

## Essay

## Bad Habitus: Anthropology in the Age of the Multimodal

**Stephanie Takaragawa***Chapman University***Trudi Lynn Smith***University of Victoria***Kate Hennessy***Simon Fraser University***Patricia Alvarez Astacio***Brandeis University***Jenny Chio***University of Southern California***Coleman Nye***Simon Fraser University***Shalini Shankar***Northwestern University*

The recent reframing of the Visual Anthropology section in *American Anthropologist* was motivated by a sense that new technologies have democratizing power and that through multimodal forms we can address a shift toward engagement and collaboration in anthropological research (Collins, Durington, and Gill 2017). Our purpose in this essay is to engage and expand the discussion raised by Samuel Collins, Matthew Durlington, and Harjant Gill in their 2017 article “Multimodal Anthropology: An Invitation,” which has been widely cited and has helped to inspire a range of new projects in anthropology that do not prioritize text. Although the idea of multimodal anthropology may challenge dominant paradigms of authorship, expertise, capacity, and language, we argue that there is nothing inherently liberatory about multimodal approaches in anthropology. Therefore, as our discipline(s) increasingly advocates for the multimodal in the service of anthropology, there is a need for deep engagement with the multimodal’s position as an expression of technoscientific praxis, which is complicit in the reproduction of power hierarchies in the context of global capitalism, “capital accumulation” (Collins, Durlington, and Gill 2017, 144), and other forms of oppression.

The kind of critical deep engagement we call for is not without precedent. Early critiques from filmmakers like Trinh T. Minh-Ha pointed to ethnographic film’s complicity in reproducing a Western view of other cultures (Moore 1994). Trinh urged us not to drop our cameras but to use them to reveal how a prevailing system of representation is naturalized and seen as the only truthful and correct way through the normalization of our ethnographic and cinematic methods and techniques. Such critiques inevitably called for a revision of our ethical engagements, a speaking nearby rather than speaking for (Chen and Trinh 1994; Ruby 1991; Trinh 1992). More recently, Harjant Gill (2017, 63) has asked the important question: “How are our films and our scholarship continuously shaped by the various media-scapes within

which they circulate, and how does institutional power condition what is knowable in the form of ethnographic accounts?” (see also Gill 2016).

In a similar vein, we seek to interrogate the multimodal in our contemporary disciplinary context and praxis. The wide array and regular emergence of new technologies at our disposal to develop multimodal work demands that we consider broader questions relating to capitalism and technoscience that go beyond, but still include, considerations of film and the politics of representation. Moreover, questions of ethics will need to be redefined because new and more accessible or seemingly “democratic” technology will not solve certain ethical dilemmas, but rather will bring forth new ethical considerations to be recognized and addressed. Chen and Trinh’s twenty-five-year-old provocation resonates today in this regard:

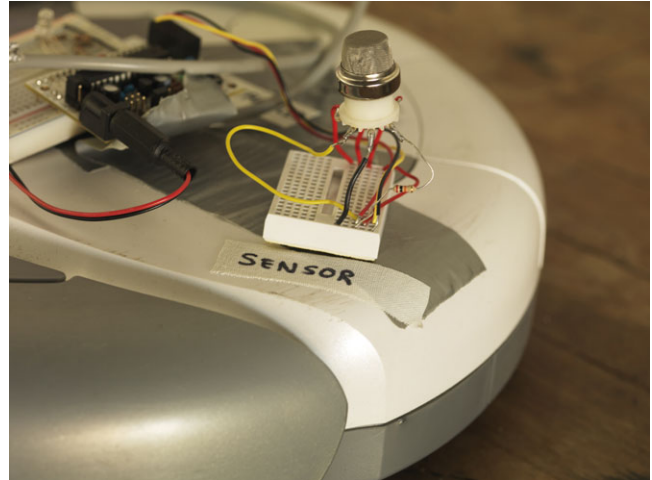
If the tools are dealt with only as to further the production of anthropological knowledge, or to find a better solution for anthropology as a discipline, then what is achieved is either a refinement in the pseudo-science of appropriating Otherness or a mere stir within the same frame. (Chen and Trinh 1994, 439)

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “multimodal” as being “characterized by several different modes of occurrence or activity; incorporating or utilizing several different methods or systems.” Sarah Pink (2009) has explored multimodal scholarship as emerging from studies in phenomenology and of the senses. Significant contemporary experimental ethnographic work is growing in prominence in anthropology, such as the film and video work emerging from Harvard’s Sensory Ethnography Lab, the work of more than one hundred artists shown in the Ethnographic Terminalia exhibitions from 2009 to 2015, or Roderick Coover’s work at Temple University (see Tsoupikova et al. 2015). The University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Experimental Ethnography and CAMRA, under the stewardship of Deborah Thomas and John Jackson along with a cohort of graduate students, have held annual conferences dedicated to multimodal anthropology, produced blogs, and exhibited multimodal work. Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan and Isaac Marrero-Guillamón (2019, 220) have recently mobilized the very productive notion of *invention* alongside multimodality, including inventive pedagogies, forms, and collaborations, “to refer to the multiple ways of doing anthropology that create different ways of knowing and learning together.” However, has the multimodal merely become equated with a more diverse methodological and technological tool kit? Within anthropology, how deeply are we looking at the systems that both produce the technologies being used and defining the work that can be done with them? Multimodal anthropology—characterized, for example, by the use of sound, photography, video, art, drawings, digitally

produced graphic novels, performances, installation art, social media, cloud-based software, and mobile phones (and much more could and will be added to this list)—is a set of practices often deeply implicated in the digital and its invisible networks and resource-hungry requirements. If we are to take obligations within multimodal praxis seriously, we have to ask questions, such as: How does the use of innovative technology elide and contribute to injustice and the violence of extractive economies? What of the wave of suicides in Apple’s iPhone factories in China (Condliffe 2018), the child and slave labor used in mining rare earth minerals (Kelly 2016), or the emergence of hyper-scale server farms (Vidal 2017)? How do algorithms operate within these extractive logics reproducing exclusions and experiences of violence faced by marginalized communities offline and online (Noble 2018)? These are just some examples of exploitative and extractivist dynamics that feed our practices of using mobile phones and other technologies for representing knowledge.

Building on Sara Ahmed’s (2007) concept of “bad habits” and Pierre Bourdieu’s (1988) “habitus,” we question how multimodal anthropologies may function to reproduce and reinforce a problem we call *bad habitus*. We suggest that multimodal anthropologies can just as easily reinforce existing power structures by making recourse to techno-fetishism or by dressing up neocolonial practices of extraction, inclusion, and appropriation in new language. Following Latour (1987, 174), who asks, “What is kept of technoscience once all the trials of responsibility have been settled,” we wonder: What do multimodal approaches to knowledge production privilege and what do they strategically deny? What does the multimodal preserve and promote and/or destroy in its world-making? Is multimodal anthropology a fetish object that disguises what is really going on? How do technologies work? How, by whom, and under what conditions are they produced (Harvey 2014, 7)? We use this opportunity to theorize and conceptualize the potential of multimodal studies to not only make use of new tools and methods but to investigate the reification of power hierarchies and privilege of technoscience that these tools and methods may enable. We want to analyze multimodal dynamics through a lens of global social justice by including investigations of labor, access, and mobility in the creation, dissemination, and maintenance of new technologies.

The discussions leading up to this essay began among three members of the Ethnographic Terminalia collective (Stephanie, Trudi, and Kate), who, along with cocurators Craig Campbell and Fiona P. McDonald, have been privileged over the last decade to engage as curators and artists in highlighting art-focused approaches to representing ethnographic knowledge and power. This paper draws inspiration from work both inside and outside art practices that critically engages with the materialities of new technologies and their entanglements with our diverse practices as anthropologists (for example, Figure 1, the work presented by Public Lab for Open Technology and Science in the 2011 Ethnographic



**FIGURE 1.** Making Sense: Lab as Gallery as Field. *Public Lab for Open Science and Technology* (Jae Ok Lee and Byeongwon Ha). A DIY spectrometer and a Roomba hacked to be an indoor air pollutant mapper and generate real-time data about the gallery environment. Created for Ethnographic Terminalia 2011: Field Studio Lab, Montreal, Canada. (Photograph by Rachel Topham)

Terminalia exhibition *Field, Studio, Lab* at Montréal’s Eastern Bloc Centre for Interdisciplinary Art). But collectively, the authors of this essay are also troubled by the easy uptake of new tools and platforms in the service of what is being called the multimodal.

That said, we do not believe we are somehow outside of bad habitus; rather, we fundamentally see ourselves as deeply implicated in the reproduction of technoscience and power hierarchies through our use of tools, networks, methods, and modes of dissemination. In addition to advocating for an anthropology of the multimodal alongside critical engagements with multimodal tools, we envision bad habitus as a troubling feeling that is productive and necessary to recognize.

On the occasion of the 2018 meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Jose, the heart of Silicon Valley, the authors of this article presented a roundtable called “Bad Habitus: Anthropology in the Age of the Multimodal.” We each provided examples from our research as entry points into thinking about anthropological histories, technological contexts, and multimodal potentials. Patricia Alvarez discussed the material topographies of “naturally sourced” dyes that destroy ecologies to consider the problem of creating film and collaborating with interlocutors in contexts when film or interactive documentary web-based projects aren’t likely to be viewed or easily accessed by interlocutors-collaborators. Deborah Thomas described the collaborative multimedia work and installation *Bearing Witness: Four Days in West Kingston* (Thomas, Bell, and Wedderburn 2017) and pointed to counter-uses of surveillance (and practices of filming police) even as they come up against the legal limits of justice under racial capitalism.

Trudi Lynn Smith and Kate Hennessy's presentation on the destabilization and anarchival materiality of color motion picture film raised the question of the material resistances of pink ruin at play in the archives of salvage anthropology. Coleman Nye introduced a collaborative graphic adaptation of anthropological research (Hamdy and Nye 2017) and evaluated possibilities for practices of citation and collaboration through graphic forms while thinking through documentation of the intimate experience of illness alongside the complex social, economic, and environmental landscapes that shape health. Shalini Shankar's reflection on the challenges of representation in anthropology questioned the role the multimodal might play to "decolonize anthropology," particularly through the uptake of social media and the political projects anthropologists are engaging in: #MeToo and #HAUtalk, minoritized community conversations, and re-ordering the public sphere without an invitation. Jenny Chio quoted Dean MacCannell, who in another AAA panel exclaimed, "Stop admiring your tools," and drew on artist Hito Steryl's *In Defense of the Poor Image* (2009) to call attention to the excess, the waste, and the detritus of the multimodal as a means of recognizing the chains of obligation and responsibility in which all of our work is enmeshed. Stephanie Takaragawa brought attention to our complicity in our bad habitus: How is our bad habitus enmeshed in issues of power and hierarchy that we are complicit in reproducing within the academy through hiring, lecturing, tenure, and citational practices?

Discussion of these projects helped us shape an articulation of bad habitus and reorient attention toward what we think of as an *anthropology of the multimodal*. We ask: What is taken for granted in current mobilizations of the multimodal in anthropology? For the purpose of structuring our initial thoughts here, we have divided the discussion into two parts: (1) on multimodal inheritances, which begins to situate multimodal practices within recent critiques of the discipline itself, and (2) on multimodal anthropology in the context of global capitalism and rapidly developing technologies like artificial intelligence that our work is increasingly making use of, whether we realize it or not. We finish up with an invitation to get comfortable with feeling bad about our bad habitus. Building on initial provocations around the multimodal, and following the work of many brilliant scholars who are provoking critical discussion around science and technology in society and culture (certainly there are so many more than we cite here), we aim to connect this kind of deep engagement with technology, representation, and its real-world implications to future discussions and articulations of what is for now being called the multimodal in anthropology.

### PART 1: MULTIMODAL INHERITANCES

How are current articulations of multimodal anthropology and the tools and methods we take up within it deeply rooted in anthropology as a discipline? How is multimodal anthropology also fundamentally entangled in capitalism and

technoscience? As anthropology proliferates with new tools and ways of using them, we join others in highlighting how racism, misogyny, colonialism, ableism, and extractivism remain central concerns in considering the direction anthropology is taking and what it will become. As Cedric Robinson argues, constructions of race and capitalism evolved together producing a modern world system of racial division and expropriation: "'racial capitalism' (is) dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide" (see Kelley 2017). Michelle M. Wright (2015, 14) reminds us that constructs of racialized identity are "produced through history, culture and ancestry, which are predicated on a notion of time and space that is linear and driven by progress," that we must be mindful and understand who and how individuals perceive and perform themselves. As our technologies and our methods coproduce and reinforce one another, what can we be doing to better identify and deconstruct how the multimodal has been produced and what it has inherited?

In the opening of her influential essay "The Phenomenology of Whiteness," Sarah Ahmed (2007, 149) asks, "What does making the invisible marks of privilege more visible actually do?" She considers how whiteness—"a social and bodily orientation"—is imbricated within institutional habits, inheritances, techniques, and proximities. On the blog *Feminist Killjoys* and in the book *Living A Feminist Life* (2017), Ahmed writes about doing diversity work and "the hardening of histories into barriers in the present" (2017, 154). Ahmed asks, "how is 'white men' a building" (154)? And she provides abundant illustrations from everyday life in the university, such as academic citations in the Ivory Tower that continue to be built on the alleged legitimacy of the able-bodied white man, reproducing white habitus (Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006), heteronormativity (Gill 2017), ableism (Nakamura 2013a), and so on in academia.

When audit culture (Strathern 2000) requires that we have the requisite citations for tenure, and the editorial boards of peer-reviewed journals are determined by like-minded scholars, are we only able to reproduce the status quo? Multimodal tools and what appears to be a growing acceptance within anthropology and interdisciplinary departmental tenure committees of nontextual work (for example, ethnographic films and interactive media, exhibitions, curatorial activities, and research-creation) have, we suggest, created a sense that multimodal tools may be one way to subvert dominant narratives of success based on a single-authored monograph or article. However, an acknowledgment of our bad habitus necessarily means assuming a critical position in relation to the use of multimodal tools, which also reproduces the dynamics and power hierarchies entrenched in anthropology. The recent exposure (Weiss 2018; Yates-Doerr 2018) of violent practices in the production of the online open-access journal *HAU* was a disturbing reminder of these inheritances and also pointed to the ways in which our multimodal tools, such as online journal platforms and digital editorial workflows, can inherit and reproduce unequal relations of power in academia (see

*Cultural Anthropology* “Hot Spots” series edited by West (2018). This was addressed productively in the standing-room-only late-breaking American Anthropological Association roundtable “Destabilizing Power and Asserting Praxis in Post-HAU Anthropology” at the 2018 meeting in San Jose.

Zoe Todd, who was a discussant for that session, has influenced us very much in our thinking here about the way the multimodal in anthropology is being taken up. In her blog post “The We and Them of Anthropology” (Todd 2015), she interrogates the limits of the “we” in anthropology. Building on Sarah Ahmed, Todd asks, “What would anthropological discourses look like if the halls of the academy physically reflected the actual societies we belong to?” Todd calls for anthropology to join the conversation about what matters to the nondominant voices and bodies of the discipline, to: “embrace the vulnerability, and potential, that comes with radically dismantling the ongoing patriarchy and white supremacy of contemporary Euro-Western academia. *Anthropology re-imagined is anthropology unbound from its current Euro-Western institutions and logics*” (emphasis in original).

In a more recent blog post about racism, white supremacy, and colonialism in anthropology, Todd (2018) draws on the work of Audra Simpson (2014) to ask how she can “refuse [anthropology’s] underlying white supremacist tendencies.” In reminding anthropologists that decolonization is an ongoing process, she asks, “So what does it look like for us to engage more epistemic diversity, to be more generous and generative with the work that we do, with the bodies (human and figurative) that we carry within our disciplinary walls? I am not sure.”

We aren’t sure either, but we are grateful to Zoe Todd and others (Shankar 2018) for reminding us that the feeling of uncertainty is an important impulse in engaging and refusing oppressive dynamics in anthropology, including within what is being called the multimodal. Similarly, we are motivated by the important work of Maya J. Berry, Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shayna Cordis, Sarah Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada (2017), who argue for a fugitive anthropology. In addressing contradictions of politically engaged research in fieldwork, Berry et al. call for a feminist praxis of “fugitive anthropology, a rethinking of the contours of the political in co-creating spaces of liberation and transformation” (538). Highlighting the ongoing power asymmetries of the academy, the authors write that they build a “framework for alternative pathways towards a politically engaged research we term fugitive anthropology” (540) that brings embodiment and embodied experiences to the practice of activist anthropology. This significant work, grounded in “black feminist analysis and praxis and inspired by indigenous decolonial thinking” (559), locates “a fugitive anthropology . . . [that] cannot be tethered to preordained courses or predictable paths; it moves forward with an understanding that the path to reach spaces unknown is necessarily unpredictable” (560).

In that line of thinking, we see bad habitus as including the unsettled feeling that we get in our gut—the instinctive

and visceral reminders of our bodies (including the reminder to be aware of differences between bodies). As anthropologists, we have long been concerned with the study of people and have used technologies of the time to document human expression and activity in text, sound, and image. Anthropologists have and continue to demonstrate faith in these technologies to preserve a record of human activity—a salvage paradigm that today is undermined by deteriorating film stock and obsolete file formats (see Smith and Hennessy, forthcoming). Museum anthropologists have long pointed out the contradictions between the documentation and the transmission of cultural heritage, in which documentation becomes frozen once removed from dynamic lived experience (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Krmpotich 2014; Krmpotich et al. 2013; Kurin 2007). We wonder if the momentum of sensory anthropology (Howes 2003; Nakamura 2013b; Pink 2009) and its activation with multimodal tools replicates this belief in the potential of new technologies to faithfully document and represent human experience for the future? Are multimodal methods in sensory anthropology claiming to narrow the gap between documentation and lived experience? How are disciplinary inheritances and orientations enmeshed in the enchantment of the new being reproduced and amplified with new tools? We suggest uncritical multimodal approaches may interject yet another impediment to representing the experience of the gendered, aged, raced, abled, or otherwise body of the individual. Even more, Jeff Chang (2016) calls our current moment potentially one of “resegregation” as technologies of surveillance (Yesil 2006) are deployed for our safety but are disproportionately used against religious minorities and people of color (Browne 2015; Jackson 2008). The bad feelings that recognition of such dynamics produces compels anthropologists to recognize that such devices are deployed for the convenience of some through the labor and loss of others.

## **PART 2: THE MULTIMODAL IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM**

The aspiration for a multimodal anthropology rests on the ongoing habits of technoscience. Through the lens of bad habitus, we ask: Who is able to take the orientations of technology for granted? How do they reinforce dichotomies between “the human” and “the machine”? As Eurocentric epistemologies struggle with dichotomies between human and nonhuman, Jason Edward Lewis, Noelani Arista, Archer Pechawis, and Suzanne Kite (2018) consider the importance of Indigenous epistemologies in thinking about the nonhuman in discussions of artificial intelligence. In “Making Kin with the Machines,” the authors work to “figure out how to treat these new non-human kin respectfully and reciprocally—and not as mere tools, or worse, slaves to their creators” and remind their readers of the importance of recognizing the porous boundaries between what is understood as “the human” and “the machine.” These communities are fundamentally entangled and complex arrays. The authors write:

The world created through Western epistemology does not account for all members of the community and has not made it a possible for all members of the community to survive let alone flourish. The Western view of both the human and non-human as exploitable resources is the result of what the cultural philosopher Jim Cheney calls an “epistemology of control” and is indelibly tied to colonization, capitalism, and slavery. Dakota philosopher Vine Deloria, Jr. writes about the enslavement of the non-human “as if it were a machine.”

Many technologies being used in anthropology today are fundamentally implicated in the oppression of people through unequal labor, distribution of resources, and alienation from land, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups in developing worlds as well as minority groups in industrialized spaces. We are inspired by recent ethnographic work that aims to disentangle complex sociotechnical arrays and their human effects. For example, Mary Gray’s (2016) work on the labor infrastructures of Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, including her forthcoming book, represents deep ethnographic study of the implications of taskified labor outsourcing and its undermining of hundreds of years of labor rights activism. In another example, a special issue of *Cultural Anthropology* edited by Ian Lowrie (2018) foregrounds algorithms and automation as shaping the sociotechnical assemblages that increasingly organize human experience in a way that transcends future possibilities for human control and comprehension. And in a similar impulse to unpack the invisible in the everyday, Josh Bell, Briel Kobak, Joel Kuipers, and Amanda Kemble’s (2018) special issue of *Anthropological Quarterly* on the materiality of cell phones brings ethnographic methodologies and ideas of object biographies together to explore the deep social and environmental impact of mobile phone use and the material supply chains that enable its proliferation.

A provocative example of using a material object as a starting point for critically decoding its mind-boggling human and environmental effects—from deep geological time to the cloud and back to the landfill—is Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler’s (2018) “Anatomy of an AI System.” They take a typical interaction with the Amazon Echo—a mother holding a child asking AI assistant Alexa to turn on the lights—and explode it into a graphic narrative of racialized capitalism in which “a vast matrix of capacities is invoked: interlaced chains of resource extraction, human labor and algorithmic processing across networks of mining, logistics, distribution, prediction and optimization.” The authors point out that the small moments of convenience that new technologies provide (turning on a light, calling up a song) require a scale of resource use that far exceeds what it would take a human to do the same work. And while making sense of these costs is near impossible, “it is increasingly important that we grasp the scale and scope if we are to understand and govern the technical infrastructures that thread through our lives.”

Can we begin to practice an anthropology of the multimodal that is grounded in questioning technoscientific praxis? The current framework proposed for multimodal

anthropologies seems to avoid critiques of technological determinism by keeping a space open for new technologies in the present and future. However, these technologies and media forms often appear, inveigh themselves, and disappear before we have a chance to fully understand what has happened. Other forms undergo technological and formal shifts, which sometimes we make meaningful, and sometimes we fail to capture. What is implicated in the move from the calotype to photographs to film to video to digital medias? From single images to comics to graphic novels? From salon-style installations to immersive multimedia environments? Crawford and Joler (2018) recall Jean-Francois Lyotard’s phrase “affinity to infinity,” used to “describe how contemporary art, techno-science and capitalism share the same aspiration to push boundaries toward a potentially infinite horizon.”

Grappling with the complexity, scale, and scope of technical infrastructures raises further questions about the limits for multimodal anthropologies if they are harnessed to a future controlled by capitalist corporations. What happens when the intention of a new technology is to capture energy, dollars, and resources? How might we (or do we) nurture and maintain media worlds that exceed these capitalist technoscientific futures? How do we best resist giving algorithms a monopoly on the multimodal experience? This might be the thought experiment: What of multimodal anthropology when the power goes out?

Elizabeth Chin (2016, 2017) reminds us that new technologies are commodities and therefore work within the system of capital and extractive capitalist logics. This includes the variegated ways that commodities work—how commodities and consumption are taken up within power, within the middle class, within the academy, and within capitalism’s relationship with race. Who benefits from an “affinity to infinity”? Who does not? Perhaps, rather than a welcoming act, in some cases an act of refusal may be necessary (see Ahmed 2018; Simpson 2007; Todd 2018). If we believe in the promise of addressing inequity through the development and application of new technologies, we run the risk of naturalizing dynamics of oppression. This act reifies tropes of progress, rather than admitting that inequity is a state we are already complicit in constructing. Furthermore, we may unintentionally ignore how the multimodal is instrumental in furthering this divide by focusing on outcomes of technological change, rather than the input of technological labor and extraction.

As Crawford and Joler (2018) caution,

Digital labor—the work of building and maintaining the stack of digital systems—is far from ephemeral or virtual, but is deeply embodied in different activities. The scope is overwhelming: from indentured labor in mines for extracting the minerals that form the physical basis of information technologies; to the work of strictly controlled and sometimes dangerous hardware manufacturing and assembly processes in Chinese factories; to exploited outsourced cognitive workers in developing countries labelling AI training data sets; to the informal physical workers cleaning up toxic waste dumps. These processes create new accumulations of wealth and power, which are concentrated in a very thin social layer.



**FIGURE 2.** Making Sense: Lab as Gallery as Field. *Public Lab for Open Science and Technology (PLOTS)* (Jae Ok Lee and Byeongwon Ha). Created for Ethnographic Terminalia 2011: Field Studio Lab, Montreal, Canada. (Photograph by Rachel Topham)

So, we are wondering, if we as anthropologists fundamentally do not understand (or even care about) the technologies we use in the service of multimodal anthropologies, how can we begin to critically engage with our practices? If we claim to be grounded in collaboration with communities as partners in research, why are more of us not rethinking the technologies we use and their wide-ranging effects? Is the defense of the multimodal ultimately about having new forms of research using novel technologies and industrial funding accepted within the academy? And if so, is this being done at the expense of those whose data and representations are being mobilized through digital platforms and corporate servers, and perhaps the planet itself?

### **BAD HABITUS AND THE POTENTIAL OF DISORIENTATION**

As we began to write this essay, we were particularly inspired by the ongoing work of Public Laboratory for Open Technology and Science (PLOTS) (Figures 1 and 2). We looked back at the work they contributed to the 2011 Ethnographic Terminalia exhibition in Montreal. In their work *Making Sense: Lab as Gallery as Field*, the artists take things apart and reconfigure them to actively reimagine and enact human relationships to science. They address and act on environmental injustices via DIY, open-source techniques and training. At its core, PLOTS demonstrates that generating knowledge is powerful and should be democratic and available, and not remain solely in the hands of scientific experts. The artists remind us that when we don't understand technology or how it is being used, we should open the black box, take it apart, and figure out how the wires connect. Inspired by these actions, we call for an *anthropology of the multimodal* premised on what we believe should be an ongoing obligation to try to make sense of the technologies and inheritances upon which multimodal practices depend.

As Sarah Pink (2011) points out, multimodal approaches to ethnography appear to default to a classical ethnographic approach. As a challenge, she asks: "Would it not be more informative and exciting to engage with new conceptualizations of ethnography, ethnographic knowing and empathetic research practices" (274)? We argue in this article that these new conceptualizations in anthropology require an acknowledgment of the multimodal's disciplinary inheritances as well as its embeddedness in global capitalism and technoscience. This is an acknowledgment grounded in the recognition of the active and unfinished process of ongoing obligations, one we underscore here by employing Sara Ahmed's (2014) firm assertion that "it takes conscious willed and willful effort not to reproduce an inheritance."

Therefore, we propose an anthropology of the multimodal as one way to address bad habitus. An anthropology of the multimodal finds grounding in Donna Haraway's (2016, 2) ethic of "learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying in response-ability on a damaged earth." It is also about making "good trouble," as veteran American Civil Rights leader Congressman John Lewis (D-Georgia) has repeatedly urged us to do. An anthropology of the multimodal stays with the trouble; it is an undertaking both disturbing and disorienting. Framing the importance of disorientation, Ahmed (2007, 165) writes:

It is by showing how we are stuck, by attending to what is habitual and routine in 'the what' of the world, that we can keep open the possibility of habit changes, without using that possibility to displace our attention to the present, and without simply wishing for new tricks.

Bad habitus is a critical approach that provides possibilities for recognizing the taken-for-granted positions of white bodies, privileged bodies, and able bodies. It requires suspicion of new tricks. It is also a feeling of being confronted by taken-for-granted positions. It is the conscience within us that allows us to work toward recognizing the ways in which we are each complicit in the generation of bad habitus. As anthropologists, can we embrace this disorientation as generative? After all, isn't disorientation our preferred space? Disorienting the multimodal in anthropology, therefore, is a call to recognize and change our habits, reconceive the architectures in which we live, and rethink the technologies with which we work.

### **REFERENCES CITED**

- Ahmed, Sara. 2007. "A Phenomenology of Whiteness." *Feminist Theory* 8 (2): 148–68.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2014. "White Men." Feminist Killjoys blog, November 4. <https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/11/04/white-men/>.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2017. *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, Sara. 2018. "Refusal Resignation and Compliant." Feminist Killjoys blog, June 28. <https://feministkilljoys.com/2018/06/28/refusal-resignation-and-complaint/>.

- Bell, Joshua A., Briel Kobak, Joel Kuipers, and Amanda Kemble. 2018. "Unseen Connections: The Materiality of Cell Phones." *Anthropological Quarterly* 91 (2): 465–84.
- Berry, Maya J., Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shanya Cordis, Sarah Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada. 2017. "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field." *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (4): 537–65.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, Carla Goar, and David G. Embrick. 2006. "When Whites Flocks Together: The Social Psychology of White Habitus." *Critical Sociology* 32 (2–3): 229–53.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1988. *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgement of Taste*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Browne, Simone. 2015. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chang, Jeff. 2016. *We Gon' Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation*. New York: Picador.
- Chen, Nancy N., and Trinh T. Minh-Ha. 1994. "Speaking Nearby." In *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V. A. R. 1990–1994*, edited by Lucien Taylor, 433–51. New York: Routledge.
- Chin, Elizabeth. 2016. *My Life with Things: The Consumer Diaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chin, Elizabeth. 2017. "On Multimodal Anthropologies from the Space of Design: Toward Participant Making." *American Anthropologist* 119 (3): 541–43.
- Collins, Samuel Gerald, Matthew Durlington, and Harjant S. Gill. 2017. "Multimodality: An Invitation." *American Anthropologist* 119 (1): 142–46.
- Condliffe, Jamie. 2018. "Foxconn Is under Scrutiny for Worker Conditions. It's Not the First Time." *New York Times* website, June 11. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/11/business/dealbook/foxconn-worker-conditions.html>.
- Crawford, Kate, and Vladan Joler. 2018. "Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo as an Anatomical Map of Human Labor, Data and Planetary Resources." AI Now Institute and Share Lab, September 7. <https://anatomyof.ai>.
- Dattatreyan, Ethiraj Gabriel, and Isaac Marrero-Guillamón. 2019. "Introduction: Multimodal Anthropology and the Politics of Invention." *American Anthropologist* 121 (1): 220–28.
- Gill, Harjant S. 2016. "Film as a Powerful Feminist Medium." In *Feminist Ethnography: Thinking through Methodologies, Challenges and Possibilities*, edited by Dána-Ain Davis and Christa Craven, 138–39. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gill, Harjant S. 2017. "Censorship and Ethnographic Film: Confronting State Bureaucracies, Cultural Regulation, and Institutionalized Homophobia in India." *Visual Anthropology Review* 33 (1): 62–73.
- Gray, Mary. 2016. "Your Job Is about to Get Taskified." *Los Angeles Times* website, January 8. <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0110-digital-turk-work-20160110-story.html>.
- Hamdy, Sherine, and Coleman Nye. 2017. *Lissa: A Story about Medical Promise, Friendship, and Revolution*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Haraway, Donna. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Harvey, David. 2014. *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Howes, David. 2003. *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Jackson, John. 2008. *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Kelley, Robin. 2017. "Introduction." *Boston Review* website, January 12. <http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism>.
- Kelly, Annie. 2016. "Children as Young as Seven Mining Cobalt for Use in Smartphones, Says Amnesty." *The Guardian* website, January 18. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/jan/19/children-as-young-as-seven-mining-cobalt-for-use-in-smartphones-says-amnesty>.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 2004. "Intangible Cultural Heritage as Metacultural Production." *Museum International* 56 (1–2): 52–65.
- Krmpotich, Cara. 2014. *The Force of Family: Repatriation, Kinship and Memory on Haida Gwaii*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Krmpotich, Cara, Laura Peers, Members of the Haida Repatriation Committee, Staff of the Pitt Rivers Museum, and Staff of the British Museum. 2013. *This Is Our Life: Haida Material Heritage and Changing Museum Practice*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Kurin, Richard. 2007. "Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Key Factors in Implementing the 2003 Convention." *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 2:10–20.
- Lewis, Jason Edward, Noelani Arista, Archer Pechawis, and Suzanne Kite. 2018. "Making Kin with the Machines." *Journal of Design and Science (JoDS)*: n.p. <https://jods.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/lewis-arista-pechawis-kite>.
- Latour, Bruno. 1987. *Science in Action*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Lowrie, Ian. 2018. "Algorithms and Automation: An Introduction." *Cultural Anthropology* 33 (3): 349–59. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca33.3.01>.
- Moore, Henrietta L. 1994. "Trinh T. Minh-Ha Observed: Anthropology and Others." In *Visualizing Theory: Selected Essays from V. A. R. 1990–1994*, edited by Lucien Taylor, 115–25. New York: Routledge.
- Nakamura, Karen. 2013a. *A Disability of the Soul: An Ethnography of Schizophrenia and Mental Illness in Contemporary Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Nakamura, Karen. 2013b. "Making Sense of Sensory Ethnography: The Sensual and the Multisensory." *American Anthropologist* 115 (1): 132–44.
- Noble, Safiya. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression*. New York: NYU Press.
- Pink, Sarah. 2009. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Pink, Sarah. 2011. "Multimodality, Multisensuality and Ethnographic Knowing: Social Semiotics and the Phenomenology of Perception." *Qualitative Research* 11 (3): 261–76.
- Ruby, Jay. 1991. "Speaking for, Speaking about, Speaking with, or Speaking alongside: An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma." *Visual Anthropology Review* 7 (2): 50–67.
- Shankar, Arjun. 2018. "What Do We Want Anthropology to Resemble?" *Anthropology News*, September 7. <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2018/09/07/what-do-we-want-anthropology-to-resemble/>.

- Simpson, Audra. 2007. "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship." *Junctures* 9:67–80.
- Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Steryl, Hito. 2009. "In Defense of the Poor Image." *E-Flux*, November 10. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>.
- Strathern, Marilyn, ed. 2000. *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics, and the Academy*. London: Routledge.
- Thomas, Deborah A., Deanne M. Bell, and Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn, curators. 2017. *Bearing Witness: Four Days in West Kingston*. Philadelphia: Penn Museum. <https://penn.museum/exhibitions/galleries-and-exhibitions/bearing-witness>.
- Todd, Zoe. 2018. "Should I Stay or Should I Go." Anthrodendum blog, May 12. <https://anthrodendum.org/2018/05/12/should-i-stay-or-should-i-go/>.
- Todd, Zoe. 2015. "The We and Them of Anthropology." *Savage Minds* blog, May 16. <https://savageminds.org/2015/05/16/the-we-and-them-of-anthropology/>.
- Trinh, Minh-Ha. 1992. *Framer Framed*. New York: Routledge.
- Tsoupikova, Daria, Scott Rettberg, Roderick Coover, Arthur Nishimoto. 2015. "Hearts and Minds: The Residue of War." *Proceedings of the 21st International Symposium on Electronic Arts*. [http://isea2015.org/proceeding/submissions/ISEA2015\\_submission\\_27.pdf](http://isea2015.org/proceeding/submissions/ISEA2015_submission_27.pdf).
- Vidal, John. 2017. "'Tsunami of Data' Could Consume One Fifth of Global Electricity by 2025." *The Climate Change News*, November 11. <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2017/12/11/tsunami-data-consume-one-fifth-global-electricity-2025/>.
- Weiss, Jules. 2018. "Citation Is a Gift: 'Punking' Accounting in #hautalk." *Footnotes* blog, July 7. <https://footnotesblog.com/2018/07/07/guest-post-citation-is-a-gift-punking-accounting-in-hautalk/>.
- West, Paige. 2018. "From Reciprocity to Relationality: Anthropological Possibilities." *Cultural Anthropology* website, September 26. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1525-from-reciprocity-to-relationality-anthropological-possibilities>.
- Wright, Michelle M. 2015. *Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Yates-Doerr, Emily. 2018. "Open Secrets: On Power and Publication (#hautalk)." *Anthrodendum* blog, June 16. <https://anthrodendum.org/2018/06/16/open-secrets-on-power-and-publication-hautalk/>.
- Yesil, Bilge. 2006. "Watching Ourselves: Video Surveillance, Urban Space and Self-Responsibilization." *Cultural Studies* 20 (4–5): 400–416.