



Lauren Leve

INTERLOCUTORS: LANGUAGE, POWER AND RELATIONALITY IN DECOLONIAL ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICE

Lauren Leve is an associate professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research focuses on the relations between political and economic liberalization, ethical personhood and religious change. She is the author of *The Buddhist Art of Living in Nepal: Ethical Practice and Religious Reform* (Routledge, 2016) and articles about gender, democracy, development and religion in Nepal. Other ongoing work includes a community-engaged digital project on Buddhist heritage sites.

Department of Religious Studies
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
125 Carolina Hall, CB #3225
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3225
USA
leve@email.unc.edu

ABSTRACT

A significant challenge for ethnographers since the 1980s has been how to name their relationships to the people with whom and about whom they produce knowledge. Following critiques of how the term “informant” encodes and reproduces colonial power dynamics, ethnographers have sought alternative language to describe fieldwork-based relations. This article examines one of the most commonly used terms—“interlocutor”—and considers the implications of adopting a word that emphasizes voice and speech over embodied participation. “Interlocutor” is appealing to contemporary scholars because it signals respect for the people we work with using a vocabulary that reflects modern secular ideologies. Yet, research that advances decolonial goals may depend less on transforming styles of ethnographic representation than on opening the ethnographer and ethnographic inquiry to other ways of knowing and being, via embodied experience and relational practices. When ethnographers of religion engage the people we work with primarily as voices we set ourselves up for misunderstanding and miss opportunities to trouble imperial structures of knowledge.

Keywords: fieldwork; ethics; positionality; materiality; decolonial methods; interlocutor.

Concepts have teeth, and teeth that bite through time.

Simpson (2007: 66)

Of all the fieldwork-related conversations I've had with students, colleagues and myself over the years, one of the most persistently vexing focuses on the question of how to label a category. Once simply referred to as "informants", since the 1980s, at least, ethnographers have struggled to name their relationships to the people with whom—and about whom—they produce knowledge. This uncertainty reflects critical reassessments of the relations between researchers and researched that began among feminist scholars and anticolonial theorists writing from the Global South and entered the mainstream as part of a broad disciplinary reckoning inspired by recognition of anthropology's role in the colonial project, plus a post-structuralism inspired literary turn which highlighted the ways that normative styles of ethnographic representation reinscribed imperial hierarchies through textual practices.¹ As an undergraduate anthropology major and then graduate student in the late 1980s and 90s, I remember heated debates over objectivity, universality and styles of ethnographic description. We asked ourselves if we could study culture without participating in reproducing imperial power—and, if so, how. In the years since, my peers and I have continued to struggle with these questions. And we have been joined by new colleagues who carry on these critiques under the rubric of decolonizing scholarship.

The search for alternatives to the word "informant" emerged in this intellectual context. Once taken for granted as a utilitarian description of those members of a social group being researched who share experientially attained information with the scholar-investigator, the term is now considered to distort the ways that researchers and researched work together, downplaying the contribution of "the natives" while valorizing the anthropologist and their role. From this perspective, identifying someone as an "informant" reduces them to a source of information (data) and denies their participation as a co-creator of knowledge. Agency and creativity are reserved for the ethnographer, who is imagined as the only one with the insight to identify what is worthy of being known and the skill to enact the kinds of analytical interpretation that academic research demands.

For researchers raised in a post-*Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) world, this now-debunked vision of ethnographic practice hides the positioned nature of knowledge and substitutes a heroic fantasy of scholarly selfhood for the actual realities of dependency and dialog. Ethnographic fieldwork is a relational practice,

1. Seminal publications in this history include Anzaldúa and Moraga (1983); Asad (1963); Behar and Gordon (1995); Clifford (1988); Clifford and Marcus (1986); Fanon (1967); Gordon (1988); Harrison (1991); Hymes (1969).

and ethnographic data is a tangible product—indeed, the embodiment—of a field-worker’s engagements with agentive others. Realizing this, ethnographers across a variety of fields have sought alternatives to the term “informant”. This article will consider several of these terms and their adequacy to the task they are being asked to take on. I will argue that each has strengths and limitations, and none is so free of baggage that it can be used without pause. The term “interlocutor” deserves special reflection because of the way it reflects liberal democratic language ideologies that emphasize voice and speech at the expense of embodiment and participatory practice.

Concepts, Terms and Relationships

Among the terms that have emerged as contenders to replace the word “informant” are “partner”, “consultant”, “collaborator” and “friend”, as well as the most commonly used, “interlocutors”. Each of these words points to a particular practice of relationality involving the ethnographer and the people they work with. And each reflects political and epistemological commitments regarding knowledge, power, subjectivity and positionality that can make the choice of terms a statement of values. For example, to refer to someone as partner or collaborator in knowledge production suggests interpersonal equity between allied coworkers and implies respect for the contribution(s) of the person(s) from the community being studied. Yet, this and other terms can also be misleading if used categorically (as “informant” was). Is it deceptive to call a person I had only a few conversations with, a “partner”? What about someone I observed doing something from afar if that person had no conscious intention of contributing to my project but was just going on with the business of their life? Is there a standard for how much someone must contribute to a project to be labeled a partner? And should I be concerned by the historical echoes of fascist cooperation that “collaborator” evokes?

Other alternatives bring different problems. “Consultant” has the advantage of not requiring ongoing cooperation and it signals respect through inclusion in a professional class constituted by specialized expertise. Yet, one might challenge the extension of a market-based imaginary to what are often informal—and unpaid—relationships. Or question who benefits when knowledge that arrives entangled in gifts of labor and care is compared to the product of fungible transactions for the purpose of signaling personal esteem. And the word “friend”—which seems laudable for acknowledging the affective dimensions of fieldwork—is potentially even more fraught. As feminist ethnographers have pointed out, when people enter social relationships with different backgrounds and expectations, betrayal, or the feeling that one has been betrayed, is always a painful possibility. And this is particularly so when one party to the friendship has reason to expect professional gain (Stacey 1988).

Of course, there are ethnographers who do forge collaborative projects with research partners and/or who compensate community members for their time and knowledge. Intimacies forged in the field regularly end up transcending instrumental aspirations. And all relationships grow and change over time. Over the course of almost thirty years working in Nepal, I have accrued social and intellectual debts to individuals who likely have no memory of me today; I also have friendships that have lasted decades. These relations have certainly shaped my understanding of Nepali religion and culture. But they've also influenced who I've become as a person and how I perceive pretty much everything about the world. Professional relations have inspired projects and led to friendships and partnerships. A woman I first met when the development agency I was working for hired her to help me navigate the dynamics of a remote rural locality is now the main subject of a book I am writing about the conversion of Hindu women to Christianity. When earthquakes shook the country (including the apartment where I was living) in 2015, her home was the first place I felt safe—and she told me that my presence had the same calming effect on her. We later partnered to help a Dalit community in her district where all of the houses had been destroyed.

The inevitable transformation of ethnographers, the people they work with, and their associations over time, and the diverse range of practices entailed in field-based research, means that no single term can encompass the variety of relations between ethnographers and the people they depend on. Yet, the intersection of ethical, epistemological and pragmatic concerns in the relationships that produce ethnographic knowledge is what makes the effort to accurately represent what we do, and who we do it with, important. It is also the reason that lexical choices demand careful reflection, including for those of us who study religion.

Speech, Method and Materiality

By explicitly acknowledging the dialogical character of ethnographic work, “interlocutor” appears to avoid many of the problems discussed above. It foregrounds the dialogical, negotiated, co-constructed character of ethnographic data and affirms the contributions of those who willingly share their wisdom. And it does all this without seeming to advance any particular claim about the affect, conditions or temporality of any knowledge-producing interaction. Moreover, inasmuch as voice is associated with agency and power in liberal cultural worlds, referring to ethnographic subjects in ways that highlight their voices disavows any presumption to *speak for* research subjects/subordinated others. Now we speak *with* them and credit their influence.²

2. As Clifford wrote in the Introduction to *Writing Culture*, “Anthropology no longer speaks with automatic authority for others unable to speak for themselves” (1986: 10).

These are important rhetorical moves. Yet, there are still questions to be asked. What is at stake when referential speech is made to appear the defining source of ethnographic data? For scholars committed to leveling hierarchies—or even just determined to “do no harm”—“interlocutor” evokes an appealingly democratic relationship where equally-empowered social actors co-produce knowledge through self-conscious exchange. As in Habermas’s (1991) description of the liberal public sphere, locution is envisioned as voluntary, transparent and grounded in common discursive practices and logics. But are locutionary acts exchanged between speaking subjects indeed the best way of pursuing and representing how ethnographers learn what we know? How might an unexamined emphasis on voice and speech unintentionally undermine decolonial goals?

Ethnography has played a key role in debunking assumptions that the go-to sources in Religious Studies are sacred texts and formal doctrine—a shift that relies on challenges to the presumed primacy of authoritative religious speech. Early anthropological studies of subaltern people and practices showed the diversity that exists within religious traditions and the value of taking non-elite religiosities seriously.³ More recently, ethnographers in a range of academic departments have focused attention on objects and practices, on the ways that translocal forces like global capitalism may impact personal religious identity, and on how embodied religious subjects actually live out their beliefs, which may differ considerably from the behaviors sanctioned by institutional hierarchies.⁴

This work has contributed to a broader disciplinary interest in religious materiality that has challenged what Gregory Schopen (1997) identifies as Protestant-inspired ideological assumptions about the primacy of spirit and the authorized word that he suggests are deeply rooted in Religious Studies and associated fields. In Buddhist Studies, he proposes that these unconscious biases led colonial-era scholars of Indian Buddhism to privilege normative textual claims over material evidence from archeological sites, and to malign the embodied Buddhist practices they observed taking place around them as degraded distortions of what they imagined had been an original, non-ritualized truth. These prejudices continue to appear in subtle ways today, elevating philosophical teachings and rationalized interpretations associated with canonical literature and educated elites

3. In South Asia, this can be seen in debates over the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition (Obeyesekere 1963; Marriott 1955; Redfield 1956; Nath 2001). In Buddhist Studies, anthropologists including Spiro (1970), Tambiah (1975; 1976; 1984) and Obeyesekere (1981, 1984) were instrumental in describing the full religious and cultural life of Buddhist societies.

4. All of these moves can be seen in the work of Birgit Meyer (2002; 2010) but see also Srinivas (2010), Orsi (1996), Leve (2016), McGuire (2011), Childs (2004).

(including Western-trained Buddhist Studies scholars) while granting less authority to low caste or marginalized religious communities.

While it might not seem obvious that escaping colonial prejudices in the academic study of religion demands affirming material approaches to religion vis-à-vis texts and interpretation, Schopen makes a compelling case. But how does this bear on the term “interlocutor”?⁵

For the many years since Malinowski declared to his readers that the proper conditions for ethnographic work “consist mainly in cutting [oneself] off from other white men and remaining in as close contact with the natives as possible”, fieldwork has been conceptualized as participant-observation (1922: 6). Indeed, the presumption of face-to-face contact between the scholar and persons from the culture or religion being studied as they pursued their ordinary daily lives in their accustomed environments was part of the professionalization of anthropology as a discipline (Kuklick 1997). Even considering how the trope of “the field” has been challenged and reworked over the years—and the growing use of digital technologies both for online research and as substitutes for face-to-face interactions—high quality ethnography is still widely believed to require sustained immersion in a community. As so many of the keywords selected for this special issue touch on in one way or another, the embodied and located nature of fieldwork encounters means that ethnographic knowledge is epistemologically complex. However, the density of observation that “being there” makes possible, and the promise of learning to see the world as it appears to others’ eyes, is a unique source of the power of ethnographic research.

Speech must, of course, play a role in participant-observation as a method. Informal conversations—both one-on-one and in groups—are the bread and butter (or lentils and rice, in my own fieldsite) of field-based research. And interviews are key parts of the ethnographic toolkit. Ethnographers without sufficient language skills can easily misinterpret what they observe. This will also limit the range of opportunities that are open to them, including learning from conversations that are only overheard. In fact, insight gleaned from engaging in or analyzing speech acts may account for most of what most ethnographers do come to know. Which is why “interlocutor” is an apt and desirable descriptor much of the time. But when we classify the embodied beings whose lives we engage in a variety

5. Schopen’s argument implies that scholars of Buddhism should always have been talking to Buddhists and that what they learned from them should have shaped Buddhist Studies at its origins. However, my concern is not with the practice of dialogical interchange as a source of knowledge *per se*. Rather, it is with the way that identifying the ethnographic method with speech by imagining the people we work with and learn from primarily as interlocutors risks *re*-dematerializing ethnographic work.

of ways using a term that elevates oral communication over other relational practices, we may lose sight of the materiality of communicative events. Recognizing the dialogic aspect of field-based interactions acknowledges the creative participation of our interlocutors and the ways that ethnographic knowledge is rooted in social exchange. But speech is a noun as well as a verb. Establishing it at the center of ethnographic relations risks disembedding the content of utterances from the fleshy bodies that are their source, smuggling back in the primacy of the word.⁶

The Importance of Embodied Participation in Ethnographic Practice (or, Interviews May Not Be the Best Way to Decolonize Knowledge)

When ethnographers conceive of the people we work with in this way, we may miss opportunities to trouble imperial structures of knowledge. This is not without irony given that the preference for “interlocutor” over “informant” was motivated by the rejection of anthropology’s role in reproducing colonial power. Yet, if decolonial research aims to transform “the deep underlying structures and taken-for-granted ways of organizing, conducting and disseminating research and knowledge”, then ethnographers who are committed to this goal should think carefully about any suggestion that speech is our main method—or even a transparent research tool (Smith 2013: 88).

This is particularly important in Religious Studies, where interviewing is often treated as synonymous with ethnography. In a discipline that does not have a robust tradition of extended, immersive fieldwork—and where time and money for such research is scarce but interest in living practitioners is high—it can seem desirable to pursue interview-based research while avoiding more demanding ethnographic techniques. And if the main way that ethnographers engage with their subjects is through speech, then why not?

The answer, as Charles Briggs (1986) has observed, is that interviews are culturally specific speech events that assume particular subjective and communicative norms. According to Briggs, “all speech communities possess repertoires of metacommunicative events” which help native speakers generate shared understandings by locating verbal exchange in a particular social situation (Briggs 1986: 2). The interview is one such form. Interviews structure “the encounter with respect to the roles of interviewer and interviewee” in ways that move

6. Anthropologists who focus on theorizing voice do attend to its material dimensions (Weidman 2014). But this is a relatively limited group and not necessarily indicative of non-specialist understandings.

participants' ordinary positionalities into the background and establish implicit communicative rules that govern what can be said and how (1986: 2). Because interview norms reflect theories of personhood, communication and reality that are native to the contemporary academic world, their influence on communication is typically invisible to researchers. Yet, straightforward as they may feel to professional scholars, they are neither natural nor universal as a communicative form.

For Briggs, all of this raises multiple concerns. If interviewers “fail to see how native communicative patterns have shaped [the] responses” of interlocutors who aren't familiar with, or reject, the interview as communicative form, they may inadvertently misunderstand what they hear said (1986: 2). This is especially true when talking to someone who is operating within a metacommunicative repertoire with which the researcher is unfamiliar.⁷ Furthermore, while interviews are “extremely useful” because “they are designed to efficiently produce discourse whose content, poetic (narrative) features, and technological infrastructures (pens and notebooks, tape recorders, video cameras and now Zoom recordings) are geared to fit the contours of dissertations, articles [and books]”:

They create highly unequal power relations in which one party uses questions to shape the content of discourse and to signal if the interviewees' words fit the discursive container provided and when it is adequately filled. These power differentials enact and obscure scalar relations when interviewers and interviewees reproduce broader racial and national inequities. [One might also add biases related to reason and religious logic.] Once informed consent is “obtained”, researchers ordinarily gain exclusive rights over how the discourse circulates and is interpreted, who receives it, and who benefits. Interviews thus impose standardized social scientific knowledge-production and -circulation practices that further subordinate and obscure the knowledge-making practices that interviewees use in making social worlds and challenging forms of symbolic and other violence. (Briggs 2021: 955)

7. An averted example of this appears in Audra Simpson's description of her interview with a Kahnawake Mohawk man who repeatedly denied knowing the answer to a sensitive question concerning his identity despite the fact that she knew he did. In this case, Simpson recognizes the semantic content of his words as false but she is nonetheless able to recognize what he is saying, which she interprets to be about establishing the limits of speech concerning identity in the face of Mohawk historical struggles for recognition and sovereignty. “It was very interesting to me that he would tell me that ‘he did not know’ and ‘no one seems to know’—to me these utterances meant, ‘I know you know and you know that I know I know...so let's just not get into this’. Or, ‘let's just not say’” (2007: 77). If Simpson had not herself “known”, or recognized, that his answer was a refusal to conform to the communicative norms of the interview rather than an informational reporting, she might have taken his words at face value or otherwise misinterpreted what he said.

To ensure the validity of ethnographic claims, Briggs recommends undertaking interviews only after the ethnographer has become versed in the social and speech norms of the interviewee's community. However, he proposes that these should always be subordinate to embodied learning practices, which he proposes are necessary to acquire metacommunicative competence in any case. Recounting his own early efforts to interview Spanish-speaking woodcarvers and the ways that these failed, he reflects that it was only when he sat side by side with them and imitated their carving practices himself that he began to ask questions that made sense to people who did not perceive themselves as "interlocutors", but as elders, teachers, craftsmen, etc. In other words, effective communication required participatory experience. It took relating to the woodcarvers as a co-active body within their own worlding frame for him to recognize what Slater (1992) calls the "masked universalisms" entailed in framing relations in terms of disembodied voices, as figured in surveys and many other kinds of interviews (1992: 307 in Jazeel 2014: 88).

Briggs approaches this as a cultural problem. But it also applies to religious difference. The frequently remarked-on disjuncture between "insider" and "outside" perspectives in the field and the value accorded to secular reason over "religious" forms of rationality suggest that Brigg's thoughts also add value there. His insights align with ethnographers of religion like Susan Harding (2000), Jeanne Favret-Saada (1981, 2015) and Tanya Luhmann (2012, 2020), who argue that belief cannot be understood from a disembodied, experience-distant perspective, but requires cultivating the interpretive habits of the community by the ethnographer. Moreover, if "the idea that there is such a thing as religion, with a common-sense meaning that can be applied ... across the world, is the result of European colonial rule" and "to study 'religion' is not to study a 'thing' in itself" but rather "how particular ideas (and discourses) of religion are practiced and operationalized", then trying to understand religious subjects through interviews would seem to be especially fraught (Nye 2019: 16, 15; Nongbri 2013).

The political-ethical aspirations that animated ethnographers of the 1980s live on today in calls to decolonize knowledge. But if coloniality is reproduced through concepts that divide and order (like nature/culture, modernity/backwardness, reason/belief and religion/secularity), then ethnographers wishing to undermine the continuing power of Empire will need to do more than show respect for the people they work with using analytics and vocabularies forged in the European enlightenment.⁸ While the insights that led anthropologists to reject the term "informant" remain commendable, producing ethnographies that resist imperial

8. That is, languages that have been claimed to silence, discipline or distort the rationalities that they themselves "other". As Audre Lord famously opined, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house".

power may prove to be less about nomenclature and representation than about new ways of enacting relationality that decenter imperial epistememes and bring into focus new structures of knowledge.

Conclusion

“Interlocutor” is an appealing tag for contemporary ethnographers because it conveys respect for the Other in familiar terms. By framing ethnographic exchange as the practice of dialogue, the term signals that scholars conceive of their partners as having equivalent social value. In the language ideology of Western modernity, the figure of the voice is indexically linked to agency, authority, individuality, dignity and influence. It is a “key representational trope for social position and power” (Feld and Fox 1994: 26 in Weidman 2014: 38). Indeed, “to speak and to hear the voice is to be human” (Taylor 2009: 8 in Kunreuther 2014: 15). As a term that unambiguously affirms that the people we work with have voices and that recognizing them is inseparable from our own scholarly identity (in the sense that the conceptual existence of a researcher depends on the conceptual presence of a research subject), “interlocutor” makes it clear that the people that ethnographers work with are equals in our eyes.

The question is who can hear this message. Or, perhaps, who cares? The web of associations that tie voice to agency to power are as intuitive to secular modern subjects as the idea that agency and empowerment are desirable qualities of selfhood (Asad 2003). But, like the interview, this is not a universal goal. Would the Egyptian women who challenged Saba Mahmood’s liberal feminist orientation by embracing illiberal forms of piety that valorize modesty and submission to the will of God feel more valued or respected because of being referred to as “interlocutors” (Mahmood 2005)? Or might they prefer to be represented or judged according to the ethical values that they recognize and espouse?

For scholars who aspire to resist colonial power, continuing to relate to the people we work with using lenses that reflect our own dematerializing cultural assumptions may not be sufficient to achieve this goal—however meritorious the new specs may be. Ethnographers who have learned to engage in different terms have demonstrated fieldwork’s power to provincialize would-be universal concepts (that are actually of specific, European origin)—including discourses of voice themselves (Kunreuther 2014: 31). One way to make this happen that I’ve already mentioned is through embodied participant-observation that reorients perspective. Another is to shift the kinds of knowledge we produce by changing the conditions of its production: asking questions that interest or assist the people we work with, investigating them alongside (instead of “on”) consenting human beings,

and sharing results in forms that are accessible to, useful for and controlled by the non-academic communities that the work is about.⁹ Such work—which may be called “participatory”, “activist” or “community-engaged”—subverts the authority of the researcher in material ways that unquestionably justify the language of partnership. It may not be appropriate for all projects at all times. However, if we are serious about transforming power/knowledge relations, we will need to go beyond representing our relationships differently and change how we actually work with the people with whom we also speak.

I will conclude by confessing that, despite my doubts, I can’t offer a superior alternative to “interlocutor”. I suspect that there may not be one. Given the myriad, dynamic positions that ethnographers occupy in the field (and the ways that these intersect with pre-existing identities), it seems unlikely that any single term can contain all of these relations without violently misrepresenting at least some people it purports to describe. Hence, I will continue to use the different labels I discussed, including “interlocutor”. But I’ll do so with awareness that locution is not transparent, nor can it be taken for granted. Voices are shaped, silenced, disqualified or amplified through historically-laden vocabularies and communicative norms that may represent themselves as transparent and apolitical but most certainly are not. It is unquestionably better to describe people who have allowed you into their lives using language that conveys respect to your primary audience than language that doesn’t. However, ethnographic knowledge with a chance of making a difference in the world starts with bodily practice and openness to having our own knowledge transformed—including inherited academic expectations about who we are writing for and what we hope our work will achieve. If the label “interlocutor” feels satisfactory to me, it’s because the egalitarian communicative exchange it implies reflects an ethic that is as common and comfortable in my own cultural milieu as “informant”—with its pretensions and presumptions of social hierarchy—must have appeared to ethnographers of earlier generations.

References

- Anzaldúa, Gloria, and Cherríe Moraga (eds)
 1983 *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press.
- Asad, Talal (ed.)
 1963 *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. New York: Humanities Press.
 2003 *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

9. See Hale (2001), Leve and Erikson (2022), Nagar (2002), Parker (2020), Smith (2013).

- Behar, Ruth, and Deborah Gordon (eds)
1995 *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Briggs, Charles
1986 *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139165990>
2021 Against Methodological Essentialism, Fragmentation and Instrumentalism in Times of COVID-19. *American Anthropologist* 123(4): 954–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13653>
- Childs, Geoff
2004 *Tibetan Diary: From Birth to Death and Beyond in a Himalayan Valley of Nepal*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520937840>
- Clifford, James
1986 Introduction: Partial Truths. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by J. Clifford and G. Marcus, 1–26. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520946286-003>
1988 *The Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, James, and George Marcus (eds)
1986 *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fanon, Franz
1967 *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by C.L. Markman. New York: Grove Press.
- Favret-Saada, Jeanne
1981 *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Brocage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2015 *The Anti-Witch*. Chicago: HAU/University of Chicago Press.
- Feld, Steven, and Aaron Fox
1994 Music and Language. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23: 25–53. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.23.100194.000325>
- Gordon, Deborah
1988 Writing Culture, Writing Feminism: The Poetics and Politics of Experimental Ethnography (special issue on “Feminism and Critique of Colonial Discourse”). *Inscriptions* 3(4): 6–24.
- Habermas, Jürgen
1991 *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hale, Charles
2001 What is Activist Research? *Items* (SSRC) 2(1-2): 13–15.
- Harding, Susan Friend
2000 *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691190464>
- Harrison, Faye (ed.)
1991 *Decolonizing Anthropology*. Washington DC: Association of Black Anthropologists and American Anthropological Association.
- Hymes, Dell
1969 *Reinventing Anthropology*. New York: Pantheon Press.
- Jazeel, Tariq
2014 Subaltern Geographies: Geographical Knowledge and Postcolonial Strategy. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 35(1): 88–103. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjtg.12053>

Kuklick, Henrika

- 1997 *After Ishamel: The Fieldwork Tradition and Its Future*. In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, edited by A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, 47–65. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520342392-003>

Kunreuther, Laura

- 2014 *Voicing Subjects: Public Intimacy and Mediation in Kathmandu*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Leve, Lauren

- 2016 *The Buddhist Art of Living in Nepal: Ethical Practice and Religious Reform*. London and New York: Routledge.

Leve, Lauren, and Bradley Erikson

- 2022 Visualizing Himalayan Buddhist Sacred Sites in 3D/VR: Pedagogy and Partnership. In *Oxford Handbook of Religious Space and Place*, edited by J. Kilde, 176–91. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Luhrmann, Tanya Marie

- 2012 *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Vintage Books. <https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v1i1.16>
- 2020 *How God Becomes Real: Kindling the Presence of Invisible Others*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691211985>

Mahmood, Saba

- 2005 *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Malinowski, Bronislaw

- 1922 *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Marriott, McKim (ed.)

- 1955 *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McGuire, Meredith

- 2011 *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Meyer, Birgit

- 2002 Commodities and the Power of Prayer: Pentecostalist Attitudes towards Consumption in Contemporary Ghana. *Development and Change* 29(4): 751–76. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-7660.00098>

Meyer, Birgit, David Morgan, Crispin Paine and S. Brent Plate

- 2010 The Origin and Mission of Material Religion. *Religion* 40(3): 207–211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.religion.2010.01.010>

Nagar, Richa

- 2002 Footloose Researchers, ‘Traveling’ Theories, and the Politics of Transnational Feminist Praxis. *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 9(2): 179–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09663960220139699>

Nath, Vijay

- 2001 From ‘Brahmanism’ to ‘Hinduism’: Negotiating the Myth of the Great Tradition. *Social Scientist* 29(3–4): 19–50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3518337>

Nongbri, Brent

- 2013 *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. <https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300154160.001.0001>

Nye, Malory

- 2019 Decolonizing the Study of Religion. *Open Library of Humanities* 5(1): 1–45. <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.421>

Obeyesekere, Gananath

- 1963 The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism. *Journal of Asian Studies* 22(2): 139–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2050008>
- 1981 *Medusa's Hair*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 1984 *The Cult of the Goddess Pattini*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Orsi, Robert A.

- 1996 *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Parker, Patricia Sue

- 2020 *Ella Baker's Catalytic Leadership: A Primer on Community Engagement and Communication for Social Justice*. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520972094>

Redfield, Robert

- 1956 *Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schopen, Gregory

- 1997 Archeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of India Buddhism. In Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archeology, Epigraphy and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, 1–22. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Simpson, Audra

- 2007 On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship. *Junctures* 9: 67–80.

Slater, D.

- 1992 On the Borders of Social Theory: Learning from Other Regions. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10(3): 307–327. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d100307>

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai

- 2013 *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Spiro, Melford

- 1970 *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Srinavas, Tulasi

- 2010 *Winged Faith: Rethinking Globalization and Religious Pluralism*. New York: Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/srin14932>

Stacey, Judith

- 1988 Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography. *Women's Studies International Forum* 11(1): 21–27. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(88\)90004-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(88)90004-0)

Tambiah, Stanley J.

- 1975 *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1976 *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558184>
- 1984 *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558177>

Taylor, Jessica

- 2009 Speaking Shadows: A History of the Voice in the Transition from Silent to Sound Film in the United States. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 19(1): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2009.01016.x>

Weidman, Amanda

- 2014 Anthropology and Voice. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43: 37–51. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030050>