From Sevilla to Brussels: a Description of the Decision-Making Process from the Researcher's Bodily Experience While Navigating Risks in the Field

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Abstract

I am a Colombian bellydancer, psychologist, and activist specializing in peacebuilding. This essay constitutes an analysis of my fieldwork journey while pursuing a master's degree in dance anthropology in Europe. During my first fieldwork in Sevilla, Spain, I faced a risky situation that made me leave my first research destination to start a new project in Brussels, Belgium. In this essay, I describe in detail the circumstances in both locations and reflect on how my bodily experience and my cultural and academic background informed the decisions I made during fieldwork, helping me to develop an ethical methodology and setting a research project that guaranteed the three ethical minimums of dignity, autonomy, and freedom (Rodríguez, A. L., 2010) in the field.

Martin (2019, p.5) explains how ethnographic research is a constantly improvised exercise: "Like improvisation in dance, improvisation in an ethnographic encounter often means that there is a structure, task or idea motivating actions, it is not entirely random, but within the frame created there are many possibilities about how events might unfold." Thus, the researcher's bodily experience informs the decision-making process in the field; at the same time, it is determined by a frame that motivates the actions taken.

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In this case, the frame was determined by the ethnographic situation I was immersed in and the education I received regarding how to conduct ethnographic research. According to Hanson and Richard (2017), there are three "fixations" of contemporary ethnography; these are solitude, danger, and intimacy; Since I feel related to the fixations exposed, I begin by drawing attention to my body to claim my humanity and understand how my bodily experience influenced me to take ethical decisions for myself despite the ethnographic framework I was immersed in.

Finally, I propose that improving the ethics within the field of anthropology requires high awareness and acknowledgment of the researcher's humanity and vulnerability. This acknowledgment must be encouraged in the academic debate and included as part of academic writing. Thus, we can continue to construct safer and more ethical ethnographic research projects.

Keywords: Fieldwork, Ethics, Ethnography, Peacebuilding, Dance anthropology

Cargada de sentires voy encaminada a otro territorio donde mi sueño se esconde…	*Carrying all my feelings I go on track towards another territory where my dream is hidden…*
Sigo la fuerza que dicta mi corazón	*I follow the strength dictated by my heart*
Siento, pienso, actuó con precaución	*I feel, I think, I take precautions to act*
Sigo la fuerza que dicta mi corazón	*I follow the strength dictated by my heart*
Mi instinto se va por esta dirección	*My instinct goes in this direction*
Caminando – Motilonas RAP	*Walking – Motilonas RAP*

I am a Colombian bellydancer, psychologist, and activist interested in the contributions of performing arts to peacebuilding. I choose to center my research on the experiences of those who have been historically silenced and excluded, shining a light on how individuals

Video footage by the artists in Tibú, Norte de Santander. They show the landscapes of Catatumbo region in Colombia while honouring their path and artistic career in and out of their region. For the full video, visit the online journal at https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/.

and communities continue to break barriers and find innovative ways to create sustainable peacebuilding processes in their contexts. In Colombia, I worked with victims of the internal armed conflict supporting them to raise their voices and build memory through performing arts. In 2021, I came to Europe to pursue a master's degree in anthropology of dance. As part of the program, I was required to do fieldwork in the location and topic of my preference.

My first fieldwork choice was in Sevilla, Spain. I went there to study the use of Flamenco as an instrument to dignify the culture of *3000 viviendas*, a marginalized neighborhood home to Gitanos[1], immigrants, and Afro communities. The case of flamenco in *3000 viviendas* caught my attention because it resembles some cases in Colombia, where the promotion of certain dance practices is used to destigmatize Indigenous and Afro communities that continue to be marginalized.

1. 'Gitano' is the Spanish term to refer to Roma communities.

However, this experience only lasted for a few weeks since, after facing harassment, I decided to shift my research project and go to a new destination: Brussels. I went to Brussels to work with the Colombian exiled community and rap artists. In this essay, I share in detail the circumstances in both locations and reflect on how my bodily experience and my cultural and academic background informed the decisions I made during fieldwork, helping me to develop an ethical methodology and setting a research project that guaranteed my dignity, autonomy, and freedom in the field.

Context

Como fuego amando el agua sin miedo a que lo apaguen	*Like fire loving the water without fear to be put out*
Ese fue mi riesgo sin alguna precaución	*This was my risk without any prevention*
Y aunque tus gotas intentaron apagarlo todo	*And even though your drops tried to blow it out*
Encendieron la llama que hoy suena en el michropohone	*They lit the flame that today speaks in the microphone*
Disculpa si sueno egoísta en este cuento	*Apologies if I sound selfish in this story*
El final no fue feliz, tampoco es de lamentos	*It was not a happy ending, neither a regret*
Motilonas RAP - Voy a mí	*Motilonas RAP - Coming to myself*

In my master's dissertation, *from Seville to Brussels* constitutes the first chapter in which I explain my positionality and methodology. I spent a great deal of time considering whether or not to include this part of my journey in my final dissertation. Although it is clear now, I initially struggled to connect this experience with my research. Nowadays, I realize that the reason why I wasn't able to make this connection was because the discussion was not there yet; first, my lecturers and supervisor asked me to justify why it was even important.

Official Video of the song Voy a mí by the Motilonas RAP. For the full video, visit the online journal at https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/.

During my master's studies, the two semesters of preparation before fieldwork focused the discussion around safety on negotiating ways to keep yourself safe without affecting the bonds established in the field. It gave me the idea that I needed something from the people I worked with, the data, and to get it I needed to be as least disruptive as possible, even if it meant crossing my boundaries of what felt safe. Later, when I decided to shift my fieldwork location, I received total support from my lecturers; they agreed my safety was first and that I should make the decision that felt better for myself. However, once I came back and started writing, I learned that, in order to fit the academic standards of the master's program, my lecturers and supervisor expected me to isolate my vulnerability from my writing, considering it part of my personal life rather than part of the research. On one occasion, I received the following feedback:

> The difficulties encountered during your first fieldwork have rightly left you with many questions. But perhaps it is too early to return to them in a reflective exercise. Or perhaps it will be a thread running through your work on the second fieldwork in Brussels. From the data collected during this second fieldwork, you now need to extract a problematic. (Lecturer, 2022).

I constantly found that my lecturers could not provide the guidance I needed to explain how my methodology was influenced by this experience and to make it a significant part of my research. Furthermore, risky fieldwork scenarios were normalized, especially by female lecturers, who shared proudly how they navigated harassment and risks without impacting the rapport with their informants. However, when I asked how they connected these experiences to their research, their response was that it was not important, just an inevitable part of life and fieldwork.

During one oral presentation, a professor asked me if I believed fieldwork was meant to be comfortable. I immediately responded that it should at least be safe. However, at that moment I did not know what safety meant, and I was questioning all the time if I was just overreacting to an inevitable and common life circumstance.

The ethnographic method puts pressure on the researcher to be self-sufficient enough to navigate the danger. According to Pollard (2009), there is an intention among researchers to maintain the image of someone who would never face abusive situations during fieldwork or who would not allow them to happen. This intention is promoted through minimizing these situations or normalizing them as part of fieldwork. Furthermore, according to Handson and Richards (2017), researchers are not often encouraged to include these experiences as a relevant part of their academic writing, leaving sexualized interactions, sexual objectification, and harassment out of the ethnographer's "tales of the field."

The normalization and lack of guidance on how to write about risks in the field was especially difficult for me to understand because I am not an anthropologist. I was never involved in the discussion of communities being an object of study, whether the anthropologist is an expert or not, or the dynamics of the emic-etic perspective. I am an activist and artist; my academic background is in community psychology and peacebuilding. I was trained to facilitate Participatory Action Research, a methodology developed in Colombia to engage communities in the co-construction of social projects and public politics. During my studies in these areas, it was very important to

understand the ethical aspects of my professional practice, firstly in my experience as an individual. This is something that has stayed with me.

In peacebuilding studies, there are three ethical minimums that must be respected to prevent harm in any community work; these are dignity, autonomy, and freedom (Rodríguez, A. L., 2010). The principle of dignity establishes that every human being is valuable in their own right, and should not be treated as a means to an end for someone else's agenda. Autonomy talks about people's capacity to decide what they want and to take actions to sort any situation out and achieve their goals. Finally, freedom refers to the possibility to decide the kind of life one envisions for oneself, and it is conditioned on the opportunities and resources available in the context. A person is not really free if they don't have access to the spaces that would lead them to their desired life. These ethical minimums became my lifestyle. Frequently, I make decisions based on these principles, and the first person to whom I apply them is myself. Consequently, throughout this article I aim to criticize anthropology's failure to humanize the researcher and, therefore, to humanize the group of people they collaborate with and to guarantee the ethical minimums in fieldwork. Thus, I begin with drawing attention to my body to claim my humanity and understand how my subjective experience influenced my positionality in each of the fields I visited and the resulting methodological implications.

In Seville

Tengo varias flechas en el arco	*I have several arrows in my bow*
No nací pa' caminar en zancos	*I was not born to walk on heels*
La duda del pecho la arranco	*I tear the doubt from my chest*
Traigo arraigo y lo mejor de mí es lo que comparto	*I am bringing my roots and the best part of me is what I share*
Aquí estoy, ando por el viejo continente	*Here I am walking through the old continent*
A donde voy, dejo en alto a toda mi gente	*Wherever I go, I raise my people high*

Y lo que soy es gracias a la lucha que heredé

Mi sueño es que otros logren más de lo que yo logré

Girando - Motilonas RAP

Who I am is thanks to the fight I inherited

And my dream is for others to achieve as much as I've achieved

Spinning - Motilonas RAP

Official Video of the Song Girando by the Motilonas RAP. For the full video, visit the online journal at https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/.

To understand how different possibilities of events unfolded during my fieldwork in response to my own bodily experience, it is necessary to describe the frame that motivated my actions in the field. Rose Martin (2019, p.5) explains that "Like improvisation in dance, improvisation in an ethnographic encounter often means that there is a structure, task or idea motivating actions, it is not entirely random, but within the frame created there are many possibilities about how events might unfold."

According to Hanson and Richard (2017), there are three "fixations" of contemporary ethnography: solitude, danger, and intimacy. Solitude refers to the opinion that withstanding the difficulties of conducting ethnography alone is what makes one a good qualitative scholar. Danger

is conceived of as the idea of doing anything for the "data," even putting oneself at risk, losing perspective, and engaging in situations that one would not choose in everyday life. In turn, ethnographic intimacy relates to the expectation of developing strong connections during fieldwork, constituting a "double-edged sword" that could open one up to unwanted sexual attention and potential risk (Hanson & Richard, 2017). During my first ethnographic endeavor, all of the above fixations were exposed. Back then, I was not aware of this mindset, but I couldn't ignore the discomfort manifested in my body. Hence, I ponder how my physical reactions informed the decisions made, allowing me to prioritize my safety and respect my ethics, despite the dominant ethnographic framework in which I was immersed.

I arrived in Sevilla, one of the hottest cities in Spain, during a sunny summer afternoon in June of 2022. It was my first ethnographic research experience. Deep down I was feeling guilty about coming to a vulnerable community to "extract" some information for my personal interest without any contribution. I expected to meet people who could open the door of their reality for me, hoping that I could find a way to raise their voices and facilitate their local initiatives.

My first contacts in Sevilla were two female employees of La Factoria Cultural, the cultural institution located in the *3000 viviendas* neighborhood. The main purpose of La Factoria is to oversee the flamenco promotion among the local community. They mentioned that they used Participatory Action Research, so I was very interested and critical about what they were doing. The interactions with my contacts through email were cordial. They seemed interested in my research and provided me with information to organize my project. However, once I reached the place, I did not feel the same support from them. Since they were busy with the logistics of the concerts and shows that were happening every week, they put me in contact with the director of the local flamenco group, who became my gatekeeper[2]

2. The gatekeeper, in anthropological tradition, is a person who controls the access to the setting and who knows most participants. The gatekeeper plays an essential role in introducing the researcher to the field.

and main interlocutor. However, the couple of encounters I had with him made me feel at risk, especially the last one, when I felt my dignity, autonomy, and freedom taken away.

That evening, I joined one of the Flamenco concerts in the neighborhood. After the concert, we all went back to a private room to grab some drinks and celebrate the performance by hanging out together. Those two hours were very uncomfortable for me. While we were walking towards the place, the gatekeeper whispered in my ear that I was beautiful and that he was attracted to me, while cornering me against the wall. I felt scared and disappointed; my body reacted by stepping back and turning my head away; this gesture triggered him. He started shouting, saying that I was misunderstanding his words. Immediately, I became concerned about the rapport built with him and I tried to apologize, but he just continued shouting and saying he would never hurt me because he had sisters and daughters. I remained silent and we continued walking. Once in the room, I spent most of the time paralyzed in a corner while being ignored by all the men around. I was the only woman in the room, except for another lady, who gave me a look that I interpreted as judgmental and immediately turned back.

I thought it was the perfect scenario for my fieldwork. Gathering after each show seemed to be a special tradition for them, and I had access to this space. I thought I should be thankful and stay, even though I had no headspace to actually observe or participate. It was hard to believe that, in just a few minutes, my fieldwork seemed to be falling apart. I didn't want to affect the rapport, but I was also afraid of being too kind, which might lead to more undesired attention in the future. This wasn't the first time this kind of situation had happened to me. I had been told similar things before by other men, and I experienced an increase in these uncomfortable comments after giving them the benefit of the doubt. I promised myself I would be more direct and strict with my boundaries next time, but now the situation had another dimension: I was the fieldworker and he was my gatekeeper. I thought I should just calm him down and never allow us to be alone, so nothing

would happen. I tried to stop my mind for a while and talk to other members of the group, who were mainly teenagers or young adults, but those conversations were short, and once again, I found myself thinking in a corner.

When we were leaving, the gatekeeper came back after ignoring me for a couple of hours and offered to take me back home in his car. I told him it was alright. I even apologized for my earlier reaction and said that I would prefer to go back home on my own. He reacted defensively to my negative answer, saying that the only thing I should be scared of was the dangerous neighborhood we were in and that if I didn't accept his ride, I could end up being kidnapped or raped in the street. He further insisted on the ride by saying that we would not be alone, since he was also taking two other musicians to their places.

I took a look inside his car and saw two children, around 12 and 17 years old, who were members of the group. Seeing the minors gave me confidence, and since I did not want to show fear and I wanted the moment to end—because other members of the group were already staring at us and trying to figure out what was happening—I got into the car. The road was long; the children's stops turned out to be in the suburbs of Seville, and the gatekeeper decided mine would be the last stop. It was late at night, and I did not know the city well. My phone battery had died. My heart was beating fast, and my hands were sweating. He started telling the youths that I had made a big deal because he told me I was beautiful, and asked me if I was still scared while making fun of my face and singing Flamenco proudly. I tried to stay calm, thinking that the more composed I stayed, the less likely he would be to take action against me.

We dropped off the last child at his house, and I immediately moved to the front seat. I looked him directly in the eyes and asked him to take me to a famous nightclub in the city center, where my friends were waiting for me. This was actually true; my flatmates had invited me to a party that night. It was just the two of us in the car, and we continued the ride in silence, except for a few sentences exchanged. He mentioned wanting to take me to an important Flamenco event in

another city the next weekend and that he was trying to get tickets for me. He also offered to drive me there in his car. I only said "sure, if I am available I will go."

When we arrived at the club, I gave him a fake smile and left the car without a backward glance. I came into the club desperately searching for a familiar face inside, and I kept repeating to myself, "Now you are safe, now you are safe."

The next morning, I woke up feeling humiliated and wishing I did not need to see him again, but still convinced that I had to push through this feeling and keep going with the research no matter what. The following days, I started planning strategies to be able to continue, different ways of expressing my discomfort without "affecting" the relationship with my gatekeeper. However, I could not ignore my bodily reactions. I started feeling nauseous each time I heard a flamenco song, and I was having palpitations when hearing men with the same accent speaking in the street. Every time I thought about that evening, I'd start crying out of an overwhelming sense of vulnerability and loneliness.

I did not feel comfortable talking about what happened with the employees of La Factoria. They did not seem to notice that I never came back to them. I felt invisible. I did not go back to the neighborhood the following days and I did not ask the director of the group to meet again. One afternoon, when I still had not decided what to do, I called one of my friends to talk about my feelings. During our conversation I mentioned, "I just wish I didn't have to come back to the field ever again," and she said, "What if you don't?" Just thinking about the possibility made me feel relieved. At that moment I recovered the autonomy, freedom, and dignity I had lost before.

Respecting my body is one of the most precious lessons dance has taught me. Practicing dance raises awareness of one's needs. Martin (2019) points out how her experiences as an ethnographer and dancer/somatic practitioner had determined the way she feels the field, bringing attention to the reactions and reinvention of her body in each new context. Similarly, I carry my dance history with me. As a

dancer, I have spent a significant amount of time thinking about my body, what it is capable of doing, and how it feels in the process. Thus, I pay careful attention to what my bodily experience announces, and my decisions correspond to those signals.

My somatic experience the evening of the concert was a normal bodily reaction to facing dangerous circumstances, and my perception of risk during that ride was significant considering my background. I come from Colombia, a country with a high rate of common crime, where the perception of insecurity determines our lifestyle (Manjarrés & Baca, 2021). This is especially evident for women. I grew up hearing news about women who were kidnapped and murdered during Uber or taxi rides. From a very young age, I was aware that a woman alone with a man in his car was synonymous with danger. Additionally, I have experienced the fear of harassment during rides many times. I often share with my friends our experiences of trips where we received awful comments and spent the whole time praying, or the different strategies we found to protect ourselves. The perception of insecurity is so strong that women have come together to develop safe transport applications by and for women (Aztaiza et al., 2023; Cárdenas, 2023).

Thus, once out of direct danger, the somatic response remained in my body as a warning sign, preventing me from re-entering dangerous spaces and facilitating finding support and protection. Even though the fear reaction is usually assumed to be disruptive, the truth is that it has an adaptive purpose. Grossmann (2023) explains how the expression and perception of fear increases care-based responses at the same time that fosters cooperation with others. This perspective challenges the mainstream mindset of Western societies that usually understand fear as a maladaptive trait.

The way individuals respond to their body's signals depends on various factors such as their background, personality, available resources, and the specific situation at hand. Recognizing and listening to my body has played a significant role in my development both personally and

professionally. "Do not do it if you feel pain, it is your body preventing you from injury," my dance teacher used to repeat in class. Concurrently, my psychology professor said, "Every emotion is there for a reason, they are not something we need to get rid of. Understand the context before pathologizing any emotional response." I have learned to interpret and prioritize the physical sensations in my body without passing judgement, and to make decisions that prioritize my wellbeing in potentially harmful situations for my physical, emotional, or mental health. However, despite the evident danger I faced in the field, the framework I was immersed in including the fixations of solitude, danger, and intimacy (Hanson & Richard, 2017), made me consider continuing in a space where I was in danger.

Rios (2012) raises awareness of how the appreciation of dangerous ethnographies not only puts the researcher at risk but also contributes to the exoticization of marginal lives. Exoticization is the act of valuing individuals based on certain cultural traits that align with preconceived notions of worth, rather than recognizing their inherent humanity. It takes dignity, autonomy, and freedom away from people, reduces them to their practices or physical characteristics, and constitutes another and more subtle way of discrimination. Since I was coming to a vulnerable community, I questioned my motivations and raised awareness of this concept to prevent exoticizing the participants of my research. However, I didn't take the same considerations for my own identity. I was a young female Latin American researcher doing fieldwork in Spain in an environment mainly dominated by men, and I came with a heightened awareness of ethics in the field, including respect for the community and their interests, but with less awareness of my own autonomy, agency, and dignity.

Once I opened the possibility of shifting my research and location, I started looking for options. During my search, my priority was to find fairer conditions for myself. I wanted to work with women of color in an environment where I could feel supported and safe. I sought activists who could feel empathy for the situation I was going through, and this

is when I found a post on Facebook announcing that the Motilonas RAP were going on a tour of Europe.

I had known about the Motilonas RAP for years. Back when I was in Colombia, I learned about them during an afternoon conversation with one of my colleagues from the university. She knew about my interests in performing arts and peacebuilding. We were talking about revolutionary artists in Colombia, and she showed me one of the rappers' songs on YouTube. Their music captivated me from the beginning, their lyrics moved the fibers of childhood memories in my body. Their words painted the same landscapes I grew up looking at.

Years after my first encounter with Motilonas RAP, while in Sevilla, I found myself listening to the words I needed to hear in one of their songs.

Llevo en mis entrañas la fuerza que me acompaña de mis antepasadas hermanas,	*I carry in my entrails the strength from my sister ancestors.*
Somos la del sexto sentido, Místicas como las plantas que sanan,	*We are those of sixth sense, as mystic as the plants that cure*
no somos dos mujeres rapeando, somos miles de ellas denunciando	*We are not two women rapping, we are miles of them denouncing*
llevando el mensaje, conociendo historia	*Bringing the message, knowing stories*
La memoria no olvidando y construyendo,	*Not forgetting the memories and building new ones*
Toma mi mano, no hay miedo a cambiar esta realidad que vivimos,	*Take my hand, there is no fear to change the reality we live in*
llegó la era de unirnos, mujeres demostrar pa que nacimos.	*The era of uniting has arrived, women let's demonstrate what we were born for.*
Catatumberas - Motilonas RAP	*Catatumberas - Motilonas RAP*

Official video of the song Catatumberas by the Motilonas RAP. For the full video, visit the online journal at https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/.

The rappers announced their European tour at the same time as they released their new song, *Catatumberas,* a song dedicated to the women from their region. Tears streamed from my eyes while listening to it. The song filled me with hope in a moment when I was feeling ill from the continuous churning of my stomach, as if still trying to swallow my recent experience. I got goosebumps thinking about the possibility of meeting them in person. Once again, I actively chose to trust my body to guide my fieldwork decisions.

Shaking, I scrolled quickly along the rappers' social media looking for their contact details and sent them an email explaining my interest in working together on my research. I hoped it was not too late and tried to give as much detail as possible for them to trust me. Their response was immediate, short, and concise: "Good afternoon. Thank you in advance for your interest. It would be a pleasure to work with you. Please give us your contact number, we are going to get in touch with you." They accepted working with me on July 2nd, and I travelled to Brussels on July 16th.

The days in between were for quick preparation, getting flight tickets, finding accommodation, and saying goodbye to the extremely hot city that hosted me for a couple of weeks. I found practical and emotional support from many people around me in the process. Their words helped

me reduce my feelings and focus on the logistics needed to guarantee my wellbeing in the next destination. One afternoon, one of my colleagues who helped me find affordable accommodation for a week in Brussels sent me a message saying, "Right now everything feels overwhelming but once you reach there, you are going to find in that feminist environment the space you need to feel safe and appreciated." This message shifted my focus, for a few minutes, from anxiety to relief. I took the reduction of my nausea as a sign that I was making the right decision, and this message shaped my expectations for my new fieldwork.

In Brussels

Debajo de la luna	*Under the moon*
Cantando y caminando	*Singing and walking*
Mientras duermen las mariposas	*While the butterflies are sleeping*
Mis sueños están volando	*My dreams are flying*
Mi cuerpo se envolvió en el fuego y está danzando	*My body has been covered in fire and is dancing*
Debajo de la luna, los miedos se van escondiendo	*Under the moon, fears are fading*
Motilonas RAP - Que todo el mundo se mueva	*Motilonas RAP - Let everybody move*

Official video of Que todo el mundo se mueva song by the Motilonas RAP. For the full video, visit the online journal at https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/.

The process of moving to Brussels slowly started to feel more exciting than scary. I continued to be in contact with the artists until the day we met for the first time. They shared with me the information of the event they were attending in Brussels, the Colombia SOS exhibition. The event was one week long, and from what they said, the intention behind it was to trigger discussion around the sociopolitical context in Colombia. However, it was not clear what kind of activities would be included and who was in charge of the organization.

I went to Brussels with a backpack full of uncertainty. I only had accommodation for one week, and I did not have either the money or the energy to look for a place to stay longer. I did not know if one week was going to be enough for my research, but by this point, my priorities were oriented towards my wellbeing, and I was willing to do research only as long the resources available would allow me to. The speed with which the circumstances changed and the fear, somatized in my body, made me feel disoriented. I wrote some insights in my field notes during this moment of transition:

> I find myself reflecting on how did everything happen? Things happen to change faster than I can process. It feels confusing and overwhelming. The eagerness to take myself from one place to another does not allow time for the feelings. Meeting people, leaving people, facing the ephemeral of life. (Fieldnotes, July 13th, 2022)

Thus, I reached Brussels, the city considered as the capital of Europe, during a sunny summer afternoon in July of 2022. There, I expected to find a support network that would allow me to continue to reduce my anxiety and somatic reaction of fear. The context was new to me, but the rappers felt familiar, and I felt welcomed every second I spent doing fieldwork. It was also their first time in Brussels and Europe; they had arrived only a few days before I did, and they were meeting most of the people who were part of the event for the first time as well.

Our first meeting was in a huge natural park; it reminded me of one of the places I used to visit in Bogotá. In the middle of the park there was a Colombian party, full of stalls of traditional Colombian food. The loud music resounded in my ears, as well as the voice of the guy in the microphone inviting everyone to join the different activities available for children and adults. He spoke with a well-known Colombian accent. The familiarity of the place helped relieve the feeling of disorientation that had accompanied me for the last weeks.

After some minutes of walking alone around the place, trying to reduce the anxiety of facing a new field for the second time in less than a month, the Motilonas RAP arrived. Two young women with very dark long hair said hello in a very friendly way. Their accent immediately transported me to my hometown since we come from the same region in Colombia. Our first encounter felt horizontal, there was no hierarchical gap between us, and a sort of nostalgia accompanied our conversation.

During the afternoon we talked about their lives, their job, and what rap means to them. I learned they are cousins, and they grew up together. They were at the Colombian party after a last-minute invitation to perform. Soon, it was time. They went in front of one of the stalls and took the microphones that were waiting next to a big speaker. They started talking into the mics, introducing themselves and calling to people to join. There was soon a group of people surrounding them in a circle, and the show started. They sang a set of 10 songs, some of them that I knew, others were new to me. It was my first time watching them perform, and during the hour it lasted, I felt honored to have the opportunity to be there. Later that evening I wrote,

> They [the rappers] are very kind. From the beginning, they were concerned to let me know they are interested in my research, and they want to make me feel comfortable. Lately, I've been through emotionally difficult situations, I feel exhausted, and I

> just hope I will find a support network in this new place. They are my age and I think it is going to be easy for us to become friends. Also, their first performance was very inspiring. I knew I made the right decision when I heard them for the first time, when I saw their performance and immediately, I got goosebumps. (Fieldnotes, July 17th, 2022)

Throughout my fieldwork in Brussels, I encountered various instances of triggers that required me to continuously reflect on how it impacted my observations, perspectives, and interactions. Due to my prior experience, my primary focus was on ensuring my safety and being mindful of those around me. During my initial meeting with the rappers, we took the time to discuss my emotions, establishing an intimate space that allowed us to connect on a deeper level. This connection proved crucial to facilitating our interactions. I empathize with their stories on stage just as they did with mine in our conversations. Despite being a researcher, I approached my fieldwork as someone who needed to build a supporting network, and I maintained this mindset throughout my time in Brussels.

Dentro las cuerdas de mi garganta	*Within the cords inside my throat*
Afino el instrumento de quien se levanta	*I tune the instruments of those who stand up*
Ubico mi lengua como una flecha	*I place my tongue as an arrow*
En el arco de una cuerda vocal insatisfecha	*In the bow of an unsatisfied vocal cord*
Enveneno, la punta de la flecha es mi terreno	*I envenom, the tip of the arrow is my territory*
La lleno de sus flores, de sus sueños	*I fill it with their flowers, their dreams*
Y la aviento, como cura al sufrimiento grito a todo enmudecimiento	*And I shoot it, as a cure for the sorrow I yell at any muteness*
Motilonas RAP - El canto de la flecha	*Motilonas RAP - The song of the arrow*

Official video of the song El canto de la flecha by the Motilonas RAP, made in corregimiento Juan Frio, Villa del Rosario, Colombia. For the full video, visit the online journal at https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/.

Conclusions

Hanson and Richards write, "All bodies are instruments of research, and all research projects are shaped by the gender, sexuality, and embodiment of the ethnographer" (2017, p. 607). My body was the same in both destinations of fieldwork, but it impacted my research differently in each context. In Sevilla, being observed as a young Latin American woman put me in a vulnerable position, and even though I did not come there interested in gender dynamics, my experience brought my attention to this issue. My embodied experience determined my positionality and settled the second research I engaged in. In Brussels, being observed as a young Latin American woman positioned me as an ally, an equal, which made me feel safe and allowed me to build strong relationships based on mutual support.

To claim my humanity means to understand how I am positioned in the world, to understand my privileges and disadvantages in each geographical location, as well as the impact they have on my bodily experience. During my master's program, the discussion about positionality in the field came in the third semester, after finishing the fieldwork. Before that, the concerns were focused on the researcher's

perspective and vision of the community. I never questioned the way in which I was going to be perceived by the people I was working with before going to the field, at least not from a safety perspective. These considerations are especially important for women and immigrant researchers coming to Europe to do fieldwork.

In order to prevent harm to the community or oneself in the field, it is crucial to have a strong awareness of ethics. Drawing from peacebuilding studies (Rodríguez, A. L., 2010), I suggest that ethics in the field should be based on the three ethical minimums of dignity, autonomy, and freedom.

Within the field of dance anthropology, the body holds significant importance. It was my background as a dancer and movement practitioner that initially sparked my interest in performing arts studies. Engaging in dance practice heightened my body awareness and influenced my actions during fieldwork. Self-awareness plays a critical role in ensuring adherence to the three ethical minimums for oneself.

The emphasis on solitude, danger, and intimacy in the field led me to understand the importance of being fully present and open to fieldwork participants, often at the expense of my own dignity, autonomy, and freedom. There was an expectation for me to seize every opportunity to gather materials, sometimes putting my own needs on the back burner. However, by listening to my body's signals, I was able to make choices that protected my integrity despite the pressures imposed by the ethnographic framework I was immersed in.

Upon my return, I expressed my intention to incorporate this experience into my academic writing. However, I did not receive the appropriate guidance on how to proceed, and I decided to focus on my bodily experience to understand how it influenced my methodology and positionality. During the process, each time I revisited the events and my bodily experiences, I discovered new reasons why this particular encounter had such a profound impact on me, ultimately leading me to change locations and research projects. Some of these reasons are detailed in this article, while others I have chosen to keep private for

my own self-awareness journey. As I wrote, I felt pressure to justify why this experience was significant to my academic writing, and ultimately identified three reasons.

First, it is challenging for women to speak out about harassment, for various reasons. Often, our experiences are dismissed, and we are perceived as overreacting. Harassment inevitably leads to victim-shaming to some degree. Secondly, I didn't want my experience to be seen as a reason why women are unable to succeed as researchers, just like men do. This often requires overcoming obstacles to enter spaces that may pose safety risks. Lastly, I feared perpetuating stereotypes and further stigmatizing a community that is already marginalized and discriminated against.

Taking this into consideration, I concluded that my aim in this article was not specifically to talk about harassment in the field, but to claim the researcher's humanity through their vulnerability. This particular event happened, and affected my dignity, autonomy, and freedom due to who I am, my identity, and the context I was immersed in. However, the risks would be completely different for another researcher with other characteristics and in another geographical location.

In saying this, I do not intend to downplay the systematic oppression faced by female immigrants of color in most geographical locations. However, I do believe that, in order to make a significant impact in the field of anthropology, it is essential to raise awareness in each future researcher about their vulnerabilities and boundaries, regardless of their privileges or disadvantages. Additionally, it is crucial to adhere to the three minimum ethics that ensure the ability to take actions beyond the research agenda.

In conclusion, improving the humanity and ethics within the field of ethnography does not come from avoiding or exoticizing risky fieldworks, but rather from acknowledging and embracing the humanity and vulnerability of everyone involved. It is important that this acknowledgement is encouraged in the academic debate and included as part of the writing exercise. Thus, we can continue to construct safer and more ethical research projects in the future.

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