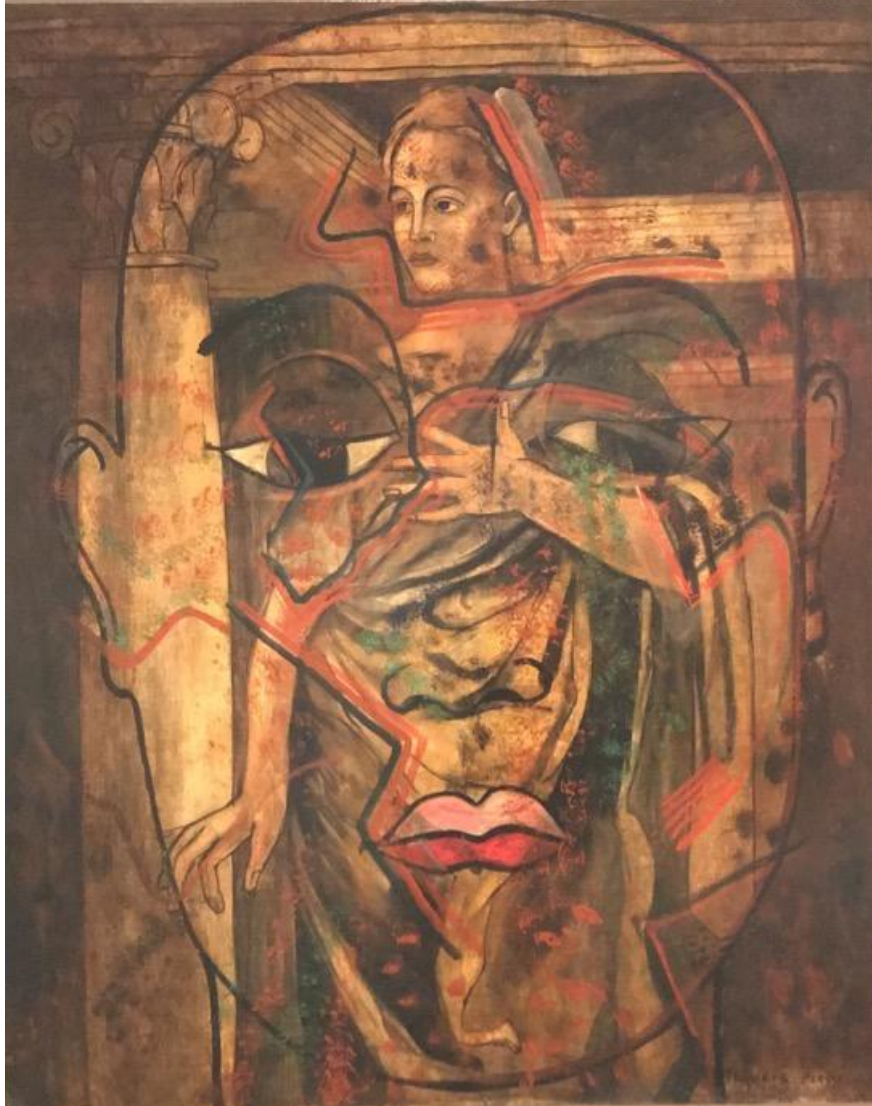


Reflective Report; Friendship as a Method

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Introduction

This research focused on evaluating a previous ongoing project called ‘Thinking Inside the Box’, (henceforth referred to as TITB), a pedagogical initiative which utilises archival footage to pioneer student-led education to equip students with leadership skills. This project allows the students to take the initiative to construct the course to their own passions within the subject of political history (specifically this year was focused on dictatorship in Nicaragua and Brazil). The method utilised to analyse the efficacy of the TITB initiative was Tillmann-Healy’s ‘friendship as a method’. Tillmann-Healy (2003) was the pioneer and creator of the ethnographic research method of ‘friendship’; defined as amicable ties between researcher and participant as a kind of fieldwork, allowing both parties involved to gain knowledge. This was performed through peer-to-peer interviews, meaning that students interviewed each other whilst these interactions were recorded. This methodology employs ‘friendship’ to encourage a more meaningful and truthful reflection process, instead of an attempt to impress an ‘interviewer’- thus reducing the possibility of the Hawthorne effect¹. This research intended to showcase the merits of the non-traditional education within TITB and thus challenge mainstream assumptions of teaching methods. This framework was proven to be not only be accessible to many more learners but also developed individuals’ understanding of history in a richer way than typical lectures and seminars, proven through our findings interviewing students across four different universities, staff involved, members of impacted community groups and stake-holders. Whilst I participated and contributed to the main focus of the TITB research I took my own initiative to develop this research into the impact of ‘TITB’ pedagogy on decolonising archives. The decolonisation of Western historical narratives and academic institutions altogether is a movement that continues to develop globally, through many local and international focus groups, academic reforms and even protests. By combining the methodology of Healy’s ‘friendship’ and the purpose of academic decolonisation, this research proposed that education should connect students with communities that are currently affected by historical points of social tension. This proved effective as ‘bottom-up’ methodologies of student-led education, were shown to be more effective when discussing colonialism than ‘top-down’ education reforms of curriculum. Additionally, the research allowed me to personally analyse archives in Madrid and Lisbon, to compare the methods of archiving and recording in other countries that ruled an empire through violent colonisation and control. This data provided comparative literature and allowed British archives to thus be analysed in contrast, to inspire alternative methods of challenging this Eurocentric version of history. Overall, ‘Thinking Inside the Box’ presents the solution that community relations as a form of learning should be adapted into university education to address Britain’s own colonial history, and repair social damage through the decolonisation of a Eurocentric narrative; it open education to be authentic and driven through student passion over obligation to an exam.

A Summary of the Research Conducted

My research this summer can be understood in four chapters; fundamental research and understanding, interviews, evaluation and refining our focus and archival research in Europe. I will now discuss each in turn.

¹ Subjects in anthropological fieldstudies performing differently to their typical inclinations and actions due to their awareness that they are being observed (Fox et al., 2007).

My research project 'Friendship as a Method' (simply the name of the Laidlaw Research Project) analyses how the pedagogical initiative 'Thinking Inside the Box' furthers the decolonisation of academic and social spaces through building relationships between communities, by giving students the power to control their own learning. This project collaborated with another Laidlaw project studied by researchers Grace Nash and Lily Else, who focused on the psychological effects of alternative teaching on the students. We decided to work in tandem and discuss our different findings and interpretations to eradicate as much apophenia (cognitive bias) as possible from our work. To support the design of our methodology of research, the beginning of my project was largely centred around researching previous studies focusing on similar pedagogy as 'friendship as a method'. This helped me to understand the fundamental background that 'friendship as a method' would be building on, and how this methodology would aid in interviews to ascertain a more authentic analysis of the TITB group. This work was compiled with Ms Else's and Nash's research and then collaboratively analysed using content and discourse analysis

Continuing, we decided to collaborate on the conducting of the interviews, mainly to avoid confusion within the research subjects, as our research required interviews to be conducted with the same set of students, staff, stake-holders and community groups. All of the interviews were held online through Microsoft Teams and were recorded. Later, these recordings were transcribed and anonymised to protect the identities of the interview participants. Each participant was required to sign an ethical and consent form because the quotes from these interviews would be used for a proposal to the University of Leeds to transform TITB from a voluntary extra-curricular focus group into a university module. The questions for the interview were all open ended, to remove as much bias as possible, and so all of the data collected was qualitative. For the performance of 'friendship as a method' within the student interviews, the subjects were paired up randomly and required to ask each other the interview questions. The Laidlaw scholar acted as a moderator, uninvolved with the interview by turning their microphone and camera off, to prompt the students to stay on-subject or intervene if confusions arose.

Once these interviews were completed, I began the analysis of what was discussed. My research supervisor Anna Grimadli held a meeting with Ms Else, Ms Nash to discuss the general findings of all the interviews conducted and to the next step of thematic analysis of the transcripts. These specific quotes chosen from the transcripts were categorised into groups; transformative thinking, the archive, assessment, staff experience and community impact. Overall, the findings presented the impression that students consciously recognized a development within their approach to learning when interacting with archive material and unconsciously improved their transformative thinking skills measurably over the duration of the year. Both the staff and the students from all four universities involved in TITB (University of Leeds, St Marys, King's College London and UCL) remarked that the open assessment through continual coursework and the exhibition allowed them the academic freedom to pursue academic achievement due to genuine interest as opposed to learning material simply for a written essay style examination. Community impact was remarked upon throughout all interview groups- all synonymous in their opinion that by intertwining education with active social aid within the community of Leeds, it gave students fulfilment and appreciation of their subject that could not have been found without it. Aiding this analysis was the connection made to Ms Adna Mohamud, a student from London who was completing a literature review within this subject area. Ms Mohamud travelled to Leeds and

we discussed her research in comparison to our own Laidlaw projects, which led me to the conclusion that- although proved through interview data that TITB was certainly a powerful decolonial methodology- it may not be the only method.

This midway evaluation of our respective projects and the insights from Ms Mohamud, forged the idea of my research trip to study other groups and spaces where academic decolonisation was happening, to give possible alternatives to what TITB operated as. Hitherto, my research was operating under a significant assumption that the collaboration between students and communities was an effective way to decolonise archives and educate young learners. This research trip would not only offer additional resources for future participants in TITB, should it be transformed into a module, but would more importantly challenge my own hypothesis by acting as a control of sorts; analysing different ways to decolonise archives such as making them free and for public access.

Therefore, my final stage of research was to propose a research trip to understand more about the decolonisation of archives in other European countries, specifically Portugal and Spain. Before my proposal was commissioned, I investigated in depth the different places to study archives in many different former colonial countries and created relationships with different academics and resistance groups within Portugal and Spain. These two countries were chosen specifically because they were, like Britain, rulers of significant empires at similar times in history and all ruled from Western Europe. These similarities would allow me to compare and contrast how these different countries archive their own colonial history; in reluctance and through many edited accounts or openly as a form of recognition of their past. My proposal was accepted and my research in each country analysed many forms of archiving; traditional and national archives such as the Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa and the Archivo Historico Nacional; Smaller privately run archives such as Biblioteca de Arte e Arquivos; Museums as archives such as Museo America, Reina Sofia and Museu de Lisboa; Physical archives such as statues and protected buildings; Social archives such as social understanding and attitude towards colonialism learned through the conversations with different resistance groups. Each of these was recorded and analysed in their own way, as shown in the pictures captioned below. Overall, this wealth of knowledge- in addition to being helpful for future use by University of Leeds students- provided the conclusion that small protests within Britain's recent past are still exceedingly powerful in the rewriting of social understanding of history. In Lisbon especially, there was a strong culture of recognition which provided a great inspiration for myself, and that I hope this research can be replicated for others to continue to challenge British education.



The reproduction of King Charles III Archaeological cabinet, Museo America. There were no labels on the items and none were grouped with any specific order; displayed because of their 'otherness' of a general non-european world for the King as 'amusements' and 'curiosities'. By reproducing this room as the King had it is a form of recognition, however by having a sign and audio tour stating the reason for doing so allows no misconceptions. This is to reclaim the narrative of history and to understand why this sort of display of foreign cultures was from the mind of a coloniser and an imperial country.





Two maps; the former a map from the colonisation of South America and the later displaying the distribution of different ethnicities in relation to deforestation. The contrast of these two maps displays the recognition of this archive, as the explanatory notes highlight how maps are a way of controlling politics and land and money, stemming from the colonial era and contrast the culture of destruction of the wild to hotspots of settlers in previously colonised countries.



Picture from Commander Juan Procopio Bassecourt's funeral, his battalion is attending in grief. One of the only pictures of the Spanish colonial wars that is available to the public. This places this man in a glorified light of leadership- to be remembered as a "hero". This archiving is highly edited and depicts a very specific version of history that this archive wants to present, by removing all other pictures from public access.

Contribution to the field of Education

Connecting to communities and creating spaces for learning through others' personal experiences is a commonplace practice in many countries around the world, but alien in contrast to my own experience of British higher education. The research trip allowed me to contemplate the different dimensions of the decolonisation project, and how this same practice could be mapped out to other subjects and not only history politics. This research is pertinent because it aims to provide evidence that modules and education based on developing such relationships are not only viable but more effective than traditional teaching practices. TITB not only encourages students to connect to people outside of their university but also challenges them to support one another's' learning experience. Whilst many university modules can create rivalry and anxiety over academic achievement or collusion, by pitting the students against each other within examinations, TITB adopts a completely polar strategy. This learning style promotes students to work with each other and aims to grade without the use of an end of year examination. Therefore, this style is also more inclusive for different types of learners, unlike exams, and puts emphasis on community relations, trust and solidarity; in one interview a student commented "it moved [them]" to see their classmates understand the importance of the political events they were researching despite not being personally affected by them.

Furthermore, this research is impactful through its active decolonisation of academia and archives. By connecting the students of TITB to exile communities, they created a new narrative around the resistance and social change within Latin America in the 1970's, connecting back to the continent's colonial history. This allowed students to interact with archives physically but also to critically analyse the institutions themselves. This research provides evidence that the project TITB was successful and thus promotes its continuation and the development of similar practices within universities across the UK. Therefore, more archives will be investigated and the narratives of British history will be continually challenged. This research is at the forefront of such a social and academic movement and aids the proactive 'errata' of colonial history.

Research Dissemination

Education and decolonial pedagogical approaches are something I am passionate about, both as a means to conduct research as a student and to impact wider practices within teaching communities. I will continue to convey my research findings to institutions where the pedagogy of friendship may be impactful, such as legal work in vulnerable communities I am hoping to complete as part of experience connected to my Law degree. As the TITB method of decolonisation is such a versatile method of education and social repair, it has the

potential to be beneficial in universities, lower education, local government schemes, youth groups, social justice groups and even therapy. To push the propagation of this pedagogical method in its many potential outlets, I have connected to Archivists within Spain and Portugal as well as many individual researchers and even community groups. To aid in its dissemination in the UK, I have created a research poster. This is shared on the Laidlaw network and on the 'TITB' webpage- which accumulates the works of students from the University of Leeds, St Mary's College, University College London and King's College London for the public who attend workshops to view. Sharing the poster in both of these spaces has the potential to reach other academics interested in this research area but also to connect to students and members of the public to generate a discussion around the importance of this type of education. Additionally, the research findings that I have collected this summer will also become part of a book centred around the TITB methodology and hopes to reach out to wider international actors.

Additionally, Laidlaw Scholars Lily Else and Grace Nash and I have proposed a group presentation of our research for the Student Success in Taught Education Conference 2023 in Leeds. We were very grateful to be accepted and are working together to use this as an opportunity to not only develop our own presentation skills in a professional academic format but also to emphasise the importance of alternative pedagogical methods within education to create authentic historic narratives. Moreover, I will also be attending the 2023 Laidlaw Research Conference in Dublin. These conferences will act as conduits to, respectfully, connect to senior researchers and initiate interest in the Laidlaw Scholarship from researchers outside the University of Leeds.

Personal Development

Although this is not my first interaction with academic research or social research, it was my first time dealing with archives. This project was collaboratively developed between myself and my supervisor, so I felt I had complete creative control and liberty within the premises to take the research to where I was most passionate; I made the research my own where I had never been able to do so before. If the same search project had been dedicated to another scholar it would undoubtedly have followed a different avenue of discussion, proven through the individual journeys of research conducted by myself, Ms Nash and Ms Else despite originating from the same theoretical foundations. This freedom and support yielded true passion in my work that I have never experienced before. Throughout formal education, the research I conducted was always performative for an exam- simply proving my own skills instead of actively participating in the development of a field of study. The Laidlaw research this summer reversed my perception of academic research entirely, and I felt empowered perceiving how my work had a measurable impact on the practice of teaching.

As it was my first time researching in archives, it was undoubtedly challenging. I had to balance networking- as I wanted to create amiable relations with the archivists themselves to later discuss their opinions and methods of archiving colonial media- speaking in a foreign language, the physical act of accessing source material and the research analysis itself. The methods I developed involved accessing and browsing catalogues of each archive, receiving the necessary permission to access the material itself (as due to the nature of my research and the material itself, a significant amount was highly protected), before the physical act of

properly recording the data through photocopies or descriptions if photocopying was restricted. This opportunity provided by the Laidlaw Scholarship is a journey I will always be grateful for; despite the difficult undertaking, this adventure into a completely new academic environment taught me many skills I would not have acquired without such an experience. I became more self-reliant, confident in my subject area and unashamed to question the validity or ethics of decisions that previously I may have simply accepted. By collaborating and interacting continually with many different senior members of staff, co-researchers, my supervisor and members of the public this research equally aided my professional diction and non-verbal communication when researching in Europe. In summation, the research project this summer has taken me through an impossibly fruitful journey of academic development; however these achievements must not overshadow the far greater emotional progression I have made due to the Laidlaw Scholarship. Not only through the Research Project but also through the many Laidlaw Residentials and Outreach Days I participated in, has my confidence grown. I stated in my application that many women who are ambitious often feel the need to apologise or diminish their accomplishments- and I was previously a victim of this “imposter syndrome”. Now my Research Project is complete, I have travelled alone throughout Europe, been accepted to present at an academic conference, I am proud to display these victories. I would not have been able to succeed this far without the support of so many generous people, and I will always be grateful for that, however I believe my greatest personal development is to grant myself that same pride.

Leadership Skills

I have naturally taken to roles of leadership before this research, possibly due to my impatience over indecision however, my attitude toward it has altered quite measurably since my involvement in Laidlaw. Previously, I would lead others directed by my awareness and empathy and mainly ‘gut’ feelings- making decisions on what I believed most would enjoy or benefit from without considering the ethics of such decisions. Through leadership training Laidlaw has taught me how to be an ethical leader, and that it is not enough to make decisions on presumptions about what I perceive to be benefiting everyone. To be a truly strong leader I’ve learned to communicate properly to my team to ask what they desire and to accumulate all of these opinions before making a decision; thus drawing from my coworker's true feelings, not my own presumptions. This is best displayed through an anecdote from the first leadership residential; in a task I assumed that others would be equally comfortable presenting in front of an audience, and so I distributed the task accordingly- however, I later realised it would have been more effective to organise the group based on their individual strengths by having some present and others organise and plan. Additionally, I have previously been naive to the ethics of leadership in respect to my empathy toward my team. As I am naturally an empathetic individual, I struggle to be a strict authoritative figure and thus was previously exploited to be far more lenient than a good leader should be. Being an ethical leader, I have come to learn, is a constant evolutionary process: balancing each coworker's needs, lifestyles and desires to perform at our most efficient and strongest. Within the TITB research with fellow researchers Miss Nash and Miss Else, unforeseen circumstances would arise that require the workload or deadlines to be altered, and I learnt how to be understanding of these disruptions whilst equally pushing each other to achieve our best.

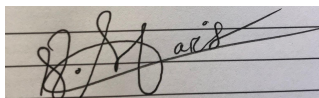
Conclusion; Education and Research in My Future

Before my first step onto campus, I knew I only wanted to be in university for three years. I told myself I would pour my efforts into achieving the highest grade I could in my LLB Law Undergraduate degree, before continuing on training within a law firm and beginning my working life. Then I was accepted onto the Laidlaw Scholarship and my perception of my future after undergraduate was multiplied. By allowing me a space where I could truly feel ownership and purpose for the research I was completing, the Laidlaw Scholarship was the first time in my academic career I have felt unadulterated excitement over the work itself- for no other reason than the performing of such research gave me joy. I never believed pursuing a master's degree or continuing with higher education after graduating with my bachelor's degree would be a path that I would entertain, simply because I naively thought it would be boring. However, this summer has erased that view completely and I am now optimistic about possibly continuing my journey within university for a much longer term than my first three-year course.

Supervisor Comments

As part of a four-person team (myself and two other Laidlaw Scholars), Hazel conducted and analysed a series of interviews to evaluate the effectiveness of a pedagogical framework titled *Thinking Inside the Box*. Hazel has been a wonderful colleague throughout this project and has collaborated fantastically with the rest of the team by coordinating research strategies and managing the division of labour. What has stood out about Hazel is her boldness and can-do attitude: she has shown a consistent and unwavering willingness to throw herself into the deep end of new challenges with a maturity beyond her career stage, and this has benefited the project immensely. As part of her contribution, Hazel independently proposed carrying out fieldwork in Lisbon and Madrid to capture first-hand the debate around decolonising archives and museums; her planning demonstrated an impressive balance of ambition and feasibility, while her ease in communicating with relevant stakeholders despite cultural and linguistic barriers demonstrated real dedication to her research. I believe her leadership skills lie in her vision and readiness to step into new territory, which acts as a driving force for those around her. At the same time, she has the prudence and humility to seek guidance and advice from her peers, demonstrating that her blue-sky thinking is also practical and grounded in self-reflection. It has been an honour and a privilege to work with her!

Signature of Scholar:



Date: 20 /09 /2023

Signature of Project Leader:

Date: ____ / ____ / ____