

## **Data Schmata: some reasons why I think musicians in Wadeye (NT, Australia) have chosen to work with researchers**

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This paper responds to the question "How are our consultants' views included in our own work and how do they shape the record?" Through my work with musicians in Wadeye (Northern Territory, Australia) I have come to believe that performers participate in research for a multitude of different reasons, including:

1. Intellectual stimulation;
2. To validate and memorialise their life's achievements;
3. To demonstrate to others in their community the status and vitality of their musical practice, and hence recruit more performers to continue the tradition;
4. To achieve balance with other groups who have undertaken similar projects;
5. To attract status, prestige and resources from the outside world;
6. For the pleasure of it.

For these performers, I believe that the question of 'data' is a non-question: the point about a living musical practice is that it has to be continued in the real world, not in the archive. Although many performers use recordings as an aid to performance, and wish for these recordings to be kept and made available to future generations, they do not see the recordings as objects that they wish to pay a lot of philosophical attention to beyond their supporting role in maintenance of musical and social practices. Their energies are necessarily directed to maintaining the practice, not maintaining the data.

As a researcher, I consider it my responsibility to pay due attention to making any data I am involved in producing as accessible and sustainable as possible -- not only to fulfil the ethical and personal obligations I feel to my research collaborators, but also because it supports my own research publications and agendas, and satisfies the funders and institutions that support my research. Like the musicians with whom I work, I consider that the recordings are an aid to my principal cultural activities rather than the focus of them. Having said that, I'm aware that in centuries to come the recordings may be of greater cultural interest than any theorising I may do about them.

I believe that there is much common ground between my musician collaborators and me, and the data produced as we travel that ground has to serve the interests of everyone involved in the journey. For me, this is the only practical way of proceeding. The record is not only desirably, but necessarily, shaped through interaction.