

**Unruly Embodiment as Feminist Research Methodology:  
Reflections on Uncomfortable Spaces and Care Ethics in a  
Heat Stress Collaborative Project**

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# Unruly Embodiment as Feminist Research Methodology: Reflections on Uncomfortable Spaces and Care Ethics in a Heat Stress Collaborative Project

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## Abstract

Embodiment methodologies foreground the role of the researcher's body within qualitative inquiry. By reflecting on a heat stress project, we build on sensorial feminism and feminist care ethics to argue for a praxis of *unruly embodiment*. This includes: (1) recognition of moments when the body or environment viscerally demands attention and overrides the researchers' cognitive sense of mastery and agency; (2) attentiveness to mis-attunements, discomforts, avoidances, spatiotemporal ruptures, and feelings of alienation in place; and (3) that these two modes of attention can only be achieved by carefully foregrounding the researchers' social positionalities and their shifting, situational impacts within research.

## Keywords

embodiment, reflexivity, care ethics, feminist methodologies, extreme heat, climate justice

## Introduction

The last three decades have witnessed an “embodied turn” in the social sciences. A wide range of disciplines have developed embodied methodologies, including sociology, human geography, anthropology, arts and performance-based fields, health studies, disability studies, and history (Casey, 1996; Fleetwood-Smith et al., 2021; Herzfeld, 2001; Paterson, 2009; Powell, 2010; Stoller, 2004; Thanem & Knights, 2019). Embodiment methodologies have sharpened awareness of the role of the researcher's body within qualitative inquiry, focused attention toward the opportunities for knowledge through the researcher's bodily engagements with social phenomena and field sites, and revealed the value of the sensorial realm in challenging mind/body dualisms.

In contributing to these methodological innovations, we argue for a feminist praxis of *unruly embodiment*, an approach that builds on Sara Ahmed's (2017) work on the sensoriality of feminist consciousness. We do so to challenge dominant gendered assumptions about the roles and experiences of researchers' bodies in space and place. Unruly embodiment consists of three methodological techniques. These are: (1) recognition of moments when the body or environment viscerally demands attention and overrides the researcher's cognitive sense of mastery and agency, as well as (2) attentiveness to mis-attunements, discomforts, avoidances, spatiotemporal ruptures, and feelings

of alienation in place. And (3), that these two modes of attention can only be achieved by carefully and openly foregrounding the researchers' social positionalities and the shifting, situational impacts of such positionalities within moments of research.

Taking inspiration from crip studies and critical walking studies (e.g., Chandler et al., 2019; Springgay & Truman, 2021), we argue against a view of the researcher body that assumes a seamless and coherent bodily experience of space and place, and instead seek to draw insights from moments of felt friction and a critical awareness of the embodiment of power and injustice. As argued by Mol and Law (2004, p. 15), “the assumption that we *have* a coherent body or *are* a whole hides a lot of work. This is work someone has to do.” In this vein, we attempt to strip away the work of masking and creating the “absent body” (Leder, 1990) in accounts of social science research, among research team members, and even for the researcher herself.

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## Who Are We?

In seeking to develop a methodology of embodiment, we were drawn together by common interests and experiences: we are all female, recent migrants to Australia, qualitative and feminist researchers with a constructionist orientation, and all engaged in research that foregrounds gender and social justice approaches. We also bring diverse backgrounds to this collaboration.

**Catherine Trundle:** I am a medical anthropologist and ethnographer from New Zealand, recently migrated to Melbourne, Australia. I have a continuing position in a public health department at a large publicly funded university. I hail from English, Irish, and Italian roots, a rural background, and an upwardly mobile family of modest means. I am in my mid-forties, and am the mother of a neurodiverse child with disabilities. My research explores the socio-cultural dimensions of heat stress and climate justice and is grounded in collaborative ethnographic methodologies.

**Sumaira Khan:** I'm a public health researcher from India, and I have recently migrated to Australia on a scholarship to pursue a PhD in Medical Anthropology. I am working with South Asian migrant women living with type 2 diabetes mellitus in Melbourne, exploring the socio-cultural dimensions of gender, care, and chronic illness among this group from a feminist ethnographic lens. Catherine is my supervisor. My research is grounded in the feminist ethics of care, embodiment, and emotional reflexivity.

**Molly Turrell:** I am a sociology doctoral researcher from England, and I lived temporarily in Australia on a dual scholarship while carrying out part of my fieldwork. I am in my late twenties. I am deeply interested in issues of social justice. My research qualitatively explores the sexual and reproductive health decision-making of women experiencing homelessness (Reeve and Turrell 2025, Turrell 2025). Feminist values inform the way that I do research, and particularly relationality and an ethics of care are central organizing principles. I believe in centering the voices and experiences of women in research and recognize these as valuable forms of knowledge. I worked as a research assistant with Catherine before joining the research team.

We offer these more as introductions to ourselves and the first-person voice of our article, rather than as authoritative statements that seek to legitimate our work through narratives of the self. As decolonial scholars have noted (Gani & Khan, 2024), positionality statements can signal respect and modesty, but they can also work to entrench privilege, mask power, and leave hierarchies unchanged, even while they profess to account for and resolve the impacts of a scholar's privilege

(see also Trundle et al. 2025). Rather than categorically state our positions, we aimed to embed ongoing reflexivities about positionality throughout our processes as a mode of "purposeful experimentation" with embodied methodology (Brown & Sawyer, 2016; see also Done & Knowler, 2011).

## Embodied Methodologies

Methodologies of embodiment have burgeoned since the 1990s, seeking to challenge mind/body dualisms within research that privilege rational and cognitive modes of engagement over material, experiential, affective, and sensorial methods (Vacchelli, 2018). As feminist scholars point out (e.g., Haraway, 1988), while researchers engage with the socialized and gendered body as 'object' of research, the Cartesian assumptions of much research renders its corporeal dimensions invisible, too often hiding its emotional labors and sensorial reactions and interactions, and erasing the bodily experiences and entangled social positionalities of both researcher and researched (Chadwick, 2017; Massey, 1994; Pink, 2012).

In response, scholars have proposed a range of sensory and embodied methodologies that span across the qualitative research process, from data collection to analysis and writing. Sensorial and embodied data-collection processes can involve attention to participants' sensorial experiences (such as eating), the collection of sensorial data, or the use of sensorial research tools, such as sensory interviewing (Chadwick, 2017), body-anchoring interviewing (Stelter, 2010), sensorial prompt methods such as photovoice (Sutton-Brown, 2014), body mapping (Jager et al., 2016), and apprenticeship and "joining in" fieldwork (Desjarlais, 2003; Pink, 2012). They have commonly involved various modes of walking with participants through places, including soundwalks (Butler, 2006), smellwalks (Low, 2009), and multi-sensory walks (Imai, 2010; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Low, 2015; Pink, 2008).

As Ellingson (2017) points out, data analysis is also a physical activity "grounded deeply in the material world" (p. 150), and sensorial attunement is necessary to reflexively contend with how researchers respond to data, are drawn and enlivened by different parts of it, and become avoidant of others. Equally, member checking and community engagement, as well as writing up and communicating projects, can contain commitments to sensorial expression and embodied attention. These might involve poetic writing (Chadwick, 2017), ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2011), dance (Martin, 2019), and visual outputs (Pink, 2020). This literature has proven fertile ground for expanding understandings of epistemology and meaning-making by revealing the deeply embodied nature of intellectual work at every stage.

Our praxis responds to three critiques that we offer of this literature. First, much of the literature treats embodiment centrally as a matter of conscious and purposive *attention* and *attunement*, a process that turns the mind toward the

body and treats the body as a sensorial medium or tool through which to know and understand the world (Csordas, 1999, 2002). Equally, this standpoint often treats the sensorial body of our participants as windows toward something deeper and more systematic and significant, such as cultural, social, and political patterns, practices, and structures (Thanem & Knights, 2019).

But as Paul Stoller notes in his ethnographic study of sorcery in West Africa, to take the body seriously and give it its due in research means to cease acting from a Cartesian standpoint that instrumentalizes it in service of a “higher” cognitive purpose, and which sees the mind as the seat of personhood, agency, and control:

Sensuous ethnography, of course, creates a set of instabilities for the ethnographer. To accept sensuousness in scholarship is to eject the conceit of control in which mind and body, self and other are considered separate. It is indeed a humbling experience to recognize . . . that we do not consume sorcery, history or knowledge; rather it is history, sorcery and knowledge that consume us. To accept sensuousness is . . . to lend one’s body to the world and accept its complexities, tastes, structures, and smells (Stoller, 1997, p. xvii).

Rather than advocating mastery of the body through using and attending to our senses in order to know the world, we advocate for acknowledging and learning from research moments when the world grabs at our bodies and impinges upon us, or when the body resists cognitive directives. In other words, what might we learn if we pay attention to when our bodies *demand* we pay attention, when they prove unruly and uncooperative to our cognitive mastery, and when we find our bodies turned into objects of other people and things’ agency, through the physical and intersubjective worlds in which we dwell as researchers? (Gell, 1998; Latour, 2005).

Second, the embodiment methodology literature tends to focus on modes of sensoriality that are contemplative rather than visceral, and sensorially pleasant versus sensorially unpleasant, oppressive, assaulting, and threatening. Moreover, it tends toward examining sensorial phenomena that support sociality and wellbeing rather than threaten it, and is more associated with leisure than work, survival, or struggle. As such, it often valorizes and even romanticizes the senses and sensory engagement as a way of knowing, being, and doing. Sensorial research may even be framed as therapeutic. For example,

We contend that it may be possible for sensory ethnography to have direct positive health and community outcomes for participating residents. For example, teaching children to “turn up the senses” may help them to practice the similar process of “mindfulness” . . . More broadly, applied sensory ethnography may function as an “intervention” that encourages children and other residents to practice a more active and critical citizenship for the benefit of their own lives and communities (Sunderland et al., 2012, p. 1066).

In this vein, scholars have focused on walking as a virtuous and often humanistic mode of sensorial engagement (e.g., Ingold & Vergunst, 2008; Irwin, 2006). Drawing upon ideals of the wandering, observant flâneur, scholars present walking as particularly useful for attending to the senses, largely because “the act of walking re-paces and slows down our experience of time and space (as compared with other quicker forms of mobile practices). This . . . attunes our bodies to the host of affects and mundane vignettes of the city” (Yi’En, 2014, p. 221). Or, as Jung (2014) argues,

mindful walking is an interactive way of knowing, allowing the entire body, and all of its senses to experience the surroundings, to trace, and connect different areas, to intuitively sense when and how to avoid potential dangers, and to live in the entangled social pathways . . . Mindful walking can also serve as an awakening and meditative process that increases awareness (pp. 625–626).

Walking, as shown below, is not only a mode of contemplative engagement, but rather can reveal spatial barriers, avoidances, and the unique experiences of different bodies and bodily differences. As crip scholars and feminist scholars have noted, the archetype of the flâneur excludes those for whom space remains in varying ways hostile, inaccessible, or unsafe (Chandler et al., 2019; Dreyer & McDowall, 2012; Jackson, 2021). This highlights our third intervention, for while embodiment scholars note the necessity of exploring the researchers’ social positionality (e.g., Pink, 2008, 2012), few articles we reviewed in our literature survey unpacked the researchers’ positionality nor embedded such insights in descriptions of embodied methodological practices or the results generated through such research.

## Feminist Approaches to Methods of Unruly Embodiment

As recent feminist scholars have noted, feminist theory developed its analytic strength by relying upon an uneasy and at times contradictory relationship to the material body (Grosz, 1994; Wilson, 2015). Feminism’s most enduring impact has been to challenge the oppressive effects of biological essentialism and its resulting determinisms regarding sex and gender. As Feminist scholar Elizabeth Wilson (2015) notes, in doing so, feminism has largely built its theories of the political, and indeed built its political influence, on the maxim that “the body is a social construct.” A corollary of building anti-oppressive, anti-deterministic theory has been a body cast as the raw and largely inert materials “that culture animates” (Wilson, 2015, p. 310). As a result, the body became, for many feminist thinkers across the 20th century, a largely untrustworthy source of data compared to the social, political, cultural, and historical sources of data used to contextualize the body. In contrast, recent feminist scholarship has sought to elevate and take seriously the body as

a material, sensorial, biological, and embodied reality (Threadcraft, 2016). Such approaches seek to do so in ways that avoid reinscribing essentialism and maintain lively contact with socio-cultural domains.

For Sara Ahmed (2017), feminism is foundationally sensorial. One comes to feminism first through the senses, and feminist consciousness comes about as a response to sensory overload and feelings of being encroached. The sensorial realm combines both bodily sensations and sense-making processes. In an unjust world, the “histories that bring us to feminism” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 22) are accumulated histories we hold in our bodies. Ahmed describes the everyday banality of sexual assaults and gendered violence that women learn to bear and that constitute their bodies as exposed and vulnerable to others. Such experiences are a “relentless assault on the senses; a body in touch with the world can become a body that fears the touch of the world. The world is experienced as sensory intrusion. It is too much” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 23). Everyday sexism is a type of sensorial pressure, one that is often “too overwhelming to process at the time” but which also over time constitutes a type of anticipation. We learn to expect everyday forms of violence and, in the process, shrug them off, to be less affected, a type of resignation via sensorial numbing.

To take Ahmed’s (2017) lead, feminist methods are less a detached intellectual response based on knowing the world than a “gut level of awareness” and a form of sensorial “self-assembly” (p. 27). “We resist what we encounter because it is too much to take in” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 29). Feminism becomes a way to “reinhabit. . .your own body” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 30). The sensoriality of feminism, or the sensations that feminism causes, is a form of mis-attunement with the world through our senses. If, as Ahmed describes, “attunement matches an affect with an object,” then feminist mis-attunement is a form of rebellious alienation through which we are able to wonder. “We wonder about things; we marvel at their assembly” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 41). A feminist sense of sensorial alienation is thus consciousness raising, a new way of “get[ting] in touch with things” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 42) in the world around us through our bodies, a method that seeks to call into question and reject the accommodation of normalized violence that presses upon our bodies.

## **An Embodied Experiment With Feminist Care Ethics, Sensorial Feminism, and Collaborative Autoethnography**

### **Our Project**

Over 3 months in early summer 2024/2025 in Melbourne, Australia, we conducted an autoethnographic research design experiment seeking to collaboratively iterate

embodied methods suitable for studying heat stress and the urban spaces of everyday extreme heat. This project, and the departmental funding for two early-career scholars to engage, were initially tied to Catherine’s own ethnographic research on heat stress in Australia. This project seeks to understand how heat becomes an object of expertise and governmental intervention, and whose expertise and what type of expertise come to count and have social and political value. Specifically, it seeks to understand how heat becomes a concern worthy of public health policies and actions, and whose bodies and needs are foregrounded or invisibilized in this process.

In the project outlined here, however, we worked together to conceive of both the objectives and methods of our collaboration. Through ongoing discussions and conversations over 6 months, we first identified our methodological, ethical, and theoretical common ground. From this, we sought to build a project that could be collaboratively iterated in an experimental way at each stage. An embodied and sensorial methodology grounded in a feminist care ethic was, we decided, crucial to studying heat stress. This is in part because of heat’s ambient quality in research; it can be both dangerous, invasive, and inescapable. What would it mean to do emplaced, heat stress fieldwork in a careful, safe, and even nourishing way? How might attention to the body and bodily safety of the researcher engender insights about the bodies and bodily safety of participants, and generate ways to co-design collaborative, participatory research that does not ignore the bodily needs of all involved? This project was a first step in answering these questions.

### **Our Methodology**

To develop a sensorial and embodied methodology, we drew upon two methodologies: a methodology grounded in feminist care ethics and collaborative autoethnography.

**Feminist Care Ethics.** Researchers working through a feminist care ethics lens are committed to reflexivity and transparency that create “unsettling, honest accounts of research practice, opening up the seccrecies and silences to wider dissemination and debate” (Philip & Bell, 2017, p. 72; see also Toombs et al., 2017). A feminist care ethics treats collaborative, care-based, and rapport-focused approaches not as straightforward research virtues but as complex and messy processes of mutual care that require a critical and reflexive focus on power relations and the dynamics of knowledge production (Tronto, 1993). This approach treats ethics as “ongoing, knotty, and interdependent . . . relational, networked, and thick” (Henriques et al., 2025, p. 3). Care is simultaneously ethical, emotional, and practical, and according to Tronto (1993, 2013), it contains five moral dimensions: attentiveness,

responsibility, competence, responsiveness, and solidarity. Feminist care ethic research seeks to be critically attuned to power and its impacts in research, attempting to be “purposive and care-full. . .[to] ensure experiences of oppressions, marginalisation and injustice are placed at the centre, and that just outcomes are sought from its findings” (Brannelly & Barnes, 2022, p. 19). At the same time, as scholars point out, care is rarely straightforward or singular in its impacts (Trundle 2012) and can even be a conduit for inequitable, harmful, and exploitative impacts (Brannelly & Barnes, 2022, p. 3), both in society and in collaborative research. Enacting a feminist care ethics means remaining careful with and critical of care itself.

**Collaborative Autoethnography.** Autoethnography aims to tell a story about the researcher’s self as embedded in their context. The “mutual embeddedness of the personal and the social” (Chang, 2021, p. 55) is thus a core tenet in autoethnographic texts. Personal experience and reflections upon them thus constitute a primary source of data that is iteratively explored, and can include embodied, historical, and creative data (Amoroso, 2021, 2023; Silverman & Rowe, 2020). Autoethnographic writing styles are diverse and often experimental. Collaborative autoethnography, a close cousin of autoethnography, is imbued with a relational ethic and draws diverse personal reflections into collaborative acts of discussion, thinking, interpreting, and writing (Chang, 2021). These collaborations can occur within research teams and between researchers and their interlocutors (Brown & Sawyer, 2016; Ellis, 2007). While many collaborative autoethnographies pool individual and personal data for collaborative reflection, we worked to share experience and generate data together, then continue the collaboration into analysis and writing.

## Our Method

In preparation for the experiment, Catherine and Molly conducted an interdisciplinary literature review on embodied and sensory methods within the social sciences to gain a comprehensive overview of methodological trends and approaches to writing within embodied and sensorial research. This review revealed that, while discussions of the gendered dimensions of embodiment and embodied methodologies are common, there remains a need for more overtly articulated feminist approaches, rationales, theorizations, and practical applications within embodiment research.

The first two days’ planning and designing together involved a series of solo reflexive writing exercises. The questions we each answered included the following: What have been my embodied experiences of extreme heat? How do my positionalities and background shape my embodied experiences of heat? How does my disciplinary background shape my experiences of heat? What constitutes good

collaborative research for me? What positive and negative experiences have I had with collaborative research? And who benefits from this research and how? The objective of this stage, in line with a feminist care ethics, was to heighten critical self-reflection of our “starting point” assumptions, past experiences, and how our divergent and intersecting positionalities would likely shape the embodied experiences of our fieldwork.

On the third day, we shared these writings, and through a recorded discussion, we elaborated on our experiences, asking: “So what?” In other words, how might these factors impact and shape our research methodology and our collaboration, and how might we utilize these insights to design our methods? (Trundle and Phillips 2024). Gendered experiences of heat became, at this stage, a focus of discussion, and we recognized that our feminist orientations were crucial in our understandings of embodied experiences. This discussion usefully highlighted our different personal histories with heat, with fieldwork, and with research collaborations. The fourth day involved designing our methods practically, in which we devised a field workbook of embodied and sensory activities, drawing upon embodied methodology literature and therapeutic techniques.

The fifth and sixth days were spent in the field. These both began by meeting in a park, sitting beneath the shade of a cool tree, and reflecting on what we expected, anticipated, and hoped for in that day. Here we aimed to create a reflective “liminal” stage that signaled to our bodies and selves a gentle transition away from university spaces and modes of being and doing. Before fieldwork, we wanted to give ourselves time to slow down, purposefully be still and reflect, make present our core intentions, notice anticipatory emotions, and recognize bodily states of health, well-being, discomfort, lethargy or energy, illness, or tension that we were each bringing into the field.

We spent the fifth day in a heat island suburb of western Melbourne, moving through various spaces of heat and heat refuge, such as the town center, the community center, the market, the leisure center with pool, a car park, a shopping mall, and a new townhouse property development. In walking together and attending carefully to how each other encountered the space as accessible, inaccessible, hostile, or hospitable, we were inspired by critical walking studies and cripistemologies’ attention to “interdependent walking” (Chandler et al., 2019, p. 86), a method that is grounded in a critique “of the valorization of independent mobility” central to the archetypal flâneur (Chandler et al., 2019). To interdependent walking, we would add *interdependent resting*, an equally vital concept in fieldwork, in which through rest the body is able to be cared for, conversations can occur, sensorial inputs can be lessened, and reflection can be centered.

During this day, we used our journals to reflect on what our five senses were experiencing, as aligned with Pink’s (2012) five senses descriptions. We used an emotions

wheel to chart our emotional experiences, and we used a body diagram to help conduct a mental body scan and tune in to how parts of our bodies were experiencing the space. In line with Brannelly and Barnes' (2022, p. 37) approach to care ethics, these three exercises aimed to dismantle "epistemological boundaries." Brannelly and Barnes focus this work on challenging the boundary between "those who are considered authoritative knowers and who are recognised as capable of creating new knowledge, and those who are suspect both as informants and participants in knowledge generation." In contrast, we focused our efforts toward dismantling epistemological boundaries *within* the researcher self, toward the division between bodily processes commonly treated as knower (e.g., certain types of cognition) and those treated as suspect to the knowledge process, such as emotions, physical sensations, and senses. Such divisions, many scholars note, are built upon simplistic dichotomies. For example,

Emotions provide important information about what matters to people, and what particular experiences mean to them . . . it is mistaken to regard emotions as "non rational" as they have complex cognitive structures that express the relationship between the person and the object about which they are expressing emotion (Brannelly & Barnes, 2022, p. 25).

Our use of the emotional wheel and body scan was also developed through drawing upon our experiences of body awareness techniques within somatic therapy and mindfulness practice. These were then iterated *in situ* in a collaborative, conversational, and spontaneous way during fieldwork. These exercises also reflected influences from crip studies, specifically the idea that emotions are "relational forces" (Chandler et al., 2019, p. 87) that link selves and subjectivities with place and reveal their interdependencies.

On the sixth day, we conducted embodied research in a high-income suburb in eastern Melbourne that contains higher-than-average tree shade coverage. We spent time in a cafe, the main shopping street, a church, walking along residential streets between the main shopping area and a local school, and resting in a small park. We sought to experiment with generating "embodied voices" (Chadwick, 2017, p. 60) through embodied modes of language and writing. We took inspiration from Chadwick's (2017, p. 60) proposal to "preserve bodily energies" in text, and Gilligan et al.'s (2003) *listening guides*. From Chadwick, we sought to render visible more of the "lively qualities" of our embodied experiences and hew closer to the experiential dimensions of them from a subjective perspective. Rather than describe our senses and emotions like they were things to observe, as we had on the first day, we sought to foreground the first-person pronoun, "I," as Gilligan et al. (2003) recommend. In our journals, we used free-writing techniques useful for backgrounding the often-dominant

analytical academic voice, writing without editing or pausing to reflect, and in a "stream of consciousness" mode. We wrote "I am" statements about present experiences, "I like or don't like" statements, statements about key conditions/actions we each were discovering we needed to feel comfortable at a bodily level in research, and a subjective description of "five emotions" we were experiencing in response to our environment. These activities were influenced by our reading of critical walking studies and their innovations in "counter-mapping" (Springgay & Truman, 2021, p. 172) and counter-storying. Such techniques draw to light narratives and imaginings of place that cut against the grain of dominant representations of both space and place-based fieldwork.

Both days of fieldwork were warm and sunny but not extremely so, ranging between 22°C and 26°C, although certain spaces we entered created microclimates of much hotter and cooler temperatures. This allowed us to experience heat and to anticipate how certain spaces would be on extreme heat days, while remaining safe.

**Embodied Analysis and "Felt Themes" Generation.** On the seventh day, we reflected upon our experiences in the field and explored an embodied form of thinking, analyzing, writing, and generating "felt themes" from our data. As a research design and planning exercise, we found this process deeply generative in better understanding ourselves as positioned researchers, and in developing a nuanced, care-filled embodied research method.

To select and generate the reflective vignettes, we sat together in person, shared food and tea, prioritized enjoying shared company, and allowed ourselves to ease into reflection through first allowing unrelated, non-research-directed discussion. We worked forward from "little insights," reducing the intellectual pressure to "be analyzing" or abstracting data into a theme at any one moment, and there was an implicit shared feeling of holding space for laughter, connection, and care as we navigated complex experiences. This conversational mode supported breaking away from hierarchical ways of thinking and analyzing the "felt themes" that followed later. It is important to note, however, that hierarchies—engrained into our structural roles and institutional enculturation—did not simply disappear from our interaction. Instead we consciously worked with and against them and had the language to speak about them and respond to them when we noticed their persistent presence.

To generate "felt themes," we went over the material and notes from the field, seeking to generate "an embodied process of intimate familiarity" (Ellingson, 2017, p. 149). In this process, we went over the written notes and recorded conversations that we had engaged with as short debriefs between intervals of sitting and walking through different spaces. While doing so, instead of gaining familiarity with data in a cognitive sense or attempting to abstract it into

meaning, we attempted to remain embodied. We scribbled, yawned, hummed, highlighted sentences in our notes that gripped us, flipped and played around with the notes in our hands, laughed when reading out loud something uncanny or an amusing Freudian slips of spelling, sharing moments of felt insight with each other, and engaged in further reflective first-person writing, both individually and collaboratively. We asked what worked or did not work, why, and what impact it had on our bodies, on us as researchers, and as people.

As we became familiar with emerging themes, we reflexively discussed moments of striking contrast or familiar parallels between our experiences at different places in the field. These experiences included moments that bugged us, gripped us, held us, lingered on our senses, or made us feel varying comforting or unsettling emotions. This exercise made us verbalize and become aware of the unique situatedness of each of our experiences and how, considering our positionalities in practice, we were uniquely impacted in our interactions within the environments. Through talking, we were able to verbalize and then write about the moments which gripped each of us the most viscerally and were telling of our unique situatedness and histories. The “felt themes” developed from these writings into first-person vignettes.

### *An Unruly Methodology of Embodiment*

Below, we reflect upon our embodied experiences of conducting this research, as well as the insights gained. We utilize first-person vignettes as a more visceral, immediate mode of writing to express our embodied experiences, to allow the reader access to the felt dimensions, and to show the unique situatedness of our different embodied experiences. Collectively, the vignettes and our reflections demonstrate the ways in which these environments made demands on us, how our bodies made demands, and our attempts to listen with care to our own bodies and to each other’s. They also chart how we experienced disengagement, mis-attunement, and alienation from the spaces, and spotlight our attempts to consider our own positionalities as impactful on our embodied engagements with the space and capacity to generate data.

### *Is This Over Yet? When Research Feels Like “Low-Key Self-Harm”*

**Sumaira:** The smell of fresh mango and watermelon juice, fish, and vegetables all mixed together in the air. Men lazing around outside small shops playing card games. People selling meat on the streets. Women sitting under the shade of trees. People talking in an unfamiliar language in a way that seems to allow them to be themselves: animated with expression, relaxed, lacking the learned formality that migrants express when wielding English. Small retail shops with rusted black shutters. The suburb is not in a rush, and neither are its people. I like this pace, it reminds me of markets back home.

The sun is harsh, it is midday, and the “non-rush” makes one want to delay “business hours” and just be a little lazy. The colors of the graffiti on the walls, the store signs, and the flyers stuck to random places don’t go well together—they seem tacky compared to the chic Western urban aesthetic I spent my childhood absorbing through Bollywood adventures in New York, and which Melbourne confirms. Yet, the clashing cacophony of this suburb makes me feel perfectly at home, like the markets of Delhi. There are a lot of migrants here and they don’t seem out of place—and among them, I don’t feel out of place. Throughout the day, I experience moments of heavy nostalgia, laziness, a slowly creeping loneliness within myself, and the longing to go back home.

When we eat our Bánh mì sandwiches, I’m not even noticing the heat of the chilli. Molly and Catherine are reaching for their drink bottles and comment on the tingling heat on their tongues, the way it intensifies the heat emanating out of the concrete surroundings. I find this amusing and cute. I wonder if my two white collaborators are perceiving me now as the North Indian migrant with a chilli-accustomed palette and a capacity for ambient heat.

Embodied research can involve simultaneously attending to sensory experience and feeling a sense of alienation in place. Paying attention to the senses can evoke both memories and nostalgia about another place and time. This allows spatiotemporal ruptures and confluences whereby unsettling or potentially difficult past experiences are brought to the fore and demand our attention. Sumaira’s example illustrates the impacts of her positionality vis-a-vis the field site, as a migrant from a low-middle-income country in a space filled with migrants from another low-middle-income country. As Ahmed (2004) argues, “histories are bound up with attachments precisely insofar as it is a question of what sticks, of what connections are lived as the most intense or intimate, as being closer to the skin” (p. 54).

For Sumaira, the experience of spending time within a migrant suburb conjured a series of flashbacks to her home country of India. She experienced this as overwhelming and arresting of her senses, which allowed her to enter only a few notes in her research notebook. Sumaira felt an urge *not* to reflect upon what she felt in the moment: nostalgia, loneliness, and just “kind of sad.” It was too emotionally difficult. Being present in such moments was demanding of Sumaira’s body, senses, energy, and emotions, excluding the possibility of critical reflexivity and theorizing. As Gale notes, researchers “cannot feel fully and think about feeling at the same time.” The challenge of “getting out of the head and into the body [is] limited by the need to constantly return to socio-logical thought and analysis” (Gale, 2010, p. 215). Embodiment methodologies can underestimate the moments when environments, and our bodily reactions to them override our critical and intellectual intentions, and even our capacity to record data. For Sumaira, to actively force herself to intellectualize and reflect during these “ethnographic

moments,” to assert the mastery of her rational mind over her body and emotions, felt as if it would inflict “low-key self-harm.” Space can hold and evoke emotions that are painful, experiences that are hard to intellectualize, and encounters that are sensorially alienating (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 2016).

#### *Unwanted Attention: Hiding and Shielding the Gendered Body*

**Molly:** Over the course of the day, there had been several notable moments of discomfort, of feeling blatant, unwanted male eyes on my body. When it happened for the third time, we were walking through an indoor shopping mall, and it was nearing the end of the day. The lights felt overly bright and harsh, almost clinical in their intensity. In fact, the entire space had a clinical feel to it. This was a space that appeared totally neutral, one designed for ease and convenience. The white of the walls and of the floor. The faint smell and sounds of coffee being brewed from a small cafe in the middle of the shops. Noise and chatter from people milling around the space as we passed through, although again, not overwhelming in any way. The air was cool, a welcome relief from the heat of the day outside. This was meant to be a time of respite from the rising temperature of the asphalt outside. In the few designated spaces with communal seating, dotted outside of the shops, all available seats were occupied by people and their shopping bags. As we moved through the space, I thought about how bland it felt, how ordinary. I am grateful to be out of the heat, but apart from this, the space feels familiar and monotonous. My main feeling, up until the moment it happened, was fatigue; it had been a long day of travelling to multiple locations around the town, we had done lots of talking and thinking, and had spent the whole day trying to be “in our bodies.”

When the third moment of objectification occurred, it didn’t feel exceptional; rather, I acknowledged it with weariness, observing that this uncomfortable experience was familiar. I spoke about this moment when it came up with Catherine and Sumaira, who provided words of solidarity, empathy, and acknowledgment of the weariness and felt powerlessness of these experiences. I needed the toilet and planned to meet Sumaira and Catherine outside the front of the shopping center afterwards. However, on the way to the exit, they spotted the man who had been staring at me walking back toward our direction. To prevent me from having to experience further unwanted attention from this man, they waited directly outside the bathrooms for me, and collectively we exited out of the other end of the center. There, we all collapsed in a cafe overlooking the car park, warm, but at least in the shade. We began to talk about the uncomfortable realities of inhabiting a gendered body when doing embodiment work, how it shaped our movement and inclusion and exclusion in space, and how frequently this is left out of the theoretical and methodological approaches to embodiment. I pondered whether my background in feminist research, an ethos that underpins my personal and professional lives, made me particularly attuned to the gendered power imbalances in the world or heightened my feelings of injustice that came from small, everyday acts of misogyny and violence. In particular, the pain and frustration of seeing

violence that I was immersed in through research play out in my own life made me feel powerless in these moments.

There was comfort in feeling solidarity and collective rage; this, of course, was not a first-time experience for any of us. Rather, it was part of the everyday.

This vignette draws attention to the gendered experience of embodiment research. In particular, it speaks to the uncomfortable tension of needing to be present in the body in order to *do* embodiment, whilst also wanting to avoid confronting the realities of being in a body that is ceaselessly subjected to the male gaze. Embodied methodologies pay scant attention to how gendered inequities play out within research in societies where women learn to live with a constant embodied sense of hyper-awareness and anticipation of the threat of violence and violation, even in seemingly unthreatening and mundane spaces. This can result in avoidance of uncomfortable bodily attunement and uncomfortable spaces, the suppression of emotions and feelings of threat, and not wanting to dwell and reflect extensively upon them. Embodiment methodologies’ expectations for researchers to stay in the body can, in certain moments, feel difficult or even harmful.

By emphasizing the researchers’ self-directed mastery of attunement, embodiment methodologies ignore the ways in which harassment and the threat of violence constrain a researcher’s sense of agency and how the researcher becomes reactive rather than proactive in relation to place. Moreover, embodiment methodologies commonly ignore the role of a researcher’s sense of alienation and resistance, which acts as a fertile space for both understanding place and offers opportunities for researcher solidarities. Ahmed’s (2017) work encourages us to be alert to feelings of alienation, to what they convey about how power operates in a particular site. Feminism, she argues, begins as a “gut feeling,” of paying attention to our uncomfortable embodied experiences in these moments and allowing them to shape our thinking and theorizing of the world and its injustices. It is precisely in *not* attuning ourselves to a space, or in acknowledging mis-attunements, that insights are proffered (see also Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2023).

#### *Uncomfortable and Overwhelming Spaces: Burning Tongues and Grating Hums*

**Molly:** Sitting in the leisure centre foyer, I felt irritated. This feeling started small, growing as I became aware of my surroundings; the grating pop music coming loudly out of speakers above me, the doors to my left constantly sliding open and closed as people entered and exited the building, a smell of chlorine in the air, the abrasive orange and brown colour scheme of the space, and hard uprightness of the leather seats. We had chosen this space to take a second to recuperate and write down our observations about the leisure centre. As an area that was seemingly designed to take a pause in, this seemed like an appropriate place to do so. However, after

spending time reflecting and writing I felt I could no longer hold in my frustrations at the space, and shared these vocally with Catherine and Sumaira. There was a shared moment of relief when we all revealed we were feeling the same way. We expressed our astonishment at how hostile the space felt for us, how it felt directly in conflict with a space of rest. There was almost a communal glee in sharing with each other how uninviting it was to each of us. As someone with ADHD, the space made me feel overstimulated in all the wrong ways, and I had a strong desire to leave it as soon as possible. I couldn't focus, I couldn't relax, and I felt overwhelmed; what and who was this space good for?

After sharing our shared negative feelings toward the space, we agreed that this would be a good time to turn to our emotions wheel, a way to make sense of some of these negative responses. After circling words like "provoked," "hostile," and "annoyed," we quickly left, exhaling a collective sigh of relief as the fresh air of the outside hit our faces. Even though it was hotter out here, it felt more livable. To sit any longer in a space that was so unlikeable felt unbearable, like no "good" thinking could have happened there.

**Catherine:** I can feel the ubiquitous glow of the fluorescent lights, dulling everything to the same pale shade. After walking through a blaring hot supersized car park my sweat-dampened trousers cling a little, sticking to the vinyl seats. I can feel the sweat of my clammy hands resting on the lacquered surface of the laminate table. The wall mounted screen keeps catching my eye with rolling community announcements and their cartoonish characters, pastel colours and block font. My nose fills with the guggy smell of chlorine mixed with deep fried hot chips and chicken nuggets. The leisure centre foyer is a welcome reprieve from the hot sun outside, but the constantly moving breeze of the air-conditioning feels uncomfortably cool and unsettled. I'm trying to write but the sounds grate against my ears. The unending hum of the air conditioner, the regular beeps of various machines allowing entry to the pool and announcing food ready for collection, all overlaid with cheerful but vacuous pop music at a volume just loud enough to keep catching my attention.

None of these sounds, smells, and movements is at a level that many people would find aggressive, but to me, they fray at my attention and hold my body in alert mode. I crave silence, or at least different sounds, like wind in branches and birds. Only a few years ago, I wouldn't have been able to notice these sensorial effects, only a slow rising grumpiness toward everything and everyone around me as the day progressed, a feeling of impending outburst that I would save for a private moment. Raising a neurodiverse son has been an education not only in his needs, but my own. I'm learning to feel how my body is permeated by the environment, to sense how sound gets inside me and stays there, building up. What does this mean for how I do fieldwork now, I wonder.

In both accounts, it is clear that we had strong negative responses toward this space. This was a space in which we felt uncomfortable because of the way it demanded and held our attention; we could not tune it out. Contrary to dominant

narratives in embodiment literature, we were not able to control how we attuned and what we attuned to in our sensorial experiences of this space. Rather, we experienced the environment as happening *to* us, as grabbing us. Acknowledging the discomfort of this environment raised the question of what it means to occupy, and remain in, a space that challenges us. What does it mean to have to stay somewhere that feels deeply uncomfortable, to stay with your body when you may want to do quite the opposite? An awareness of sensory overwhelm, sensory sensitivities, and the neurodiversities that shape embodied experiences can enhance embodied research in a number of ways.

This focus allows researchers to reflexively consider how negative or positive sensorial reactions to place shape the direction research takes, for example, how we represent, omit, or dwell on particular sites and experiences from our research. Moreover, it raises the researcher's awareness of their sensorial needs, capabilities, and limitations and the ways these shape the generation of data. It also allows teams of researchers to understand their differences at the sensorial level, to be aware of the dynamics this generates, and to offer each other ways to check in and care for each other. Our responses to this space were not exclusively sensorial, but rather, sensoriality became emotional: sound became feelings of irritation as the emotional and sensorial intertwined. Giving space to our sensory-emotional responses revealed useful details about how we experience the aesthetics and social dynamics of space, including their inviting or exclusionary effects. The last two vignettes also show how spatial, social, emotional, and environmental discomforts entwine. In research on extreme heat, this insight is crucial, revealing how gendered or spatial dynamics create exclusions that make the space of public heat refuge inhospitable for certain groups.

#### *Physical Bodies, Physical Needs: I Have to Drink, Eat, Smoke, and Pee*

**Catherine:** We trek wearily towards the entrance of the shopping mall as cars edge around us. There is no obvious pedestrian path to follow, and so cars and people must cohabit uneasily. We pass the delivery point of a supermarket where skips begin to stink of juicy trash. Flattened cardboard boxes warm in the sun. We are all feeling our energy ebb, moving towards the sliding doors and cool air-conditioned interior with dull eyes and sunken shoulders. Spontaneous chat comes less often, and I can feel how we all have to *tell* our bodies and minds to do things. I realize we've tried to do too much within one day. *Look around*, I urge myself. What do you see? What is the soundscape here? My senses feel numbed as I try to direct them to pay attention.

The next day together, as we drive toward our chosen high-income suburb, we discuss the need to simplify the day, do less, and give ourselves more time to "just be" in our bodies, more time for rest and reflection after each activity. This intention spawns a range of effects I don't expect. In the resting between

activities, some of the best insights come, the ability to let what our bodies have taken in be processed, percolate into thought without forcing it.

Still, it's less about attention I'm discovering. Sometimes our bodies just ask for things. One of us needs to pee more than the others, and this requires us to adopt a rhythm of seeking out and knowing where toilets are at a pace that isn't intuitive to my body's own needs. Scanning for public toilets and waiting in the hallways that lead to them results in a different way of thinking about the accessibility of the space, fresh observations, and moments to stop and look around. I notice my anthropological disciplinary training kicking in, the impulse to turn mundane events into academic insights. It makes me realize the hierarchies I have inherited from my discipline, that bodily activities are most "useful" if turned into intellectual and conceptual thoughts. I look at the furnishings in the hallways to try to "see" social class. I have been trained to be efficient and productive in research, to turn restful moments into data, never stopping. But I'm not used to thinking about how I "feel" in the space, or taking opportunities of stillness to see what my body needs.

I'm learning that our bodily needs aren't just a physical process either. I can feel how my emotional and social makeup as a person entangle with the sensorial and physical dimensions of me in my researcher role. As the research organizer, I have particular instincts around care that mirror the ways I care at home. I want to feed and nourish Sumaira and Molly with food, and just like in my family sphere, hunger feels like neglect. I turn our walk down the High Street into an opportunity for lunch, and feel a sense of calm when they agree to the suggestion. Sitting down to share a meal feels like the day is going right. I'm mindful of how at ease I am in this hipster-ish hot sandwich shop, a shop that would not be at odds in my own neighborhood. How I take my time to ask questions, chit-chat humorously with the staff, and consider the homemade sodas options. So different from the curious outsider feeling in the bánh mì shop at our previous field site, my slightly hurried questions about unrecognizable foods in plastic containers, my English an exception to the exchanges in Vietnamese by staff and customers around me.

As we walk along a leafy residential street, we have time to discuss the role of cigarettes in research and the discomfort one of us feels in smoking in front of the others, of letting that bodily ritual be part of research. The only time smoking occurs during our collaboration is at a pub at the end of the first day, a space in which smoking is explicitly sanctioned with ashtrays and fellow smokers surrounding us. Still, there is an acknowledged feeling of awkwardness about doing this in front of colleagues, in the hierarchies of our positions and ideals of professionalism that make it taboo.

This vignette revealed to us an awkward feeling of transgression in describing basic bodily functions so often excised from narratives of research. Yet the physical needs of eating, peeing, and smoking were essential and regular moments of fieldwork around which we had to collectively orient our bodies, share space, and collaborate. Equally, energy levels, when we allowed ourselves to pay attention

to them, felt like a physical process and force that powerfully impacted our ability to stay in space and pay attention. Heat research revealed to us the ways in which uncomfortable spaces can deplete the body's reserves to pay attention in a deeply physical way. Considering this made us aware of how regularly we had removed our bodies, in their most visceral and fleshy modes, from the narrative plotline of our research. The performance of research to public audiences contains, like in movies where toilet stops and falling energy are rarely shown, a frontstage for only "the important things" to appear.

Yet we argue that these physical needs are integral to the plotlines of research. As we demonstrate above, these physical needs were never "just physical" and were always inseparable from our social positionality and the social hierarchies and connections we enact. By paying attention to them and describing them in our writing, we allow the normally backstage functions of our bodies to reveal core themes about the social structure of place, researcher positionality, and the researchers' roles in representation. Moreover, we can more carefully plan and carry out research that is attentive to bodily needs and rhythms. By the second day of our collaboration, we scaled back the amount of planned activities in order to account for the atmospheric burdens of heat in our bodies and the sensory tax of paying attention and navigating new spaces. Even in a leafy suburb, we planned ample rest times to simply sit and be.

### *Uneasy and Comforting Memories: Trauma, Stuck Energy, and Comforted in Place*

**Sumaira:** Everything and everyone is rich and polished. We sit on a balcony awaiting espresso coffees and freshly squeezed juice in heavy glassware. The miniature French cakes are displayed in neat rows under a square of glass. Our table offers a perfectly cool and leafy outlook, a low chatter of sound. Even so I feel jarred by my surroundings. On a table to our right bankers are casually discussing multimillion dollar deals like it's small change. To our left an older woman counts hundred-dollar bills and hands them to a younger woman, perhaps her daughter. The moneyed feel of this place sticks out almost like a caricature.

I feel suddenly aware and insecure about the color of my skin, my shoes, which have a little mud on them, and my unshaved arms. I like the coffee and the company of my colleagues. The cake seems creamier and "richer." Am I doomed to a life of not being able to access such "rich-tasting" cake in everyday life? The thought is comical and sad. This is a cafe just like any other, but with ultra-rich people. There is nothing to "explore" here, but rather just sit and reflect. I feel uncomfortable and "less ambitious" in terms of not aspiring for a lot of wealth in life. I feel self-doubt about my life choices. Am I a social science researcher in resistance, or am I feeling resentment that I can never be like these people?

Everyone likes expensive clothes and looking expensive, I think, and so do I. But this is not me. I prefer the raw crookedness of things, their interior beauty. Maybe none of this

matters. I will never be “seen” among the people in this cafe, and I will never truly see them. I am reminded of my rich girlfriends in India who subtly mocked me in school for being unkempt—they used to shave their arms in 8th grade, and I had not perceived yet that shaving your arms is telling of your class. The middle-class girlfriends said that they only mocked people like me because we were not as rich as them. I had never thought of this before—but once I did, it became a lifelong mark on my body. It was not a nice feeling, and it still isn’t, and it never will be.

Later in the day, we visited a church. As a Muslim woman, I feel close to God here. Away from the world of rich men and women. Away from feeling “less than.” The church is beautiful. The aesthetic includes a mix of calming cream, pink, and blue. Catherine sits on a bench, looking comfortable in place. Molly wanders around. I wander around as well. I feel away from the disconnection of being in a space where rich people talk about material things and power. I feel comforted, at ease, and protected, as if God is watching over me. I am tired after a long day of being in the sun and feel like sleeping in the church.

This vignette evokes the experience of inhabiting a space of socioeconomic otherness, of being immersed in an unfamiliar world and feelings of class discomfort, of unattainable beauty standards, and of material inferiority. For Sumaira, research in a wealthy suburb brought back uneasy memories and embodied trauma regarding being subtly mocked and judged, as well as experiences of resisting class judgments upon her body. Reflexive exercises in free-writing “I am” statements in a cafe revealed two embodied themes: “hostility” and “dissociation.” Sumaira’s embodiment journal thus contained such lines as “I am thinking about rich people doing me wrong,” “I feel like this is satire,” “I feel dissociated from money,” “I am looking at comfortable polished things and ease,” and “I am feeling sleepy and exhausted.” This exercise surfaced the reason why such feelings had emerged, the personal histories that lay behind them. These feelings were also rooted in Sumaira’s disciplinary training and experiences with fieldwork in India. A public health researcher who came to Australia after three years of working with underserved communities in India, Sumaira was critically aware of how a lack of wealth, education, and class unjustly leads to ill health, suffering, and early death (Khan et al. 2022). Hence, she had a visceral negative reaction to spaces filled with extravagant wealth and material ease.

Spaces of discomfort can make emotions and social position feel “stuck.” Sumaira described feeling like she would never belong in such a space. At the same time, discomfort can make emotions move in unexpected ways. In the stuckness, the dissociation, and the feeling of resistance associated with trauma, “bad feelings” should not simply be discounted. As Ahmed (2008) argues in relation to the Western liberal politics of multiculturalism (p. 12), for migrants, “Bad feelings are seen as oriented toward the past, as a kind of stubbornness that ‘stops’ the subject from

embracing the future,” and “Good feelings are associated here with moving up and getting out.” Instead, she attends to how “it is the very assumption that good feelings are open and bad feelings are closed that allows historical forms of injustice to disappear” from view. And as Harris and Fortney (2017) argue, (p. 27) “calls to practice reflexivity as controlled emotionality, controlled vulnerability, long for an illusion of normativity and a moment prior to trauma.” Free writing in moments of felt disassociation, even as they carried “bad emotions,” unsilenced years of little slights and subtle class-based mockeries that Sumaira had experienced but struggled to articulate. This reveals how embodied research, when it allows for the expression of discordant emotional experiences and personal histories alongside the sensorial, prompts the researcher to consciously and overtly foreground the social positionality from which they speak.

## Concluding Reflections

This article emerged from a desire to respond to the silences we encountered within embodied research, both across our research lives and in our engagements with literature. Our insights were realized through doing and experimenting, through reflexively unpacking our experiences of feeling methodologically unprepared to respond to our unruly bodies, and through reaching into a feminist praxis of care as a response. Unruly embodiment entails recognizing moments when the body or environment demands attention, overriding the researcher’s cognitive mastery and agency. It requires acknowledging moments of mis-attunement, discomfort, avoidance, spatiotemporal ruptures, and alienation, both allowing such moments to exist and taking time, when the time is right, to process them, rather than ignore them and hide them in our writing.

Sara Ahmed reflects on the institutional structures that support harassment and constrain complaints from “misfit” bodies. The act of complaining turns the body into an inconvenient testimony (Ahmed, 2021). The “misfit” body must then “smile as if in compensation for the inconvenience” (Ahmed, 2021, p. 143). In contrast, acknowledging, processing, and articulating moments of mis-attunement instead of ignoring and hiding them, lets the “misfit” body escape the hegemonic language of silence conveyed through such acts as smiling, ignoring, and retreating. In proposing unruly embodiment, we call for an active acknowledgment of mis-attunements and discomforts within place as a site of feminist meaning-making. This method may especially find relevance for research collaboration team leaders and researchers with misfit identities, and those seeking to align their research with an embodied feminist praxis.

Acknowledging mis-attunements requires foregrounding the researchers’ social positionabilities and the shifting, situational impacts of such embodied histories across the

research (Trundle 2018). In climate justice research involving inhospitable physical environments, such feminist insights are crucial. They reveal the compounding and intersecting nature of social and physical injustices and the way they entangle within the embodied researcher. The implications of unruly embodiment for methodological practice and the production of robust knowledge are multiple. Such an approach, we acknowledge, takes time and requires enduring collaborations and discussions versus siloed roles and divisions of research labor. There are, however, multiple benefits and strengths to this approach.

First, this approach necessitates researchers working reflexively across all stages of the research. This is a reflexivity not only of social positionality in a categorical sense, but of positionalities' bodily dimensions, implications, and manifestations, as disability studies scholars advocate (e.g., Chandler et al., 2019). Second, and correspondingly, our approach encourages a vulnerable version of scholarship that decenters the demonstration of smooth mastery and cognitive virtuosity and control. It supports more honesty about the limits and disjunctions of the research itself (Trundle et al. 2019, Trundle et al. 2025).

Third, this approach has the strength of explicitly foregrounding self-care for the researcher, allowing the researcher to bring and articulate their bodily self within research. It encourages the development of protective research techniques, discouraging researchers from putting their bodily wellbeing "on the line" for research and ignoring their bodily needs in research (Douglas-Jones et al. 2020). It encourages collaborative and relational care to be central in research design. In this sense, it is an attempt to allow researchers to embody a feminist method and ethic of care in research design, to engage with the micropolitics of research collaborative interactions, the generation of data, and the writing of research that reflexively includes the researcher in the stories they tell about their data (Brannelly & Barnes, 2022; Harding, 1987). We also experienced this methodology as a form of solidarity: when one of us felt mis-attunement with the environment, sharing it made the mis-attunement easier to bear, safer, and a point of deeper understanding about the power dynamics with which we were engaged, and which we embodied, through research. As Sara Ahmed (2017) argues, feminism entails a form of political consciousness raising through sensorial mis-attunements and mis-fits. The unruly dimension of our proposed feminist research methodology is thus a form of action and resistance to heroic, harmful, and control-centered approaches to research that speak about the body but do not allow the body—especially the gendered body—to speak back.

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All authors worked on all elements of the article, from conceptualization to fieldwork to writing.

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