

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Books are strange beasts. They grow out of so many conversations, collaborations, obstacles, dead ends, and dreams. I am always terrified when I begin to write an acknowledgments section. Sure, there is the fear that I will overlook someone who made a crucial contribution. It is, however, the task itself that creates angst, reducing all of these entanglements to a hundred variations on the phrase “thanks to. . . .” If I were an artist, I would draw a picture that would include my interlocutors and a few crucial scenes. For want of a better approach, here goes.

This book emerged when I finally felt ready to present a full statement of the ways I have been wrestling with age-old divides between work on language and communication, health and medicine for decades. Never a loner, I have been in conversation with many scholars and practitioners who also tackle these issues, each in their own way. Starting in 1983, conversations with Aaron Cicourel have always been inspirational and formative. Also at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), colleagues in Ethnic Studies and other departments deepened my understanding of race, racialization, and racism; conversations with Steve Epstein, Natalia Molina, and Nayan Shah regarding medicine and Otherness and with Ana Celia Zentella on the politics of multilingualism and linguistic racism helped push the project along. Howard Waitzkin’s reflections on more than half a century of seeing patients, his trenchant critiques of how capitalism infects medicine and public health, and his efforts to build alternatives have stimulated productive conversations over decades. Jaime Breilh and Eduardo Menéndez have taught me immensely about critical epidemiology and Latin American social medicine. Mohan Dutta’s leadership in challenging dominant approaches to health communication

has afforded crucial insights. Some ten years ago, Paja Faudree and I struck up a conversation that sparked several American Anthropological Association sessions, an essay in *Anthropology News*, visits between Berkeley and Brown, and collaborative efforts to mentor graduate students attempting to bridge linguistic and medical anthropology. Emily Avera has sustained a group that grew out of these conversations right through the present.

In thinking through the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of collaborations were crucial. Building on work with the Latinx Research Center at the University of California (UC), Berkeley, Clara Mantini-Briggs MD MPH and I organized the Latinx COVID-19 Autoethnography Collective in January 2021. The group included Gabriel Cesena, Yadira Hernández Figueroa, Ryann Hirt, Joyce Huchin, Cameron Johnson, Gisselle Rosales, Brandon Rubio, and Nate Tilton. Our weekly meetings provided a powerful sense of how the pandemic was greatly increasing educational, economic, health, and other equities for students from racialized minority communities, and they helped all of us feel less isolated during difficult times. Rosales and Rubio subsequently participated in a podcast project directed by Mantini-Briggs and sponsored by Berkeley's Latinx Research Center and the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues (ISSI). Rosales generously allowed me to use part of her contribution to the podcast project in chapter 8.

I participated in the Humanities Research Institute seminar "How We Make It: Disability Justice for the Long Haul" in the spring of 2022. Organized by the incomparable Megan Moodie, it included Sharon Daniel, Pato Hebert, Tammy Ho, Alexandra Juhasz, Cynthia Ling Lee, Rachel Lee, Marina Peterson, and Nikita Simpson. In a series of remarkable discussions, I learned a great deal about struggles with long COVID and disability and how art provided a powerful matrix for individual and collective efforts to keep going and to remember. As readers will see in chapter 7, I am deeply indebted to Hebert for an interview that brought these issues, literally, into focus and for the stunning photograph that graces the cover.

Sarah Ramírez shared her deep knowledge of and commitment to the people of the San Joaquín Valley and generously made my work on COVID-19 there possible. Between July 2021 and the present (January 2023) I have interviewed physicians, psychiatrists, nurses, dentists, public health officials, journalists, community-based organizations, elected officials, judges, educators, religious professionals, firefighters/paramedics, police officers, long-term care facility operators, and a wide range of laypeople. Although I cannot, alas, thank you by name, I want to acknowledge your tremendous generosity in sharing time with me and your deep and moving reflections on how your lives

were affected by COVID-19. They were some of the most astounding conversations I have ever experienced. I also had the opportunity to join some of you as you worked, preached, healed, tended to livestock, fixed cars, flipped through and commented on what appeared on your cellphones, and much more. Thanks for all that you taught me. I hope that this book gives you the sense that I listened carefully.

This book and the COVID-19 project could never have emerged if it were not for a partial sabbatical from UC Berkeley in 2021–22. I thank fellow participants in the Cultural Logic of Facts and Figures: Objectification, Measurement, and Standardization as Social Processes project at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, especially principal investigator Tord Larsen, for years of conversation and helpful research support. I have also benefited greatly from fascinating discussions with John Ødemark and Eivind Engebretsen occasioned by the Body in Translation project at the University of Oslo, where I was honored to serve as a professor II in 2022–23. Plans for a residency there were, alas, thwarted by COVID-19. The Latinx Research Center and the ISSI's Berkeley Center for Social Medicine provided a stimulating and supportive context, and I benefited from conversations with colleagues at UC Berkeley, particularly—in the present context—Lawrence Cohen, Seth Holmes, Karen Nakamura, Stefania Pandolfo, and Nancy Scheper-Hughes. I owe a debt of gratitude to a funky old RV parked in the woods next to our driveway. As I was living in a household with four adults and two wonderful grandchildren, Brielle and Ian, it provided a quiet and contemplative space that, fortunately, lies beyond the reach of telephones and the internet. It also afforded a safer way to do fieldwork in October–November 2021. Graduate students at UC Berkeley and UCSD challenged my thinking and shared their wide-ranging knowledge of scholarship and insights derived from their own work and life experiences. The UC Berkeley undergraduates Nicole Carrasco, Leslie Ceciliano, Leslie Correa, Emily De Arman, Phoebe Douvan, Kartal Kaya, Anai Ramos, and Miyah Saeyang helped with research on social media and transcription and in several cases participated in interviews. I thank audiences at UC Berkeley, UCSD, and UC Los Angeles; at Brown University, the University of Chicago, Hong Kong University, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, York University, Rutgers University, Ghent University, the University of Oregon, Pennsylvania State University Medical School, the University of Oslo, University College London, Beijing Normal University, and the Colegio Médico del Perú; and at academic meetings and conferences.

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