

Dr. Emma Louise Backe
emma.backe@gmail.com

EDUCATION

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| The George Washington University
<i>PhD, Medical Anthropology, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences</i>
Thesis: Breathing Through the Wound: Co-opting Care and Surviving Intimate Partner Violence in Cape Town, South Africa
Academic Advisors: Ilana Feldman (GW), Andrea Lopez (UMD), Sarah Wagner (GW) and Sameena Mulla (Emory) | September 2018-May 2025
Washington DC |
| The George Washington University
<i>Master of Arts, Medical Anthropology, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences</i>
<i>Certificate, Global Gender Policy, Elliott School of International Affairs</i>
Thesis: A Crisis of Care—The Politics, Poetics and Therapeutics of a Rape Crisis Hotline
Academic Advisors: Alex Dent (GW) and Sarah Wagner (GW) | September 2015-May 2017
Washington DC |
| Vassar College
<i>Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology and English</i>
Academic Advisor: Candice Lowe-Swift | September 2009-May 2013
Poughkeepsie, New York |

JOURNAL ARTICLES

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2024 | Abramowitz, Sharon, Emma Louise Backe, Susan Nkengesong, Dhruvi Banerjee and Sarah M. Murray. "Mental Health Interventions in Public Health Emergencies: The Best and the Rest in Research, Evidence, Intervention, and Policy Responses." <i>SSM-Mental Health</i> (100375). |
| 2024 | Backe, Emma Louise , Kelley Moulton and Jessie Waldman. "Dissonance, discordance, and disparity: The impact of differences in papers, processes, and people on justice for domestic violence survivors in South Africa." <i>International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy</i> . |
| 2023 | Manivannan, Q, Anumol, Dipali, Raja, Sinduja, Tamang, Dipti, Rathore, Khushi Singh, Backe, Emma Louise and Laura Shepherd. "Care Conversations." <i>International Feminist Journal of Politics</i> 25(2023):336-352. |
| 2022 | Fletcher, Erica Hua, Backe, Emma Louise et al. "Policy Statement Mental Wellbeing among Anthropologists at Universities: A Call for System Transformation." <i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i> 36(1):155-172. |
| 2021 | Backe, Emma Louise , Bosire, Edna N. and Emily Mendenhall. "Drinking Too Much, Fighting Too Much": The Dual "Disasters" of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Alcohol Use in South Africa." <i>Violence Against Women</i> 28(10):2312-2333. |
| 2021 | Backe, Emma Louise , Bosire, Edna N., Kim, Andrew Wooyoung and Emily Mendenhall. "'Thinking Too Much': A Systematic Review of the Idiom of Distress in Sub-Saharan Africa." <i>Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry</i> 45(4):655-682. |
| 2020 | "Capacitating Care: Activist Anthropology in Ethnographies of Gender-Based Violence." <i>Feminist Anthropology</i> 1(2):192-198. |
| 2018 | Anderson, Ryan; Backe, Emma Louise , et al. (eds). "Theorizing the Contemporary: Speculative Anthropologies." <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> .
https://culanth.org/fieldsights/series/speculative-anthropologies |
| 2018 | "A Crisis of Care: The Politics and Therapeutics of a Rape Crisis Hotline." <i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i> 32:463-480. |
| 2018 | Backe, Emma Louise , Lilleston, Pamela and Jennifer McCleary-Sills. "Networked Individuals, Gendered Violence: A Literature Review of Cyberviolence." <i>Violence & Gender</i> 5:135-146. |

BOOK CHAPTERS

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2025 | Mchuchu-MacMillan, Tarisai and Emma Louise Backe . "The Politics of Care in the Fight |
|------|--|

- 2024 Against Domestic Violence: Community-Coordinated Safety and Collective Care in South Africa.” In *Brave Women: Fighting for Justice in the 21st Century*, edited by Julia Zulver and Kiran Stallone. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-70702-5>
- 2024 **Backe, Emma Louise** and Alex Fitzpatrick. “Field Work and Feeled Work: Addressing Mental Illness in Ethnography.” In *Inclusive Ethnography: Making Fieldwork Safer, Healthier & More Ethical*, edited by Caitlin Procter and Branwen Spector. Sage Publishers. <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/inclusive-ethnography/book284396#contents>

BOOK REVIEWS

- 2023 Bhadra-Heintz, John I.B. A Tyranny Against Itself: Intimate Partner Violence on the Margins of Bogotá. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 37(3):314-316.
- 2018 Sufrin, Carolyn. Jailcare: Finding the Safety Net Behind Bars. *Anthropology Quarterly* 91(3).
- 2018 McKay, Ramah. Medicine in the Meantime: The Work of Care in Mozambique. *Anthropology News*.

TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS

- 2025 M. Richter, B. Brown, E.L. Backe, M. Remba and E. Van Rooyen. 2025. *Key Population experiences with health care in Cape Town: The Impact of the US Administration funding cuts in 2025*. Research & Advocacy Brief: SWEAT, Sisonke, SANPUD, Triangle and GenderDynamix. https://triangle.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Research-and-Advocacy-Brief_Final-9-Sept-2025.pdf
- 2022 CARE GBV Baseline Study: What Promotes USAID-funded GBV Programming. Development Professionals Inc.-Making Cents LLC, USAID.
- 2020 CONVERGE COVID-19 Working Groups for Public Health and Social Sciences Research: Research Agenda-Setting Paper. CONVERGE, Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) and NSF. <https://converge.colorado.edu/working-groups/gender-and-intersectionality-research-on-covid-19/>
- 2020 Learning Brief—Domestic Violence and COVID-19: Emerging Global Trends, Responses and Challenges. MOSAIC Training, Service and Healing Centre and AWDF.
- 2018 USAID Youth in Development Policy Implementation Assessment. Dexis Consulting Group and USAID Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL) Bureau.
- 2017 Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa. UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in collaboration with ICRW. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/child-marriage-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa/>
- 2016 Common Threads: An Art-Therapy Recovery Program for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence—Kathmandu, Nepal Evaluation Report. Common Threads. <https://commonthreadspj.org/>
- 2015 Hill, Amber J., Contreras, Manuel and **Emma Louise Backe**. *Evidence Brief: School-Based Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls*. The Global Women’s Institute and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government. <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs6206/files/downloads/Evidence%20Brief-%20School-Based%20Interventions%20to%20Prevent%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20and%20Girls.pdf>

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- 2021 “Slow Research in Urgent Times: COVID-19, Gender-Based Violence and the Ethics of Crisis.” *Digital Fieldwork Initiative*, Georgetown University. <http://sigla.georgetown.domains/digitalfieldwork/slow-research-in-urgent-times-covid-19-gender-based-violence-and-the-ethics-of-crisis/>
- 2018 “Letting Silence Have a Voice in #MeToo.” *Sapiens*. <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/metoo-silence/>
- 2018 “Left to their Own Devices: Gender, Cyberviolence, and the Internet.” *Lady Science and The New Inquiry*. <https://thenewinquiry.com/blog/left-to-their-own-devices-gender-cyberviolence-and-the-internet/>

- 2018 "Personalizing Access, Personalizing Praxis." *Allegra Lab*.
<https://allegralaboratory.net/personalizing-access-personalizing-praxis-hautalk/>
- 2017 "Engagements with Ethnographic Care: on care and self-care as an anthropologist and a rape crisis advocate." *Anthropology News*.
<https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/AN.324>
- 2017 "Feminist Anthropology." *Lady Science and The New Inquiry*.
<https://www.ladyscience.com/feminist-anthropology/no27>
- 2016 "Soothe-sayers and storytellers: The Healing Capacity of Narrative." *Peeps*. Aegis Media.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

-
- August 2025 "Gendered Sacrifice Zones: Gender-based Violence, Toxic Masculinities and Intimacy in South Africa." Anthropology of Southern Africa Conference, Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa.
- July 2025 "Waiting for Justice: Intimate Partner Violence, Attritional Lawfare and the Domestic Violence Act." African Feminisms Conference (AFEMS), Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.
- Oct 2024 "Intimate Partner Violence, Violence Against Children and Maternal Regret—The Role of Motherhood in Domestic Violence in Cape Town, South Africa." *Sexual Violence Research Institute (SVRI) Conference*. Cape Town, South Africa.
- Sep 2024 "Captive Maternal, Maternal Regret and Intimate Partner Violence." *Reworlding Reproduction Conference*. Pretoria, University of Pretoria.
- March 2024 "Injurious Intimacy: Scars and Selfhood for Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence in Cape Town." *Rethinking Injuries: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Harm, Safety and Society*. Johns Hopkins University.
- Nov 2023 "'You Putting Yourself in Jail': The Intimate Carceral of Domestic Violence." American Anthropological Association (AAA)/CASCA Annual Meeting. Toronto, Canada
- Oct 2022 "Reading and Resisting the 'Traces' of Sexual Violence: Confessional Discourse, Spectacle and Ethnographic Refusal among South African Survivors." *Sex & Publics: Interdisciplinary Debates in Southern Africa*. Gala, University of Exeter, UKRI, Governing Intimacies and WISER. University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- July 2022 "In and About: A Feminist Ethic of Care and Academia." Roundtable. International Feminist Journal of Politics Conference. Virtual.
- June 2021 "You Can't Have a Future If You're Dead." The Politics of Mourning and Mobilization around South Africa's Gender-Based Violence 'Emergency.' A World in Revolution: Feminist Politics in Times of Social Uprisings. LSE Gender Studies.
- April 2021 "Viral Silences and Shadow Pandemics: The Alterlives of Survival in South Africa." Spring Symposium, Anthropology Department, George Washington University.
- Nov 2020 "System Transformation to Improve Mental Wellbeing at Universities: A Conversation with the Anthropology and Mental Health Interest Group." Raising Voices, American Anthropological Association.
- Nov 2019 "The ART of Survival: Psychosocial Care in South Africa's Feminized Syndemics." Panel: Beyond the Endgame: Living with HIV in Post-Crisis Times. American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. Vancouver, British Columbia.
- April 2019 "Emotional Labor and Heart Engaging Mental Illness in Ethnography." George Washington University Anthropology Department Spring Symposium. Washington, DC.
- March 2019 "Anthropological Allyship and Ethnographic Care: Bringing #MeToo Methodologies to Bear in Gender-Based Violence Ethnography." Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) Annual Meeting. Portland, OR.
- Nov 2017 "Me Too: Stories in the Age of Survivorship." American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. Washington, DC.
- March 2017 "A Crisis of Care: The Politics of Care in Ethnographies of Sexual Violence." Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) Annual Meeting. Santa Fe, NM.
- Nov 2016 "A Crisis of Care: The 'Problem' of Sexual Violence in Ethnographic Research." American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting. Minneapolis, MN.
- Oct 2016 "Ethnography and Advocacy Across Categories." Creating Dialogues Between Social Movements & Academia. Public Anthropology Conference. American University, Washington, DC.

Oct 2015 “The Intersections of Anthropology and Public Health.” Shifting Climates: Dialogues of the Urgent and Emergent. Public Anthropology Conference. American University, Washington, D.C.

AWARDS AND HONORS

April 2021 Philip K. Amsterdam Graduate Student Teaching Award, George Washington University
 October 2019 Anthropology of Mental Health Interest Group Student Travel Award, *American Anthropological Association*
 June 2019 Summer Research Award, Institute for Ethnographic Research (IfER), Anthropology Department, The George Washington University

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

April 2024 American Association of University Women (AAUW) Dissertation Fellowship.
 March 2024 Dean’s Graduate Instructorship, Columbian College of Arts and Science, George Washington University. *Declined.*
 March 2024 Dean’s Dissertation Completion Fellowship, George Washington University. *Declined.*
 July 2021 International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF), Social Science Research Council (SSRC)
 April 2021 Wenner Gren Dissertation Fieldwork Grant
 March 2019 The George Washington University Summer Pre-Dissertation Fellowship, Institute for Ethnographic Research (IfER)
 March 2019 The Lewis N. Cotlow Fund, Anthropology Department, George Washington University
 March 2016 The Lewis N. Cotlow Fund, Anthropology Department, George Washington University

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Anthropology Department, The George Washington University

Professor Of Record

Spring 2023 ANTH 3708 Anthropology of Africa: Medical Colonialism, Global Health and International Development
 Spring 2021 ANTH 3691 Speculative Anthropologies
 Summer 2020 ANTH 3501 Anthropology of Development

Anthropology Department, The George Washington University

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Fall 2020 ANTH 2501: Anthropology of Gender, Professor Attiya Ahmad
 Spring 2020 ANTH 3501: Anthropology of Development, Professor Steven Lubkemann
 Fall 2019 ANTH 3503: Psychological Anthropology, Professor Richard Grinker
 Spring 2019 ANTH 1002: Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology, Professor Hugh Gusterson
 Fall 2018 ANTH 1002: Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology, Professor Richard Grinker

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Anthropological Quarterly, Institute for Ethnographic Research (IfER)

Assistant Editor

Washington D.C.
 August 2023-August 2024

Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE GBV)

Consultant for CARE GBV through Making Cents and USAID

Washington D.C.
 February 2021-September 2022

When Safer at Home Isn’t Really Safe Study, Marquette University

Graduate Research Assistant

Washington D.C.
 November 2020-August 2021

PIs: Dr. Sameena Mulla and Dr. Heather R. Hlavka

Gender and Intersectionality COVID Working Group

Co-Lead, coordinated by CONVERGE and National Science Foundation (NSF)

Washington D.C.
 April 2020-July 2020

PI: Dr. Jane Henrici, George Washington University

Dexis Consulting Group, USAID Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL) Bureau

Research Assistant, Youth in Development Policy Assessment

Washington D.C.
 October 2017-June 2018

Cellular Connections Project, Anthropology, The George Washington University

Project Manager

Washington D.C.
 September 2015-August 2017

Funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF)

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

Washington, D.C.

<i>Violence, Rights and Inclusion Research Intern</i>	May 2016-May 2017
Common Threads (NGO)	Kathmandu, Nepal
<i>Consultant, Pilot Program of Arts-Based Intervention with GBV Refugees</i>	August 2016-January 2017
Global Women's Institute (GWI), The George Washington University	Washington, D.C.
<i>Research Assistant</i>	November 2014-August 2015
Peace Corps Fiji	Korovou, Fiji
<i>Community Health Empowerment Volunteer, Gender and Youth Committee</i>	September 2013-May 2014
Vassar College Writing Center	Poughkeepsie, NY
<i>Head Consultant</i>	September 2010-May 2013
Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage	Washington, DC
<i>Folklife Festival Intern and Cultural Docent</i>	June 2012-August 2012
<i>Creativity and Crisis: Unfolding The AIDS Memorial Quilt</i>	
Gender, Health and Justice Research Unit, University of Cape Town	Cape Town, South Africa
<i>Intern</i>	April 2012-June 2012

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA) Executive Board	March 2022-December 2022
<i>Member-at-Large, Judge for Leah M. Ashe Paper Prize</i>	
Gender-Based Violence Topical Interest Group (GBV TIG)	2020-2022
<i>Newsletter Editor, Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA)</i>	
Graduate Education Strategic Planning Committee	2019-2020
<i>Student Representative, George Washington University</i>	
Feminist Anthropology	2019-Present
<i>Editorial Board Member</i>	
Sapiens, Magazine of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research	2019-2024
<i>Advisory Board Member</i>	
Peer Advocates, Anthropology Department, George Washington University	2016-2025
<i>President</i>	

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Gender Rights in Tech (GRIT), Cape Town, South Africa	2025
<i>Youth Mentor—Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence Youth Mentorship Programme</i>	
MOSAIC Training, Service and Healing Centre, Cape Town, South Africa	2020-2023
<i>Research Intern</i>	
Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS), Washington, D.C.	2017-2018
<i>Policy and Advocacy Team—Safe Bars Initiatives, Street Harassment, Decriminalize Sex Work</i>	
DC Rape Crisis Center, Washington, D.C.	2015-2017
<i>Rape Crisis Advocate and Community Educator</i>	
National Association of Peace Corps	2014-2018
<i>Health Justice for Peace Corps Volunteers</i>	
Dutchess County Jail, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.	2010-2011
<i>Women's Writing Group Facilitator</i>	

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Anthropological Association (AAA)
Association for Feminist Anthropology
Association for the Anthropology of Policy
Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA)
Society for Psychological Anthropology (SPA)
Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA), Gender-Based Violence Topical Interest Group (GBV TIG)
Anthropology of Southern Africa Association