tone, expression, or pace, for example. These patterns can carry over into public political debates (Shaw 2006), although silence and "voice" can be employed strategically and patterns of speech are not necessarily universal (Cameron 2006; Gal 1991). Importantly, gender and speech both emerge through context; language is used to perform or create gender by demonstrating femininity, masculinity, or a range of gendered constructions along with other aspects of identity and relationships between speakers (Coates 2012; Bucholz and Hall 2004; Pichler 2016). Beyond gender, perceptions and performances of age, seniority of position, class, caste, and race can all affect the ways that people speak, listen, and generally participate in discussions. Such interactions also reproduce social inequalities as some language forms are considered to be more authoritative and more valued than others and may be employed to reinforce dominant-subordinate relationships (e.g., Coates 2012; Dick and Wirtz 2011; Hill 1998; Philips 2004)—for example, when men interrupt or talk over women to dominate conversations (Zimmerman and West 1975).

These dynamics often play out as archaeological teams discuss heritage, a topic directly connected to identity. Through these conversations, participants simultaneously debate the past and perform their identities in relation to those present, shifting their behavior and communication strategies as the composition of the group changes (Hymes 1962, 1964). Feminist ethnographers have long documented that depending on who is present for the discussion, people become more or less vocal, participating more or less actively (e.g., Viswaswaran 1994, 95–7). In localities where policy debates are largely performed by men in male dominated spaces, discussions about archaeological projects can potentially exclude women, who must find other ways to participate in the conversation. Similarly, in regions that have taboos against women speaking to certain family members such as fathers-in-law or brothers-in-law, women cannot easily participate in deliberations where those men are present and speaking.

In mixed groups, participants may silence themselves rather than disagree with or contradict a more senior or powerful person who is present. Archaeologists who are not attuned to the dynamics shaped by identities and intersectional inequalities may mistake silence for assent (Watkins 2014). Junior scholars and students cannot easily contradict or speak over more senior researchers; in small towns and villages, similar hierarchical dynamics are at work. For example, when Carol McDavid (2008) began working with those connected to the Levi Jordan Plantation, she found it necessary to provide separate spaces for descendants of the plantation owners and descendants of the enslaved, because of the interplay of contemporary racial attitudes. At Çatalhöyük, Atalay (2012, 70–1) found that even when creating a separate forum for women, only the older women spoke freely as the younger women did not want to contradict, or express their own interests in front of their elders out of respect for them. She then created a separate forum for young women to participate freely. Ignoring group composition and local norms of communication ultimately leads to the silencing of less powerful sub-groups and individuals, which prevents participatory research projects from being representative.

Even when separating groups to allow for full discussion, it is important to examine the texture of discourse beyond content—that is, the ways that interactions unfold. To identify power dynamics, the ways that voices are excluded or included, and how potential conversations are opened or shut down requires close attention to how interactions actually proceed (Silverstein 1977), especially because participants themselves are not always aware of the indexical features of discourse, even when they feel their effects (Silverstein 2001). For example, participants often speak in a particular order because of custom or respect, and as a result, early speakers have the potential to substantially shape the direction of the conversation and later speakers must work harder to turn the conversation. Participants may use indirect address, addressing the person next to them rather than the person who is the intended receiver of their comments, in order to diffuse tension and avoid disagreement and argument. After all, if the target of the comments disagrees or is offended, both speaker and target can pretend that the message was not directed at them or the speaker can pretend that they did not hear, averting an argument. Speakers may use jokes or poetry, code switch between languages or dialects, use high or low variations of speech, or employ embodied forms of communication (e.g., sitting up or back, leaning in or out, crossing arms, looking down or away) in order to appeal to particular people without directly addressing them. Archaeologists that notice these verbal and embodied dynamics in both themselves and others can better understand the intentions of participants, where disagreements lie, and where potential solutions may emerge. Below, we discuss one particular approach that highlights the linguistic mechanisms that may be used to create a sense of shared understanding, or intersubjectivity, in order to facilitate communication between researchers, community members, and other stakeholders.

Tactics of Intersubjectivity

Despite the common emphasis on multivocality in much participatory research, an intersubjective understanding is actually the unspoken goal of most heritage work (Colwell and Ferguson 2006; Wylie 2008). Archaeologists often use ethnographic strategies, including building rapport and trust, as a way to create shared understandings related to heritage (see Gable [2014] for a discussion on the relationship between rapport and intersubjectivity; and González 2016 for a discussion on trust). These strategies often include the negotiation and performance of various identities, and invite discussion of the role between identity and intersubjectivity. Put simply, our field identities shape our interactions and by extension our ability to reach shared understandings.

We use Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) *tactics of intersubjectivity* to illustrate our own ways of performing identity during field research. These tactics provided a way of creating mutual understanding and allowed us to modulate our field identities according to context. Bucholtz and Hall use tactics of intersubjectivity to describe daily communicative practices that subjects employ in the process of fashioning identities. These practices shift depending on context. Expanding on the idea that identities are performed rather than innate (Butler 1990; see also Joyce 2000 for an archaeological example) and that performance occurs through speech events (Silverstein 1976), they argue that identity is demonstrated through speech events that incorporate three opposing concepts: 1) similarity and difference ("adequation and distinction"); 2) genuineness or artifice ("authentication and denaturalization"); and 3) authority or disempowerment ("authorization and illegitimation").

The first pair of ideas, similarity and difference, refers to the ways that people demonstrate that they do or do not share a common identity (see also McClaurin 2001; Narayan 1997; Slocum 2001). Instead of assuming that they share a common outlook (because of a mutual common language, kin-group, caste, gender, etc.), people build a shared identity through speech events. For example, utilizing a common code through accent, tone, volume, pitch, and vocabulary may suggest that two people are of the same or different gender, age group, etc. The second pair of concepts, genuineness and artifice, refer to the employment of language to express authenticity or expertise. For example, when a speaker skillfully uses a particular language or dialect, they demonstrate that they are authentically of a region or ethnicity. When someone employs gendered discourse markers they can demonstrate gender norms. Similarly, the skilled use of archaeological and complex vocabulary demonstrates a person's scholarly credentials. In contrast, a clumsy performance may suggest that someone is "faking it." Finally, the third pair of concepts, authorization and illegitimation, offer a way for people to demonstrate their legitimacy and authority or their disempowerment, thus showcasing the power relations among those who are interacting. For example, using a national or state language establishes a speaker's legitimacy in the eyes of authorities, while using alternative languages or dialects may show a speaker's outsider status or alternatively, may demonstrate resistance. Through these three sets of juxtaposed ideas, speakers and listeners fashion multiple aspects of identity as well as relationships of power through each communication event. Speakers employ these tactics consciously and unconsciously in everyday conversation to create and perform various aspects of social identities such as gender, ethnicity, and class. Below we present some examples drawn from our own field experiences.

Communicating in North and South India

The experiences presented here come from four separate research projects and span our graduate research and early careers (Raczek 2011; Sugandhi 2014; Sugandhi et al. 2010). While we did not explicitly design all of these projects to be participatory or devoted to heritage work, they nevertheless included substantial community interactions that highlighted the importance of language and communication as critical to building trust among participants, establishing our field identities, and undertaking delicate conversations about heritage. Importantly, these projects taught us that people's involvement in discussions about heritage hinges on the ability to know us as engendered persons, shaped by our families and communities (see Arthur, this volume).

As we conducted each archaeological project, we worked from a place of reflexivity and assessed ourselves and our relationships to the communities where we worked (see Fryer, this volume). We each started as unmarried, ciswoman graduate students with the means to travel internationally. We are otherwise quite different in terms of our backgrounds. We are of different ages and temperaments; Raczek is older and a second generation Polish-Irish American Catholic whose family largely resides in the United States, while Sugandhi is younger and a first generation Indian-American Hindu with most family still living in India. We had differing abilities to speak the local languages where we worked and different levels of familiarity with common cultural practices. The people we engaged treated us in different ways and placed different expectations on us as well. Thus, as we built our field identities, our respective backgrounds, skills, and experiences shaped our interactions and our efforts to engage local communities. That capacity for engagement also varied a great deal between north and south India.

Raczek's (2011) dissertation included a survey to identify stone raw material sources on the Mewar Plain in Rajasthan, North India. As she undertook this work, she recruited a small local crew and trained them in archaeological methods and general Indian prehistory. At each survey location, she engaged with usually male bystanders to explain the broader project and share knowledge of ancient stone tool production. She also listened to advice on where to find archaeological sites as well as good stone sources and plentiful stories about ancient times. As she is racialized as white, she was visibly an outsider. Though she is conversationally proficient in Hindi, local interlocutors often assumed that she did not speak any Indian languages and that she was either lost or prospecting for gold, oil, or uranium. Most residents in the region do not speak English, and people often first addressed her assistant, a local young man, fluent in both Hindi and the local Mewari, who embraced the role of being an ambassador.

In contrast, Sugandhi's dissertation research consisted of a survey and surface collection project around the site and village of Tekkalakota in Karnataka, South India (Sugandhi 2008), and was much more limited in terms of her interaction with the community because of the more isolated nature of many of her survey locations. Unlike Raczek, her Indian ethnicity and appearance did not attract as much attention from locals, although her field attire and activities did stand out and invited some questioning from the community. When she began her project, Sugandhi was encouraged to hire an assistant to accompany her in the field and eventually came to employ the nephew of her driver, a young man from a nearby village who was interested in archaeology and history. Together, Sugandhi and her assistant spent several months surveying the fields and hills around

Tekkalakota and collecting ceramic samples. Their encounters with local residents were often brief and outside of their homes, but while doing their collections work they began to have more recurring interactions with local landowners and people working in the immediate area. People were generally very friendly towards Sugandhi and often indicated appreciation of her identity as an Indian American who had chosen to come back to rural India to do work. Since Sugandhi was a graduate student and her assistant school-aged adults often addressed them as if they were children, admonishing them for being out in the hot sun and telling them to take some rest. At the same time, many residents approvingly commented on their studiousness and diligence in the field.

The initial insights that we gained from our research as doctoral students significantly shaped our post-dissertation research with additional colleagues—a joint endeavor conducted between 2009 and 2011 to examine the site of Chatrikhera, which lay within Raczek's survey areas in the Mewar Plain. The location of the site within a village presented an excellent opportunity to develop community-oriented strategies to investigate approaches to ethical practice in field research. We joined with Dr. Lalit Pandey, a senior archaeologist who worked and lived in the region, and Dr. Prabodh Shirvalkar, a junior archaeologist who had excavated with Raczek in the region when they were both graduate students. The presence of these two male scholars added additional elements to the composition of our research team, though here we focus mainly on our own experiences. Our team gained official permission to create the project from the *Sarpanj* (the village head) and the general community at a public meeting of men on the temple grounds, but we recognized that we still needed to seek the input of women in the village if we were to consider the project legitimately "inclusive." Although we had spoken with many families after the village meeting, we found that when men were present, women were often absent, making tea or attending to other household duties. As a result, we deliberately sought out opportunities to meet with women without men present to discuss the project, their interests, and their concerns.

When Sugandhi returned to Tekkalakota to begin a program of large-scale excavations in 2018 and 2019, her familiarity with the community, and the positive relationships she established during her prior work, were extremely beneficial to the overall operation and direction of her project. When returning to sites and seeking permission to excavate, she found that most of the landowners fondly remembered her and her assistant, now a local schoolteacher and the project manager. Nevertheless, there were significant differences between her earlier project and the present one, including the scale and number of people involved, as well as Sugandhi's own changed professional and personal identity. While some of her linguistic and behavioral mannerisms remained consistent from her prior work, there were many shifts that accompanied her changed role from graduate student to junior colleague to project director.

Upon reflection, we noted that throughout all of our field projects we had both consciously and unconsciously adjusted our own linguistic practices to reflect various aspects of our identities. Below, we present several specific examples of the different strategies that we found ourselves employing that mirrored the tactics of intersubjectivity suggested by Bucholtz and Hall (2004).

Establishing Similarity and Difference among Participants

Through our conversations we identified shared points of identity with the people we encountered in our work. Women often pointed out that we were all women. Educated men told us about their degrees. People sometimes asked about our salaries in order to determine our wealth, and they sometimes shared details of their own wealth with us in order to show that they were "middle class" like us. In the North people frequently asked us about caste as they shared their own. These questions stemmed from curiosity as well as a desire to determine bases of similarity and difference. With a connection established, we could also talk about archaeology, heritage, and the lives of the past inhabitants of the land.

Two important ways that we established similarity and difference with people we worked with, included the use of kinship terms and terms of address. These practices are often adopted unconsciously (Silverstein 2001) but we slowly came to recognize them as meaningful. In her dissertation work, Sugandhi and her assistant developed a close sibling relationship, typical of close platonic male–female friendships in India, and which is signified by the use of kinship terms as proper names such as "*Didi*" for elder sister, and the tying of the *rakhi* thread on the wrist during the holiday *Raksha Bandan*. When speaking English, they addressed each other as "Brother" and "Sister" instead of using proper names, as is common in the region. Similarly, Raczek was addressed as "*Didi*" by people who knew her in the village where she resided. However, when out on survey, she was often called "Ma'am," a common term of respect that demonstrate perceived differences in status.

When our joint project at Chatrikhera started, we noted that village residents used both terms to address us. However, they used "Madam" for Raczek more frequently than for Sugandhi, thus fostering different relationships with each of us. Madam is often used as a term of respect for officials, supervisors, professors, and other professionals and officials of higher rank. Ultimately, as they came to know us better and to tell us apart, they began to call Raczek "*Motibai*"—elder sister or elder aunt (which includes a sense of respect and seniority)—and Sugandhi "*Chotibai*," meaning younger sister or aunt. These terms had dual meanings, as *moti* means "big" and is sometimes glossed as "fat" while *choti* has a second meaning of "small." The double meaning allowed them to use the terms publicly, respectfully, while also subversively poking some fun at the size difference between us (see discussion of illegitimation below). The terms, though, reinforced their perception of our status and roles, as well as their relationships with us. The residents referred to our senior colleague as "Sir," a term used to mark officialdom, while our remaining colleague was "*Bhai*" or brother (no older/younger distinction used), indicating a more relaxed and informal relationship. Through these kinship terms, the village residents placed us in relation to them, but by doing so they also placed us in ranked relation to each other. Although we saw each other as relatively equal in our project roles, the village residents did not. These interactions influenced our team dynamics and work patterns on a daily basis.

Terms of address also marked and created similarity and difference. Although English has a singular "you" Hindi has three possible variations: *aap* (formal, used to show respect to older persons or superiors), *tum* (informal, used among friends), and *tu* (intimate, used rarely). Mastering the correct usage is challenging for native English speakers, meaning Sugandhi's background in Marathi (a related language) gave her a linguistic advantage. Raczek had been advised by an early Hindi Professor to err on the side of formality so she tended to use "*aap*" when speaking to adults, which sometimes created distance between speakers. Sugandhi, on the other hand, switched back and forth between *aap* and *tum* with ease depending on the situation, and was able to better bridge gaps. Her more frequent use of *tum* and even the occasional *tu* was also shaped by the more frequent use of informal terms employed in spoken Marathi. Here, our different backgrounds played a role: while women of various ages used *tum* with us, men used *aap* with Raczek frequently, but reserved the term for more formal situations with Sugandhi. Our senior colleague was almost always addressed as *aap*, while our junior colleague both used and received *tum* regularly from both men and women. Identifying the nature of relationships allowed us to pay careful attention to power relations and constructions of authority, and therefore to the ways that people participated in the project. These power relations can have significant bearing on the conduct and outcome of research, impacting everything from decision making at the trowel's edge to final site interpretation.

Performing Authentication and Denaturalization

Authentication through language is one way to make a claim about identity whether it be nationality, ethnicity, gender, education level, or class. India is linguistically diverse and has many official languages; speaking certain languages or dialects, employing colloquialisms, or using embodied communication can all contribute to the performance of authenticity. In multilingual nations like India, choosing to speak Hindi over English, Kannada over Hindi, or Mewari over Hindi can indicate a positioning of oneself as an authentic nationalist or regionalist, or of a certain class or education level (Faust and Nagar 2001). In our case, English signaled our American backgrounds while those who spoke with us in that language signaled their educated backgrounds and sometimes class or region (see below). Because of these forms of signaling it was clear that village residents saw us as authentically educated and knowledgeable about archaeology. However, as women who were working with men, far from family oversight, we also needed to demonstrate high moral standards in order to dispel concerns about our integrity (see also Abu-Lughod [1986] 2016, 11–12; Visweswaran 1994).

In addition to modifying her language use during her dissertation work, Sugandhi also utilized embodied communication, adapting many of her behaviors to conform to the standards expected of a "good Indian girl" living in a small town without her family. She did not socialize much outside of her known circle and did not go out at night or frequent the public areas of her hotel when she was alone. Raczek also followed such norms while living with a family in rural Rajasthan; however, her visibility as a foreigner meant that fewer such expectations were placed on her and that performing such actions were sometimes seen as inauthentic. While both of us dressed conservatively and used clothing as a form of embodied communication, Raczek often donned the *salwar kameez* (long shirt and loose pants) with *dupatta* (long scarf) to adhere to local norms and distinguish herself from white female foreign tourists in nearby tourist areas who were sometimes criticized for dressing and acting inappropriately.

In our later work at Chatrikhera, if we discussed the archaeological project with both men and women present, women covered their heads and spoke in a loud whisper or were still and silent. We also became quieter in these meetings to signal our femininity, particularly when our senior male colleague was present. When appropriate, however, we spoke in a tone meant to be heard. In those moments of participation, we eschewed local norms of femininity and matched our speech with the men, researchers, and local leaders who were usually educated, upper class, and upper caste. This tonal signification allowed us to authenticate our roles as researchers and decision makers. Participating in these discussions differed for both Raczek and Sugandhi; there were different expectations put on each of us because of our backgrounds. By modulating our communication strategies when group composition varied, we worked to find connections with villagers wherever possible (see also, Fryer, this volume).

As a result of these experiences, we decided to devote considerable time to talking to women in the absence of men (for a similar practice see Atalay [2012, 98]). Here, we separated from our male colleagues and met with women when the men in their family were away from home. In these moments, we engaged in "women's talk" to signal our femininity. Since our work included non-traditional activities, such talk allowed us to demonstrate that we shared some common experiences and authenticate our identities as women. In some families, when men (and sometimes mothers-in-law) were physically absent, women spoke freely, loudly, gestured widely, and laughed, and so we did as well. As we connected through discussions about life and family and our current and future roles as wives, mothers, and daughters-in-law, we also listened to narratives about the local past and concerns about the excavation project. Through these conversations, we were able to modify the project and think together about the past and how it was perceived.

Addressing Authorization and Illegitimation (legitimacy and disempowerment)

In the rural areas where we worked, particularly in North India, it is unusual for women to move about and work independently in unknown areas without the supervision of a male relative. As a result, both of us pointedly used multiple techniques to establish an authoritative identity and legitimize our presence, including language choice and use of documentation. During our dissertation research it was more common for people to approach our male assistants or colleagues rather than address us directly. Although we often spoke frankly with women (Sugandhi relying on non-verbal communication such as head nodding and smiling, or short utterances in Kannada), we often avoided mundane interactions with men in the field.

Official documents issued by various government authorities formally authorized us to conduct research in the area. Our permits, visas, and IRB documents were written in English, Hindi, and for Sugandhi, Kannada, and we presented them when dealing with local authorities such as the police. We also used them to demonstrate our legitimacy to residents and avoid false-role assignments such as Maoist insurgent or Government agent. Even though some could not read the documents, seeing them remained important. Similarly, at the end of our preliminary season at Chatrikhera, several families asked our team to write down research agreements formally. We did so, printing English on one side and Hindi on the other. Although few could actually read the whole document, they were pleased that a document had been drafted and signed by them, ourselves, our archaeological colleagues, and a long-term local collaborator.

The strategic use of language by ourselves and others also established authority. English is more commonly spoken throughout the south than in the north and the use of English varied in each location. Mewari, the local language in Rajasthan that is related to Hindi, is more commonly spoken among older generations. In Karnataka, Kannada is widely spoken. As Americans, we preferred to use English when speaking with other archaeologists, however, when foreigners are not present, many archaeologists in India switch between English, Hindi, and other regional languages. While English is a favored language in some circumstances, it is also looked down on in others, as using it can be seen as elitist and anti-nationalist. Introduced by the British, English has a history as the language of the colonizers, the elite, and in some cases, the government. Today, English medium schools are often preferred because people believe that attending one will lead to better job opportunities (Mathew 2018).

In most situations, Sugandhi found it was much more effective to assert the Indian aspect of her identity, speak in Indian-English and Hinglish, and maintain a discrete silence when in the presence of elders or groups of men. However, she reversed this in certain cases, such as when trying to enter luxury hotels or when being harassed by young men; at those times she displayed a more forceful and distinctly American attitude and accent. This code-switching was sometimes deliberate but many times unconscious, involving not just language, but also other kinds of non-linguistic behaviors such as posture and gesture. Raczek's encounters did not involve the invocation of a similar dual identity. She was typically given respect because of her appearance as a white American. And since most people assumed she only spoke English, many were impressed by her use of Hindi and frequently complimented her on it.

Sugandhi, on the other hand, who has a similar proficiency level, was often told that her Hindi was poor and that she needed to improve it.

In Rajasthan, Raczek and Sugandhi both utilized Hindi to speak with most people. Raczek had informal training in Mewari, but it was insufficient for discussing complex ideas. Depending on the composition of the group, English, Hindi, and Mewari were simultaneously used. Those who knew some English sometimes used it to display their authority. Mewari or complex Hindi vocabulary was sometimes employed to privately contest ideas in our presence.

Implications and Future Directions

Though we did not formally design our dissertation research projects to be collaborative in nature, we both found ourselves employing strategies from linguistic anthropology in order to build trust with the people that we worked with and to express our budding field identities. By working with our colleagues and deliberately acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of both our teams and the communities where we worked, we built stronger, more inclusive programs. At Chatrikhera, our project team selected an area for excavation that featured prominently in village narratives told to us by women over chai as we simultaneously discussed heritage, families, and the future. We then made agreements that the community supported and that substantially shaped the direction of the research (Raczek et al. 2011). Our experiences highlighted the challenge of achieving intersubjectivity, and the value of incorporating engendered insights into heritage practice.

When Sugandhi resumed work at Tekkalakota for a long-term project of excavation, she utilized the important lessons gleaned from the work at Chatrikhera. She returned to Tekkalakota in 2018 and 2019 and began test excavations accompanied by her former assistant (now project manager), as well as with several Indian graduate students and her young daughter. In employing tactics of intersubjectivity such as authentication and authorization, Sugandhi often had to shift her modes of communication to highlight alternating aspects of her identity. As expressions of her identity shifted with context, so too did her interactions with others. For example, when she and her assistant were in the company of her students, Sugandhi adopted a more senior role and tone in the discussion, while her assistant maintained a more discrete silence. This position was reversed in conversations with local residents when Sugandhi was the one to observe more silences, letting her assistant take on a more authoritative voice.

Although Sugandhi adopted a more authoritative tone overall compared to her prior work at Tekkalakota, she found there were many times when local people remembered the way they had reproached her for being out in the sun in the past. In these instances of remembrance, Sugandhi initially found herself reverting to a junior position, addressing residents using kinship terms reserved for elders and maintaining silence while other spoke indirectly. Assuming this subordinate role maintained the close kinship-like relationships she had established years earlier, but was also countered by her changed identity as the director of a research program, a mother and a college professor—a senior position clearly evident throughout the season as she negotiated project details, scolded her child, and instructed her students (see Arthur [this volume] for an analysis of motherism). As Sugandhi tacked between these different identities and demands in the field she was able to renew old bonds which had been forged more than a decade before, while simultaneously establishing herself as a good Indian mother and as a professional scholar capable of managing graduate students and a large-scale archaeological project.

Similarly, local people responded to Sugandhi's changed age status in multiple, and sometimes contradictory, ways. For example, during the excavation season, many people were overly concerned with Sugandhi's young daughter's health and ability to manage field conditions, despite the fact that she remained in good form during the entire season. Sugandhi's assistant was particularly adamant about the quality of available drinking water, while one local family insisted on supplying home cooked meals. These gestures were ways for people to show their affection and affirm kinship-like relations, while simultaneously expressing disapproval of Sugandhi's field-parenting methods, which were well outside the norms of NRI (Non-Resident Indian) and Indian upper middle-class standards. This dual sentiment was again demonstrated when Sugandhi returned several months later without her child and was frequently reproached for it, much in the same way that Sugandhi's own family criticized her. By including her daughter in her interactions with local residents at Tekkalakota, Sugandhi's connections with community members continue to grow closer and more expansive with each visit, building not only on her identity as a research scholar, but also on her more familial roles such as mother, sister, and daughter.

As Sugandhi moves forward with her research at Tekkalakota she will continue to attend to the nuances of identity, context and the tactics of intersubjectivity that will allow her to build fruitful collaborative relationships that will benefit both her research program and the local community. These relationships have continued to grow and have also shaped the project's long-term goals, as Sugandhi and her team find themselves reflecting more on the needs of the community at Tekkalakota, particularly in terms of access to education and the impact of climate change.

Conclusion

Communication events are complex interactions that not only address topics at hand, such as heritage and archaeology work, but also recursively structure complex identities through social distinctions including gender, ethnicity, and class. A feminist approach to participatory research carefully constructs communication events to address issues of inclusivity and representation and to forefront a concern for trust and equity. Acknowledging the complexity of participant identities and inequalities within a broader social context, attending to communication styles and local linguistic norms, and making time for repeated interactions in a variety of contexts allows all participants—researchers and stakeholders—to learn and share from one another. This allows groups with different backgrounds, goals, and interests as well as imbalances of power to more effectively pursue intersubjective understandings.

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