



School of Social Sciences

Summer Scholarship Research Program 2020

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Project 102: Tourism Futures in Western Sydney: Realising the Opportunities of Western Sydney Airport

Supervisor(s): Garth Lean - g.lean@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Project description

The development of a second Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek has been identified as an important opportunity to foster tourism development in Western Sydney. However, some have argued that the benefit for Western Sydney tourism may be limited with domestic and international travellers transiting directly from the airport to other destinations closer to the Sydney CBD, or in other parts of New South Wales and Australia. It is important that opportunities to benefit from such a significant infrastructure development are realised.

The summer research student will work with the project supervisor and other tourism stakeholders in Western Sydney to investigate how the Western Sydney tourism sector can take advantage of the tourism development opportunities that the new airport offers.

Project Aims

1. To identify opportunities for tourism development in Western Sydney that can come from a new airport at Badgerys Creek.
2. To identify strategies to take advantage of these opportunities.

Project Methods

1. Search for publicly available reports, media, journal articles and other sources that detail opportunities for tourism in Western Sydney related to the development of an airport in Western Sydney.
2. Collate articles and sources in an Excel Spreadsheet.
3. Conduct a basic thematic analysis.

Opportunity for Skill Development

The student will have the opportunity to join the TinDA (Travel in the Digital Age) and SoTech (Social Technologies) research teams, a group of 20+ academics, research students and research associates investigating the intersections of mobile lives, people, travel and technology. We conduct innovative projects in collaboration with government, commercial and not-for-profit partners. This collaborative environment will enable the student to fast-track their development as a researcher, and lead to future research opportunities. In addition, the student will develop the following research skills:

- Learn how to conduct and organise a review of reports, journal articles and media commentary using Excel.
- Gain skills in content / thematic analysis.
- Gain knowledge of the ethical and legal complexities of conducting social research.
- Have opportunities to network with Western Sydney tourism stakeholders.
- Have the opportunity to co-write publications that draw on the research they complete.
- Join a wider interdisciplinary team of staff and students and be included in the project's digital presence, in turn, building their own professional web presence.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

While all students are welcome to apply, this project would be most suited to a final year undergraduate student who has been completing a degree in the School of Social Sciences or School of Humanities and Communications. We welcome applications from students who are looking to continue into higher research degree programs, and to have an ongoing connection with the Travel in the Digital Age and Social Technologies research teams.

Project 103: Humanitarian aid work: Who copes well and why? A summative review of the literature

Supervisor(s): Garry Stevens - g.stevens@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Melissa Phillips - melissa.phillips@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Project description

This project builds upon our 2019 systematic review of the available literature regarding effective stress adaptation among professional humanitarian aid workers, and its relationship with indicators of occupational wellbeing, such as role satisfaction and longevity. To date, much of the available research has focused predominantly on adverse mental health outcomes associated with these often high-pressure work roles. There has been less examination of factors that directly support the occupational wellbeing of Aid workers and enhance their adaptive capacities in high stress environments. Our recently completed review takes a 'positive psychology' or 'salutogenic' focus, identifying known, modifiable factors (e.g. training, support systems and access, cognitive style) that may directly contribute to worker resilience and wellbeing.

The available information related to humanitarian worker wellbeing is limited in scope, but also largely restricted to academic publications, making this information less accessible to industry and practitioner bodies. This limits consideration of resilience-based factors; both individual factors and supports, and organisational processes and programs that can proactively support worker wellbeing. A key output of this program is to produce a brief, accessible summary paper that can reach a wider audience (e.g. practitioners, industry peak bodies, policy experts, employer groups and support networks). This can provide an evidence-based contribution to discussions and debates currently taking place in this sector. This project is particularly timely in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, as workers in this sector support highly vulnerable populations often with limited health protections, while trying to minimise their own exposure.

Project Aims

The aim of this project is translate our recent academic research into a summary publication suitable for wider dissemination; to industry and professional audiences, including policy experts and practitioners within the development and humanitarian assistance sectors.

Project Methods

The student will receive familiarisation training in the conduct of a systematic review, to support updating of our existing database (i.e. from 2019). This will ensure a systematic search procedure and selection of any additional studies which meet our inclusion criteria. This review update will be conducted using the PRISMA guidelines (the basis of our original systemic review) and will search four electronic databases (PsychINFO, CiNAHL, Embase and Medline), as well as Google Scholar and relevant grey literature. The student will also be trained to use Endnote software to export the selected studies into the existing database, and for use in the referencing of the developed journal article.

Opportunity for Skill Development

- Familiarisation with Systematic Review methods (i.e. post Systematic Review ‘updates’)
- Develop a quality PowerPoint presentation of key research findings and policy/practice recommendations
- Develop research writing and publication skills

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following prerequisite(s) to apply

This project is open to any student who is keen to explore this research area and develop a publication that is accessible to a wide audience.

Project 104: Two generations of queer women’s experiences and perceptions of shifts in gender and sexuality identities, and experiences of lateral violence within the queer community and its impact on wellbeing and belonging.

Supervisor(s): Corrinne Sullivan - corrinne.sullivan@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Lucy Nicholas - l.nicholas@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Project description

Gender identity for assigned female at birth queer people who present as masculine of centre is often presented as in a generational conflict, between older people who may identify as ‘butch’ or related terms, and younger people who may reject the category of woman and identify as nonbinary or trans. This has earlier been articulated in scholarship as the “Butch/FTM border wars” (Halberstam and Hale, 1998) [FTM means female to male trans].

While increasing numbers of people are identifying their gender in queer ways it is true this is particularly so among young people who are fluent in gender language and are constantly creating and using new lexicon and means of understanding and expressing themselves (Smith et al 2014; Nicholas 2014). In particular, there has been a growth in young people identifying as nonbinary, genderqueer, genderfluid and related terms that reject the binary (Barker & Richards 2015).

Meanwhile there has been some backlash from some radical feminists to these identities, using the argument that it undermines the focus of feminism, and some critique from some people who identify as butch lesbians in media and community contexts (Thorpe 2013). Additionally, both sides have reported feeling like the division is exacerbating ‘lateral violence’ in queer communities, undermining the social support that comes from a sense of belonging to wider queer communities that is so key to the wellbeing of queer people (Fury 2017; Reeders 2020).

This is a small, qualitative research project that seeks to interview two generations of assigned female at birth (AFAB) queer people to gain insight into their experiences of and perspectives on shifts in gender and sexuality identities, and on lateral violence within the queer community and its impact on wellbeing and belonging.

Project Aims

- To determine whether generation shapes participants’ perspectives on gender identity;
- To determine whether participants have experienced lateral violence in queer communities;
- To determine whether lateral violence has impacted participants’ wellbeing or sense of belonging;
- To determine whether participants’ geographies impact their positions.

Project Methods

The research will entail in-depth, semi-structured ‘elicitation’ interviews with a purposively sampled group of queer people assigned female at birth. Five over the age of 38 and five under the age of 30.

Recruitment of the participants will be through a snowballing method originating in online and offline queer communities. The interviews will be undertaken on Zoom and recorded. They can then be transcribed and the participants given pseudonyms.

The participants will be asked to watch an episode of the TV show 'Vida' to elicit discussion about the themes. Guideline questions and topics will be developed.

The student will be asked to develop a literature review on intergenerational division and lateral violence in the queer community, will undertake transcription, and take part in the collective coding of the data with the research team. This will allow for the student to gain experience across many stages of the social science research process and have genuine input into the project and a publication.

Opportunity for Skill Development

In being led by two experienced social science researchers, the student will be able to build skills in:

- Advanced literature searching (choosing appropriate databases and parameters, ensuring 'saturation' on the topic, collating literature thematically)
- Writing effective and concise sections of literature reviews for purpose
- Contemporary transcription methods (using auto-caption and then editing)
- Being exposed to raw social science qualitative data
- Developing themes from data with a senior team
- Involvement in writing at a publishable standard
- Understanding journal guidelines

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

The student would preferably be from an Arts or Social Sciences background.

Project 105: Facilitating Migrant and Refugee Settlement in Australia: A Socio-Economic Model for Regional Development

Supervisor(s): Melissa Phillips - melissa.phillips@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Ataus Samad - a.samad@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Project description

Australia's population growth and distribution is mostly centred along urban and coastal areas. Within Queensland, 61.6% of residents live in 'major cities', 20.5% in 'inner regional' areas, 14.8% in 'outer regional' areas, 1.8% in 'remote' areas, and 1.3% live in 'very remote' parts of the State (Queensland Treasury 2019). Under the Australian government's humanitarian program, a considerable number of refugees settle in Australia each year. Given this current trend of urban settlement, where and how to successfully settle refugees is an important issue for Australia especially for building community resilience in regional and rural sites. This project sets out to develop a conceptual framework for enabling sustainable refugee settlement away from urban areas, and into regional Australia that draws on the strengths of refugees and the capacities of local communities. Currently due to various economic, social, political, and policy reasons, migrants (including refugees) predominantly settle in metropolitan cities of Australia which has become a highly contested issue in contemporary Australian media and political discourse. While there is evidence to suggest that there is a higher rate of unemployment among the refugees, there is also a shortage of workers in the Australian regional agribusiness. Presently, a large proportion of this shortage is met by temporary overseas workers, which is a paradox because of its inherent limitations and convenience. Despite serious interest among the various stakeholders, there is a knowledge gap as to how to facilitate successful refugee settlement and integration in regional areas. We posit that such policy has numerous inter-connected benefits:

1. It can narrow the existent skill shortage gap,
2. It contributes to the economic growth of regional Australia,
3. It ensures that work experience of refugees is utilized in relevant sectors,
4. As integrating members of a regional community, refugees build and contribute to social capital. The proposed concept is a paradigm shift from a 'charitable' or beneficiary view of refugee settlement to regional socio-economic development while ensuring a meaningful life for the refugees.

Project Aims

- To outline the current landscape for migrant and refugee settlement including relevant policies and practices as they relate to regional and rural settlement with a focus on employers
- To determine population patterns; what proportion of population lives in regional, rural and remote areas; the internal migration of young people to the metropolitan cities and future needs.

- To uncover why it is important to settle refugees and migrants in the regional areas with a specific focus on employment opportunities, lifestyle, developing social capital, education, affordability including:
 - The barriers for migrants
 - The strengths of refugees through a social capital and strength-based approach
 - How regional communities can welcome refugees
- What are the potential limitations or inhibitors to regional settlement
- How can we enhance capacity of regional communities through a resource based approach

Project Methods

This research involves a desk based literature review and interviews to be conducted with key stakeholders (policy makers, researchers, settlement providers etc). The student will be engaged in the process of conducting interviews with the supervisors and also taking notes and finalising the literature review into a report that will be published under the HADRI banner.

Opportunity for Skill Development

Student will obtain skills in data collection, analysis and report writing. There will also be the opportunity to learn and develop interview skills with experts in the field of settlement.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

Project is open to any student with an interest in this topic/subject area

Project 106: Maintaining Community in the face of COVID 19: a case study from Greater Western Sydney

Supervisor(s): Helena Onnudottir - h.onnudottir@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Mary Hawkins - m.hawkins@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Project description

COVID 19 has radically restricted mobility. For weeks at a stretch, people have been asked to remain within their local neighbourhood, and to limit their interaction with others. Even as some restrictions on mobility and social interaction ease, for many people, and particularly for those who are continuing to work from home, the local neighbourhood remains their primary location. This project explores the extent to which enforced immobility has changed people's perception of their immediate social and geographic community in the Katoomba local government area. Has it caused greater engagement, for example prompted people to explore their neighbourhood, and to reach out to local neighbourhood groups? Have house bound individuals sought contact with others through facilities like the virtual chat rooms hosted by the Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre? How has an absence of tourists – in 2019 more than four and a half million people visited the Blue Mountains on either a day or overnight trips - affected people's perceptions of their neighbourhood? Katoomba LGA has been chosen as the case study because it hosts a diversity of neighbourhood organisations, has few transitory residents, and has a strong sense of community, evident in the response to bush fires, for example. It is therefore a good locale in which to investigate community resilience in the face of COVID-19.

Project Aims

The major aim of this project is to explore – through anthropological and sociological lenses – forms of 'community resilience' in the face of challenges set in place by the Covid-19 pandemic. Global responses to the pandemic have been diverse and well documented in public and social media since March of 2020. Our aim is to produce a closely focused case study research, at a local community level, which will provide an insight into the particular responses and reactions to the pandemic, arising in a small Australian community. Such academic enquiry will provide critical insights into social and cultural factors at a grassroots level, which might at times not be detected, analysed, and understood in political and media debates through the broad national and global gaze. A journal article will be prepared by the student and the supervision team based on the research findings.

Project Methods

This project will take a mixed methods approach. Firstly, the student will conduct a desk top survey of local media outlets, for example The Blue Mountains Gazette and the Blue Mountains News website. Secondly, the student will contact (via email or in person) the Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre and the Mountains Community Resource Network, in order to obtain usage statistics, and to recruit one staff member from each organisation for interviews. Thirdly, the student will recruit a further five individuals for interviews, sourced through the Centre and via the Network, or from the student's own personal social network. The interview protocol will be developed by the student and the supervision team. Finally, the student will conduct observations within the Katoomba LGA, recording evidence of community responses to Covid-19 restriction in the form of public display of advertisements and information aimed at community members.

Note that these are proposed methods, depending on Ethics approval and social and physical distancing restrictions during the summer months.

Opportunity for Skill Development

This project allows a student to receive training in field research methods with the guidance of two experienced anthropologists. The student will develop their observation techniques and record these observations in a field journal which will be reviewed by the supervision team and discussed with the student; the student will learn how to construct an interview protocol and gain experience in interviewing; and finally will develop skills in data analysis and report writing.

The student will also be invited to collaborate in the production of a journal article based on the research.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following prerequisite(s) to apply

This project will ideally suit a student of sociology or anthropology, in their second or third year, who is resident in the Blue Mountains and already has some experience in field research, possibly from participation in a field research related New Colombo Plan project.

Project 107: Media Representations of Working Holiday Makers During COVID-19

Supervisor(s): Garth Lean - g.lean@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Project description

Each year, Australia issues around 140,000 Working Holiday Visas to young people from other countries to allow them to travel to and work in Australia for 1 year. If these 'Working Holiday Makers' (WHMs) / backpackers wish to stay for a second or third year, they can secure a visa extension by travelling to rural and regional areas of Australia and working in a specified field for 88 days. These fields of work include: plant and animal cultivation; fishing and pearling; tree farming and felling; mining; and construction.

The COVID-19 global health pandemic has created a period of great uncertainty for Working Holiday visa holders. Decisions needed to be made about whether to return to countries (where the situation may be less safe, or they may be indefinitely separated from partners, or have no work), or to remain in Australia where access to work, accommodation and key services may be uncertain. In some cases, these visa holders did not have a choice as border closures and cancelled flights made returning home impossible.

The TinDA (Travel in the Digital Age) and SoTech (Social Technologies) research teams are currently completing research investigating the experiences of Working Holiday Makers in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic. To date this has been in the form of a nationwide survey. A Summer research student will work with the research team to gather and analyse media articles that have been published since the declaration of the global pandemic to support ongoing research on the topic.

Project Aims

1. To identify media representations of Working Holiday Makers in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. To identify the experiences of Working Holiday Makers covered within media during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Project Methods

The summer research student will:

1. Search for media articles on Working Holiday Makers and backpackers in Australia during COVID-19.
2. Collate articles in an Excel spreadsheet.
3. Conduct a basic thematic analysis to identify common representations of Working Holiday Makers during COVID-19 and the experiences and issues encountered.

Opportunity for Skill Development

The student will have the opportunity to join the TinDA (Travel in the Digital Age) and SoTech (Social Technologies) research teams, a group of 20+ academics, research students and research associates investigating the intersections of mobile lives, people, travel and technology. We conduct innovative projects in collaboration with government, commercial and not-for-profit partners. This collaborative environment will enable the student to fast-track their development as a researcher, and lead to future research opportunities. In addition, the student will develop the following research skills:

- Learn how to conduct and organise a review of media using Excel.
- Gain skills in content / thematic analysis.
- Gain knowledge of the ethical and legal complexities of conducting social research.
- Have the opportunity to co-write publications that draw on the research they complete.
- Join a wider interdisciplinary team of staff and students and be included in the project's digital presence, in turn, building their own professional web presence.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

While all students are welcome to apply, this project would be most suited to a final year undergraduate student who has been completing a degree in the School of Social Sciences or School of Humanities and Communications. We welcome applications from students who are looking to continue into higher research degree programs, and to have an ongoing connection with the Travel in the Digital Age and Social Technologies research teams.

Project 108: A meta-ethnography to understand operational effectiveness of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) programs

Supervisor(s): Garry Stevens - g.stevens@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Nichole Georgeou - n.georgeou@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Project description

This study builds on the work done from the Summer Scholarships of 2018 and 2019. This study will conduct a meta-ethnography to understand the operational effectiveness of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) programs. This meta-ethnography study will build on the ongoing research of our systematic review on LRRD. Findings from the review will be further analysed using the meta-ethnographic approach by Noblit and Hare (1988). This approach will allow the analysis to develop a line of research argument synthesis by systematic translation and comparison between studies. The line-of-argument syntheses can enable the creation of new models, theories, or understanding, rather than a description of the synthesised papers (Noblit and Hare 1988). Through this study we aim to establish an evaluative framework that can be utilised by practitioners and policy makers to evaluate the operational effectiveness of LRRD programs.

Background to LRRD: The concept of LRRD emerged in the 1980's when the food crisis in Africa highlighted a funding gap between humanitarian assistance, relief, and development activities and the need to link short-term relief and longer-term development programs to support sustainable outcomes. LRRD was initially conceived as a 'continuum' model; a linear one-way transition from an emergency relief phase back to a pre-disaster development course, with rehabilitation often conceived as a 'bridge' between these phases. While the model provided important recognition that humanitarian need, poverty and state fragility are inter-related and often occur concurrently (Otto and Weingärtner 2013) this approach failed to respond to the complexity of protracted humanitarian emergencies of the 1990's where changing operational environments made it difficult to respond to each phase separately or in a linear fashion (Duffield, 1994, European Commission, 2001). A 'second generation' or 'contiguuum' model was adopted during this period which recognized the need for often simultaneous and complimentary use of different aid instruments. However, these latter iterations have also been criticised for lacking conceptual clarity and consensus about the specific problems LRRD is attempting to address. Although this approach is commonly endorsed at a policy level (e.g. European Parliament, 2012), there are no accepted operational definitions regarding the nature of phase transitions or the working integration of their functions (Mosel and Levine, 2014). Substantial multi-lateral evaluations following the South East Asian Tsunami (Brusset, 2006, Goyder, 2006) found that LRRD was not implemented systematically and LRRD policies were seen as "too vague and disconnected from practice to make any tangible difference" (Christopolos, 2006)

There has been recent renewed interest in LRRD, with European donors in particular arguing that this model can provide an organising framework to support the operationalisation of other recent policy constructs, particularly ‘resilience’, ‘disaster risk reduction’ and early recovery concepts (e.g. UNDP) (European Commission, 2012, Mosel and Levine, 2014). This is a notable proposition given that there remains limited evidence of successful functional integration within LRRD programs themselves. In this context it is timely to review the existing evidence base regarding LRRD-programs, including operational definitions regarding R-R-D integration, and identified program outcomes that are a function of successful integration. Such information can help support a clearer operational framework for LRRD and determine the feasibility of its adaptation to ‘resilience’ and related policy instruments.

Project Aims

The aim of this study aim is to establish an evaluative framework that can be utilised by practitioners and policy makers to evaluate the operational effectiveness of LRRD programs. The framework could also be used prospectively i.e. to design programs with more effective LRRD elements.

Project Methods

This project is undertaking a meta-ethnography based on the findings from an ongoing systematic review. The meta-ethnographic approach by Noblit and Hare (1988) will be adopted to undertake the analyses. This approach allows the analysis to develop a line of research argument synthesis by systematic translation and comparison between studies. The line-of-argument syntheses can enable the creation of new models, theories, or understanding, rather than a description of the synthesised papers (Noblit and Hare 1988).

Opportunity for Skill Development

Qualitative research method of undertaking a meta-ethnography.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

This project is open to any student who is keen to learn how to conduct a meta-ethnography.

Project 109: Connecting Parramatta City: Linking Visitor Experiences, Precincts and Sydney's Airports

Supervisor(s): Garth Lean - g.lean@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Project description

Parramatta is a dynamic and rapidly transforming city, within one of Australia's fastest growing regions. The city has a rich Indigenous heritage and is also the oldest inland European settlement in Australia, containing many important historical sites. Parramatta is also home to a diverse array of other cultural and natural attractions, along with major events, restaurants, bars, cafes and shopping experiences that cater for a diverse array of visitors.

The summer research student will work with the project supervisor and Parramatta City Council to investigate innovative strategies for linking Parramatta's visitor attractions and precincts. The students will also assist with investigating transport strategies to connect the City to both of Sydney's airports.

Project Aims

1. Identify innovative ideas and strategies for connecting Parramatta's visitor attractions and precincts.
2. Identify strategies for linking Parramatta City to Sydney's two airports to enhance visitation.

Project Methods

The summer research student will:

1. Search for innovative strategies that have been used to link visitor attractions and precincts in comparable cities.
2. Search for strategies that have been used to link comparable cities to airports, particularly new airport developments.
3. Collate information and strategies in an Excel spreadsheet.
4. Conduct a basic thematic analysis.

Opportunity for Skill Development

The student will have the opportunity to join the TinDA (Travel in the Digital Age) and SoTech (Social Technologies) research teams, a group of 20+ academics, research students and research associates investigating the intersections of mobile lives, people, travel and technology. We conduct innovative projects in collaboration with government, commercial and not-for-profit partners. This collaborative environment will enable the student to fast-track their development as a researcher, and lead to future research opportunities. In addition, the student will develop the following research skills:

- Learn how to conduct and organise a review of case-studies and strategies using Excel.
- Gain skills in content / thematic analysis.
- Gain knowledge of the ethical and legal complexities of conducting social research.
- Have opportunities to network with Parramatta City Council and other stakeholders in Western Sydney.
- Have the opportunity to co-write publications that draw on the research they complete.

- Join a wider interdisciplinary team of staff and students and be included in the project's digital presence, in turn, building their own professional web presence.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following prerequisite(s) to apply

While all students are welcome to apply, this project would be most suited to a final year undergraduate student who has been completing a degree in the School of Social Sciences or School of Humanities and Communications. We welcome applications from students who are looking to continue into higher research degree programs, and to have an ongoing connection with the Travel in the Digital Age and Social Technologies teams.

Project 110: Transnational Online Worship: African-Majority Churches in Australia, Covid-19 and the Zoomiverse

Supervisor(s): Cristina Rocha - c.rocha@westernsydney.edu.au
Principal Supervisor

Kathleen Openshaw - k.openshaw@westernsydney.edu.au
Second Supervisor

Project description

This student project falls under the umbrella of the larger ARC Discovery project (with Richard Vokes, UWA), 'The African Diaspora and Christianity in Australia: New Perspectives on Materiality, Media and Religion'. In the past two decades, Australia, like other countries in the Global North, has received a growing number of people from the African continent. Many bring their religions with them, particularly Pentecostalism, but many more convert after arrival. While there has been extensive research in Europe and the US on Pentecostalism and the African diaspora [Adogame 2013; Butticci 2016, Coleman 2000], there has been little research in Australia, where a proportionally large intake from the African Great Lakes region has often been associated with poor settlement outcomes [Marlowe 2013; Tilbury 2007; Westoby 2008]. They have also been on the receiving end of a racialised moral panic regarding so-called 'African gangs.'

One of the ways in which members of this population respond to the challenges they face is through a growing engagement with Christian churches, particularly Pentecostal-charismatic ones. As a global phenomenon, Pentecostalism gives them a sense of belonging to the host and homeland societies and beyond. It also impacts on the religious landscape of the host society [Knibbe 2010; Van De Kamp 2017]. Increasingly, these individuals attend churches that were founded in Africa, yet which they have only encountered for the first time in Australia. Our research shows that these congregants spend an average of 10 hours per week engaged in worship and other church-related activities, and for some, the time commitment can be as high as 45 hours per week. Thus, church is central to their lives and church leaders are highly trusted alongside community elders.

However, with the onset of the covid-19 pandemic churches had to move services and all activities online. Indeed, watching streamed services via Facebook or YouTube from one's couch, or attending prayer meetings via Zoom is how people now engage with their religious community. Although for many African migrants the corporeality of worship cannot be replaced with a digital experience of God, they have for many years supplemented attending religious services in the flesh with an array of online religious content from across the globe. This summer project will focus on offline/online religious entanglements by mapping both the presence of African-majority churches in the Greater Western Sydney area as well as their presence online. In addition, the student will investigate how these churches engage with other churches nationally and transnationally. Finally, the student will write a short literature review on media, religion and African diasporic churches.

Project Aims

This student project has four large aims:

1. Understanding how African-majority churches are distributed geographically, and by denomination and nationality in GWS.
2. Investigating these churches' online activities (websites and social media), which were mostly created after the onset of covid-19;
3. Exploring how these churches are connected online with other churches nationally and transnationally, as they form networks through which ideas, practices, people and the 'Holy Spirit' circulate.
4. Analysing the data in light of the literature regarding the interconnections among media, religion and African diasporic churches in Europe and the US.

Project Methods

Reflecting the global pattern, Pentecostal churches in Australia are characterised by a diverse and fragmented organisational landscape. Thus, aside from megachurches, Pentecostalism is made up of dozens of smaller churches. However, these churches' numbers fluctuate all the time, both as congregants frequently move between churches and as factions within existing churches 'break away' to form their own denominations (usually under the leadership of a charismatic pastor). Conversely, though, it is also very common for smaller churches to also join up with each, either for 'one-off' events (such as prayer crusades), or around ongoing practices (such as sharing a centre for worship, or joint media projects), and these can sometimes form the basis for permanent mergers. For these, and other, reasons, Pentecostal churches are always most effectively analysed not as a set of discrete institutions, but as part of a single nexus of inter-related organisations.

Taking this into consideration, the student will conduct their research online in order to:

- Identify African-majority churches in GWS (the student will be given a list of churches as a starter).
- Collect the media content produced by these churches (which includes everything from: written testimonies of personal religious experience, to online streamed services and activities, to moving images of ecstatic religious experience, to engagement with congregants via chat function during services).
- Identify major themes in this material (e.g., entanglements between religious and migration narratives, and narratives of hardship and success/prosperity).
- Identify (local, national, and transnational) connections these churches sustain with other churches;

In addition, the student will produce a short literature review on the uses of media and African churches, and the 'distant church', that is, the shift to online churches after the pandemic hit. This literature review and media mapping will be used for drafting a research article for future submission.

This research is especially significant and appropriate as services and all church activities have moved online due to the covid-19 pandemic. This method also responding to the recent 'material turn' within media anthropology and the study of religion – to which Vokes [2012a, 2012b, 2018] and Rocha [2006, 2017, 2019, 2020] have made significant contributions.

Opportunity for Skill Development

- The student will learn how to conduct online research by:
 - Mapping African-majority churches' locations, denominations and nationality in GWS;
 - Finding out what kind of online services and activities these churches are providing for their congregants after churches were shut due to covid-19;
 - Investigating how these churches are connected online with other churches nationally and transnationally.
- The student will gain knowledge of the interconnections between media, migration and religion by conducting a literature review.
- Drawing on the findings from online research and the literature review, the supervisors will work with the student on the draft of a research article.

Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply

This project is ideal for a 2nd or 3rd year student in the social sciences or humanities.