

The Interview-Document Nexus

Recovering Histories of LGBTI Military Service in Australia

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ABSTRACT Since 2014, I have been coordinating a team project documenting the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) military service in Australia. The project examines changing policies, practices, and most importantly, the lived experiences of LGBTI military service personnel from the end of the Second World War until the present. When we conceived this project, we expected that we would derive most policy information from records in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and most information about lived experience from a mixture of media reports and oral history interviews. What has astounded us, though, has been the extent to which several service members kept their own personal archives of documents – most of which related to their personal service and some of which did not appear in the NAA catalogue. In other instances, interview participants’ testimonies or personal documents raised topics that sent us to uncover other uncatalogued archival records. In this article, I draw on examples from our research project where this interview-document nexus proved fruitful in uncovering hitherto hidden histories of LGBTI military service in Australia. Rather than thinking about oral and archival sources as needing to be reconciled, conceptualizing them as a nexus generates new methodological possibilities to uncover new sources that inform each other, enriching both microhistories and grand narratives of the past.

RÉSUMÉ Depuis 2014, je coordonne un projet d'équipe documentant l'histoire du service militaire lesbien, gai, bisexuel, transgenre et intersexué (LGBTI) en Australie. Le projet se penche sur les changements dans les politiques, les pratiques et, plus important encore, l'expérience vécue par le personnel en service militaire LGBTI de la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale à aujourd'hui. Au moment de la conception du projet, nous nous attendions à obtenir la majorité des informations sur les politiques de la National Archives of Australia (NAA) et l'information sur le vécu d'une combinaison de rapports médiatiques et d'entrevues d'histoire orale. Nous avons toutefois été stupéfaits de voir dans quelle mesure plusieurs membres des services avaient conservé leurs propres archives, dont la plupart des documents se rapportaient à leur propre service et n'apparaissent pas dans le répertoire de la NAA. Dans d'autres cas, les témoignages des participants aux entrevues ou les documents personnels nous mettaient sur la piste d'autre matériel d'archive non répertorié. Dans cet article, je m'inspire d'exemples tirés de notre projet de recherche où ce lien entrevue-document s'est avérée profitable en fait de découvertes d'histoires de service militaire de LGBTI en Australie qui auraient autrement été passées sous silence. Plutôt que de voir les sources orales et archivistiques comme étant à réconcilier, les conceptualiser comme étant en relation fait émerger de nouvelles possibilités méthodologiques afin de découvrir de nouvelles sources qui se nourrissent l'une l'autre, enrichissant ainsi à la fois les micro-histoires et les grands récits du passé.

Introduction

In March 1982, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) chief of air staff ordered an investigation titled the Court of Inquiry into Allegations Made against RAAF Police by RAAF Academy Cadets. This was an investigation into RAAF Police procedures when questioning four cadets accused of homosexual conduct. There had been longstanding rules in the Australian military against lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) service personnel, but it was only since 1974 that the three services had adopted a consistent ban. Any cases of sexual activity that involved minors, significant rank imbalances, or non-consensual behaviour were treated as disciplinary matters. All other cases were dealt with administratively by the respective service police. Those individuals found to be “confirmed homosexuals” had the option to request their own honourable discharge or to be discharged dishonourably with the notation “services no longer required.”¹

The court of inquiry sat for a week, taking about 1,000 pages of witness testimony, and delivered its findings one month later. The 57-page document outlined what had brought the four suspected homosexuals to the attention of the RAAF Police and focused especially on the RAAF Police interviews. The court of inquiry determined that, while the police findings of fact were generally accurate, minor procedural errors had collectively disadvantaged the cadets. Consequently, the chief of air staff accepted the report’s recommendation not to dismiss the four cadets for homosexual conduct but, instead, to issue them with stern warnings. This court of inquiry is the only known investigation into Australian Defence Force (ADF) police practices related to its longstanding ban on LGB service personnel, and it is the only known case where the excesses of the service police were rebuffed. The Australian government did not lift the ban until 23 November 1992, and the ADF adopted a more inclusive approach to LGB service after recognizing same-sex partners in late 2005.

A redacted copy of the court of inquiry document is now publicly accessible in the National Archives of Australia (NAA).² This was not the case until July 2017; before then, there was not even an entry for the document in the NAA’s

1 See Noah Riseman, “From Witch-Hunts to Pride Balls: The ADF and LGBTI Service Personnel,” in *Beyond Combat: Australian Military Activity Away from the Battlefield*, ed. Tristan Moss and Tom Richardson (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 29–44.

2 See National Archives of Australia (NAA), series B4586, item 704/1572/P1 PART 1.

RecordSearch catalogue. The file had been in the Department of Defence's possession, and it was only when I requested it through the NAA that the department handed the document over and it was added to the catalogue. It is not the purpose of this article to question why this was the case, and both the NAA and Department of Defence were responsive to my request.³ The key point I want to dwell on is this: had I not learned about this document's existence, I would never have known to request it, and it would still not be available. I learned about the court of inquiry through an oral history interview with one of the accused cadets, Richard Gratton. Richard not only had a sharp memory, but he also had saved numerous documents that would otherwise not be available for historians to access. He was not the only participant who told stories that led us to other records. Some of these were still in the Department of Defence's possession, while others, even if handed over to the NAA, contained personal information and therefore would be restricted under privacy provisions of the Archives Act.

Richard's oral history interview is one of 145 that my colleagues and I have conducted as part of an Australian Research Council-funded study into the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) military service in Australia. The project has the approval of the Australian Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee and, as part of that process, all interview participants have the option of using their real names or choosing pseudonyms. The majority wanted us to use their names and to quote them because they wanted their stories told publicly. We completed the project interviews in December 2018 and will be depositing the recordings and transcripts, along with personal papers that some participants donated, into the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives. Those ex-service members, like Richard, who kept documents did so because the papers reflected important events in their lives. Their motives reflect Richard Cox's observation that personal archives are "reminders of how we live in our world and are affected by numerous forces and institutions governing our activities."⁴

3 An email from a contact at the National Archives of Australia gave me more detail about the institution's acquisition practices, which vary depending on government department and type of records. Some of that information is available from the NAA publication *What We Keep: Principles for Selecting the Australian Government's National Archives*, 2015, http://www.naa.gov.au/Images/what-we-keep_tcm16-88809.pdf; and "Agency-Specific Records Authorities," National Archives of Australia, <http://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/records-authorities/types-of-records-authorities/Agency-RA/index.aspx>.

4 Richard J. Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling: Readings, Reflections and Ruminations* (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books, 2008), 150.

Institutional archives necessarily reflect the values of both dominant systems and of bureaucracies, including their silences. For this project, the ADF's historical treatment of homosexuality created a paradox. By systematically suppressing homosexuality, the institution created many silences; thus our project needed oral history as a methodology to recover hidden histories. The ADF is also bureaucratic, though, and the tools by which it suppressed homosexuality included documentation retained in archival records. Because of power structures and regulations around access and privacy (outlined later), many of those records – particularly those about individual LGBTI people – are largely inaccessible to researchers and sometimes even to defence members. Yet the bureaucracy brilliantly undermines its own control over the official record in that it necessarily creates a parallel set of documents over which it has less control: the letters, forms, and other documentation retained by the service members. This type of personal archive, retained by individuals in their homes, is different from personal archives preserved in archival institutions and has inadvertently given individuals the power to expose both the institution's past behaviour and the silences in its archive.

In this article, I focus on the phenomenon I refer to as the interview-document nexus: the production through oral history interviews of new, previously unavailable pieces of documentary evidence, which have in turn reinforced the interview participants' narratives. Drawing on literature about institutional archives, personal archives, and oral history, I argue that researchers need to shift away from the binary of oral history interviews versus written sources and, instead, consider the ways oral history interviews can uncover otherwise unknown or inaccessible documents. Interviews and documents can thus operate as a nexus where each source set informs the other and both work together to produce rich historical narratives. This article will first outline some of the literature about the relationship between oral history and archives, and will then address the role of personal archives within archival theory. It will then present four case studies from this LGBTI service history project to show the ways that the interview-document nexus can enrich historical research in unexpected and fruitful ways. The interview-document nexus exists for many research subjects, but in cases like these, where there were deliberate efforts to silence LGBTI service members, the nexus is more keenly evident.

Literature Review: Oral History, Archives, and Personal Archives

Traditionally, oral history has been seen as a way to explore the histories of those who were marginalized and excluded from written records, or of those who did not keep primary source documents such as letters or diaries.⁵ Oral history has thus often been conceptualized as a methodology to counter the bias contained within written records and to capture those histories overlooked by the collecting practices of institutional archives.⁶ Until the 1990s, archivists mostly shied away from including oral histories in their collections because they saw oral testimonies as a form of opinion, in contrast to written documents, which were supposedly objective.⁷ Over time, archivists have reflected on the imperfection of written documents as well, which may be incomplete and which are just as prone to reflect their creators' biases.⁸

By the 1990s, both oral historians and archivists were discussing the ways that archival institutions could preserve oral histories as well as oral histories' role in complementing written archival collections. There is still little literature about the intersections between archives and oral history, and the majority of articles focus on the debates among archivists over how (and in some cases, whether) to archive oral histories.⁹ As early as the 1960s and '70s, oral history was seen as a legitimate way to provide contextual information for records. Archivists could interview the depositors of personal papers to ascertain information about why they created or used particular documents.¹⁰ In 1983, James Fogerty foresaw that,

- 5 Anisa Puri and Alistair Thomson, *Australian Lives: An Intimate History* (Clayton, VIC: Monash University Publishing, 2017), ix.
- 6 Paul Thompson, "Problems of Method in Oral History," *Oral History* 1, no. 4 (1972): 26.
- 7 Jean-Pierre Wallot and Normand Fortier, "Archival Science and Oral Sources," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 366.
- 8 Deryck Schreuder, "The Heroic Study of Records: Problematising Archive and Textual Sources of Historical Writing," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 16 (1994): 69.
- 9 Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 161–92; Andrew Flinn and Rob Perks, "Curation or Creation? Archivists and Oral History," *Oral History* 41, no. 1 (2013): 113–19; Ellen D. Swain, "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century," in *The Oral History Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 343–61; Wallot and Fortier, "Archival Science and Oral Sources," 365–78; Bruce H. Bruemmer, "Access to Oral History: A National Agenda," *American Archivist* 54, no. 4 (1991): 494–501.
- 10 Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1987), 78; Christopher A. Lee and Robert Capra, "And Now the Twain Shall Meet: Exploring the Connections between

with the increasing volume of records being preserved, oral history was essential to provide contextual information and fill gaps in the archival record.¹¹

Many research projects combine oral history interviews with archival sources,¹² but there is surprisingly little scholarship in the fields of either oral history or archival studies that explicitly examines methodological approaches, challenges, or advantages to working with both types of sources. Scholars such as Trevor Lummis and Paul Thompson have written about problems of authenticity in both oral and written sources and the need for researchers to use a variety of sources in a complementary manner. Divergences between written and oral accounts may reveal the truth behind an official document or may constitute different viewpoints on the same event.¹³ Sometimes, written documents may deliberately exclude information, and in those instances, oral history interviews can reveal fresh insights that tell a broader story.¹⁴

Within all this literature about oral history and its relationship to archives and documents, there are a few underlying presumptions that may not always reflect the nature of the research journey. First, archival scholars who have written about oral history tend to assume that oral historians are working with records that are already accessible in archival institutions. Often, these would be papers of high-profile individuals such as politicians or authors. Indeed, Fogerty argues that best practice for bringing oral history and the archives into dialogue entails a review of the relevant papers or organizational records by researchers before

PIM and Archives," in *I, Digital: Personal Collections in the Digital Era*, ed. Christopher A. Lee (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011), 49–51; Swain, "Oral History in the Archives," 344.

- 11 James E. Fogerty, "Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives," *American Archivist* 46, no. 2 (1983): 150. See also Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 163.
- 12 See, for example, Alistair Thomson, "Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History," *Oral History Review* 42, no. 1 (2015): 1–29; Anne Monsour, "The Warp and the Weft: Interpreting the Lebanese Australian Story," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 30 (2008): 33–40; Bruno Pinto and Maria Partidário, "The History of the Establishment and Management Philosophies of the Portuguese Protected Areas: Combining Written Records and Oral History," *Environmental Management* 49, no. 4 (2012): 788–801; Noah Riseman, "Contesting White Knowledge: Yolngu Stories from World War II," *Oral History Review* 37, no. 2 (2010): 170–90; Roberta Perkins, "Talking Deviance History: Sydney Sex Workers of the Past," *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 15 (1993): 60–63.
- 13 Lummis, *Listening to History*, 75; Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 83–87, 180; Thompson, "Problems of Method in Oral History," 1–4.
- 14 Monsour, "The Warp and the Weft," 33; Alessandro Portelli, "Oral History as Genre," in *Narrative and Genre*, ed. Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 36.

they conduct oral history interviews.¹⁵ Of course this makes sense, but it is not necessarily feasible when working with people who have kept personal archives that are not part of institutional collections. Working with personal archives outside of archival institutions requires its own set of approaches and, as this article shows, opens new possibilities when it is linked with oral histories.

Only recently has the field of archival studies begun to consider the importance of personal archives, primarily because archives – sometimes called organizational or institutional archives – have traditionally been defined as repositories of institutional records.¹⁶ Documents generated and preserved by individuals have historically been viewed as manuscripts, artifacts, or ephemera, though in places such as Australia and Canada, there has been a long tradition of archival institutions collecting personal records. (The Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives was set up in 1978 for this very purpose.¹⁷) Most of the literature on personal archives uses the term self-evidently. The few scholars who define personal archives tend to do so in an oppositional manner or by outlining their characteristics. For instance, a call for papers for a 2001 special issue of *Archivaria* defined personal archives as “those archives created by individuals or family groups (as opposed to archives created by organizations).”¹⁸ Jennifer Douglas and Allison Mills show that scholars tend to define personal archives less by what they contain and more by who created them and why they did so. The creators are individuals rather than institutions, and they tend to preserve records that have personal significance rather than those that meet administrative requirements. The emphasis on emotional motivations links to the final characteristic sometimes used to describe personal archives: whereas institutional archives are methodical and ordered, personal archives are (supposedly) idiosyncratic, inconsistent, and significant only to the individual creator.¹⁹

15 Fogerty, “Filling the Gap,” 154.

16 Rodney G.S. Carter, Rob Fisher, Carolyn Harris, and Catherine Hobbs, “From the Guest Editors: Perspectives on Personal Archives,” *Archivaria* 76 (2013): 1–5.

17 See Gary Jaynes, “The Foundation of ALGA,” 1 May 2016, accessed 18 September 2018, <http://alga.org.au/files/Foundation-of-ALGA-.pdf>.

18 Sue McKemish and Michael Piggott, “Toward the Archival Multiverse: Challenging the Binary Opposition of the Personal and Corporate Archive in Modern Archival Theory and Practice,” *Archivaria* 76 (2013): 112.

19 Jennifer Douglas and Allison Mills, “From the Sidelines to the Center: Reconsidering the Potential of the Personal in Archives,” *Archival Science* 18, no. 3 (2018): 258–60.

Revisionist archival theorists argue that the binary, oppositional definitions of archives versus other records privilege one form of document over another, undermining and even devaluing the significance of personal records.²⁰ The Archival Education and Research Institute and the Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group suggest that archivists need to reconceptualize the numerous types of evidence and records as an “archival multiverse” that “encompasses the pluralism of evidentiary texts, memory-keeping practices and institutions, bureaucratic and personal motivations, community perspectives and needs, and cultural and legal constructs with which archival professionals and academics must be prepared, through graduate education, to engage.”²¹ Invoking a similarly diversified view of archives, Sue McKemish and Michael Piggott define personal archives broadly, “to include all forms, genres, and media of records relating to that person, whether captured in personal or corporate record-keeping systems; remembered, transmitted orally, or performed; held in manuscript collections, archival, and other cultural institutions, community archives, or other keeping places; or stored or shared in digital spaces.”²² Such a definition is particularly useful for this study because the personal archives kept by defence members include a mixture of their own writings and military records about their service careers. Jennifer Douglas and Allison Mills dub this intersection between personal and institutional records as “personal-in-the-institutional.”²³

The case studies in this article present individuals who have saved personal-in-the-institutional documents from their military service. Just as organizations save old records to preserve corporate memory and evidence, so too do individuals preserve personal archives, for similar reasons.²⁴ Personal archives are a window into the emotions and the private thoughts of an individual at a particular place and time, and they sometimes show the relationship between the

20 McKemish and Piggott, “Toward the Archival Multiverse,” 112; Richard J. Cox, “The Record in the Manuscript Collection,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 24, no. 1 (1996): 50–53; Catherine Hobbs, “The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals,” *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 128; Douglas and Mills, “From the Sidelines to the Center,” 257–60.

21 Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI) and Pluralizing the Archival Curriculum Group (PACG), “Educating for the Archival Multiverse,” *American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 73.

22 McKemish and Piggott, “Toward the Archival Multiverse,” 113.

23 Douglas and Mills, “From the Sidelines to the Center,” 261–62.

24 Cox, “The Record in the Manuscript Collection,” 52; Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling*, 4–5.

private and public spheres.²⁵ While a personal archive may seem to be about one person, Sue McKemish asserts that it can link the individual to society, positioning that person within collective history and memory.²⁶ As the case studies in this article show, this is most certainly the case for LGBTI service members, whose personal archives link their stories to the wider histories of the ADF's denigration and persecution of homosexuality. Moreover, the four examples in this article will show that personal archives – kept outside of archival institutions – can provide a means to uncover records from the recent past that would otherwise be withheld from public access because of closed access periods or privacy restrictions.²⁷

When thinking through the purposes and potential methods for accessing and using these types of personal archives, there are many instances where the literature on personal archives and oral history can inform each other. For instance, as Paul Ashmore, Ruth Craggs, and Hannah Neate note, accessing personal archives in private hands “requires forming relationships with their holders and often renders this sort of archival research a sociable occasion.”²⁸ It is personal, trusting relationships that form the foundation of successful oral history as well. Julia Horne is the first historian to explicitly link oral history with personal archives. She discusses the effectiveness of conducting interviews as a prompting, reflective tool: “The personal papers become the material link between interviewee and past events, a trigger for reflection; and the interviewer, the inquisitor of the personal papers, critiquing the ‘silences’ (what isn’t written), and asking the interviewee to fill in the gaps and evaluate the event from their present perspective.”²⁹ Ashmore, Craggs, and Neate similarly observe that the process of working with people to organize or catalogue their personal archives can produce fruitful reflections and stories that would be useful to record.³⁰

25 Hobbs, “The Character of Personal Archives,” 127–28.

26 Sue McKemish, “Evidence of Me...” *Archives and Manuscripts* 24, no. 1 (1996): 38.

27 See Jean-Pierre Wallot, “Building a Living Memory for the History of Our Present: New Perspectives on Archival Appraisal,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 2, no. 1 (1991): 269.

28 Paul Ashmore, Ruth Craggs, and Hannah Neate, “Working-With: Talking and Sorting in Personal Archives,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 38, no. 1 (2012): 83.

29 Julia Horne, “Oral History as Modern Personal Papers: In Defence of the Long Interview,” *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 25 (2003): 29.

30 Ashmore, Craggs, and Neate, “Working-With,” 87. Cox also mentions recording oral history as part of a process of going through old photographs and papers in Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling*, 55.

The case studies below reveal the intertwining of oral histories, archives, and personal archives, or what I call the interview-document nexus. The nexus is particularly useful when dealing with marginalized histories, in this case those of LGBTI people, whose oral histories and personal archives challenge the systematically gendered, racialized, heteronormative, and class biases in institutional archives. Oral history interviews can reveal the existence of official archival documents that would not otherwise have been known or accessible to researchers. Personal archives can introduce documents that would otherwise be closed to researchers and can support oral history interviews. The nexus can work the other way as well, with official records providing the names of potential interview participants, who in turn can produce their own personal archives to complement the official archive. In the case of current and ex-service members from the ADF, the interview-document nexus was especially important because the very nature of military service meant that there was always a significant paper trail relating to people's service. It was fortunate that these four interview participants kept personal archives and were kind enough to share them.

Case Study 1: Richard Gratton and Exposing Official Records

Deryck Schreuder notes that archives “are invariably also imperfect because certain texts have been deliberately destroyed – or simply lost. . . . The reasons for their disappearance are various, but the ultimate result is simply that the data upon which we base our knowledge and analysis is imperfect.”³¹ Fogerty noted in 1983 that gaps in archives are not always the result of records being lost but may also result from incomplete transfers of collections.³² This was the case in the example of the RAAF Academy court of inquiry, and it was only thanks to Richard Gratton's oral history interview that we learned about the court of inquiry and later recovered the record.³³ The oral history was just as important as the document, though, because it provided a coherent narrative

31 Schreuder, “The Heroic Study of Records,” 69.

32 Fogerty, “Filling the Gap,” 150.

33 For a longer description of Richard's life story, including the incident at the RAAF Academy, see Noah Riseman, Shirleene Robinson, and Graham Willett, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2018), 117–37.

explaining the sequence of events that culminated in the inquiry.

Richard enrolled at the RAAF Academy in 1981, and during his first year, he had three sexual encounters with an older cadet named Ryan (name changed). Ryan also had sex with other cadets, and this eventually got him into trouble. Richard was away when an incident happened in early 1982, but he explained it second-hand:

Suddenly there was this great commotion and noise and yelling . . . and Ryan was seen jumping naked out of the ground floor window of one of the other cadets, Steve, and was seen running naked across the courtyard. And so Steve got together with the rest of his course mates to talk about what they were going to do because he'd basically woken up from a drunken haze, unconscious, to find Ryan had crawled into bed with him.³⁴

A group of cadets turned Ryan's room upside down, cut up his clothes, and destroyed much of his personal property. They also reported Ryan to the RAAF Police, who had a reputation for conducting intimidating interviews for hours on end until suspects confessed and named other gay and lesbian service members – or “homosexuals,” to use the parlance of the era and thus the relevant search term to find documents in RecordSearch.³⁵ According to both Richard's oral history interview and the transcript of Ryan's police interview – saved in Richard's personal archive – it was not until the second day, after several hours, that Ryan named Richard as one of his sexual partners.

Richard was returning from a six-day bivouac exercise, and he had slept only a few of the previous 36 hours. He was summoned by the RAAF Police, who played good cop, bad cop, questioning him about his relationship with Ryan and whether he was a homosexual. After a few hours, Richard admitted to having had three sexual encounters with Ryan. It was only then that the formal police interview started. The interview transcript reads straightforwardly and suggests no police misconduct. Richard's oral history, however, describes the interview as “traumatic,” and explains:

³⁴ Richard Gratton, interview with Noah Riseman, 13 December 2016, Sydney.

³⁵ See Riseman, “From Witch-Hunts to Pride Balls,” 31–32; Noah Riseman, “Activism and Australia's Ban on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Military Service in the 1970s–80s,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 33, no. 95 (2018), 157–58.

There was a couple of hours' worth of discussion, asking you questions, and then when they think they've got enough information they say then, "Okay, well we now got to record an interview. We're going to type up an interview." So then for the first time they give you the caution, and a lot of the times going through it, it was like, "Well, you've already told us this," and you say, "Well, I'm not going to answer that." "Well, you already told us the answer so you might as well answer it again." "Okay."³⁶

After the police interview, Richard contacted his father, Peter, who was a high-ranking army officer. Peter set up a meeting with Brigadier M.J. Ewing, the Director of Army Legal Services. Ewing became convinced that the RAAF Police had behaved inappropriately and that Richard should contest the termination notice he had received. Ewing raised the cadets' unfair termination with the Defence Minister, James Killen, who was receptive but worried that the other cadets at the RAAF Academy would be uncomfortable serving alongside four men who had been all but confirmed to have performed homosexual acts. Richard organized the entire RAAF Academy and managed to get 120 statutory declarations, from almost every cadet, expressing that they were comfortable serving alongside Richard and the other three cadets under investigation (not Ryan). When these statutory declarations reached the defence minister, as Richard put it, "the shit absolutely hit the proverbial fan."³⁷

It was these circumstances, none of which are mentioned in the NAA file, that led the defence minister to direct the chief of air staff to establish the court of inquiry. Richard indicates that it was Brigadier Ewing who recommended that the terms of reference focus on the RAAF Police practices rather than on the actual incidents of homosexuality. The court of inquiry file now available in the NAA includes summaries of the events at the RAAF Academy and explains why the RAAF Police interview conditions were questionable. The NAA file also includes letters written after the court of inquiry, recommending that the cadets not be terminated lest they lodge a challenge in the federal court.³⁸ Without Richard's interview, we would have neither knowledge of the file's existence nor

³⁶ Richard Gratton interview.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ NAA, series B4586, item 704/1572/P1 PART 1.

the contextual information explaining why the court of inquiry was set up in the first place.

This example of the interview-document nexus not only exposed the hitherto hidden court of inquiry document but also introduced papers Richard kept in his personal archive. These documents included correspondence with key players, such as Peter Gration, the RAAF Academy commandant, and Brigadier Ewing; also included were Richard's personal notes, drafts of correspondence he sent, copies of his and Ryan's police interview transcripts, and part of the court of inquiry transcript (which was not in the NAA file). Richard's oral retelling of the incident at the RAAF Academy is an almost perfect reproduction of his notes from 1982. Horne found that her interviewee's responses to questions also almost exactly reflected his personal archive.³⁹ Is the strong correlation between memory and the personal archive because the interview participants read the documents so many times over the years that they have composed their memories based on the documents? Or is the connection between the documents and interviews a reflection of their sharp memories? Whatever the reason, they do show the ways that personal archives can reinforce oral history interviews and memory as accurate accounts of interview participants' perspectives on events. Moreover, Richard's personal archive provided me with enough information to request the court of inquiry records from the NAA.

Holders of private archives may, as Ashmore, Craggs, and Neate note, "see themselves, as guardians of a certain history neglected elsewhere."⁴⁰ This is most certainly the case for Richard Gration, who wrote in an email, "I've kept them [documents] all these years because I have long had in the back of my mind that it would be useful one day to document the history of LGBTI members in the ADF and that day has now finally arrived."⁴¹ Although Richard managed to retain many documents from the era, the one that eluded him was the actual court of inquiry final report. He said in his interview, "I did ask my friend, the brigadier, to . . . I wanted a report, and I tried several times to get it from him but he said, 'No, no, look you're never going to see it. Just put it out of your mind. You're just never going to get a copy of this report.'"⁴² Richard was jubilant when I sent him a copy

³⁹ Horne, "Oral History as Modern Personal Papers," 30.

⁴⁰ Ashmore, Craggs, and Neate, "Working-With," 83.

⁴¹ Richard Gration, email to Noah Riseman, 16 January 2017.

⁴² Richard Gration interview.

of the court of inquiry report released by the NAA. He wrote in an email, “Even though it was a difficult time for me and brings back memories of how badly the RAAF behaved 35 years ago, it is still nice to read some of the report’s contents.”⁴³

The RAAF Academy incident and court of inquiry represent a key moment in Australia’s LGBTI history. It was the first and, as far as we can tell, the only occasion when the ADF examined its own police procedures for investigating suspected LGB people. The findings did not completely condemn the RAAF Police practices, but they did rebuke excesses and, more importantly for the wider history, confirmed much of what LGBTI ex-service members have reported in oral history interviews. Yet without oral history, this key, well-documented moment would not likely have come to light, and the official archive would have perpetuated silences.

Case Study 2: Mike Seah and Circumventing Access Restrictions

Cox notes that “even a casual glance into our stacks of personal records will reveal the evidence of how pervasive government is in our lives.”⁴⁴ This statement is even truer for those who serve in the military, as every aspect of their employment and often their personal lives is documented in official government records. Accessing personnel, medical, or veterans’ files can sometimes be challenging for defence members, let alone for researchers. Provisions in Australia’s Archives Act limit the release of records to protect privacy, and as of 2018, there is a closed access period of 23 years.⁴⁵ For these reasons, historians can often only access official records via the personal archives of service members.

Mike Seah served as a doctor in the RAAF from 1990 to 2011. His interview presented an important narrative of an officer who was openly gay during the period immediately after Australia lifted its ban on LGB service personnel in November 1992. Most significant for our project was what Mike’s oral history and personal archive revealed about the 1990s: there was ongoing institutional

43 Richard Gratton, email to Noah Riseman, 18 September 2017.

44 Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling*, 150.

45 The closed access period was 30 years until 2010, when amendments to the *Archives Act* reduced it to 20 years. This is being phased in, with the National Archives opening two years’ worth of records each year until the process is complete in 2020. See “Access to Records under the Archives Act – Fact Sheet 10,” National Archives of Australia, accessed 8 May 2018, <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs10.aspx>.

discrimination against LGB defence members, most prominently through the failure to recognize their relationships. Mike was a member of a social and advocacy LGB defence force group known as G-Force, which existed from 1994 to about 1998. G-Force arranged social meet-ups, organized the first defence force contingent in Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, and pushed to extend benefits to same-sex couples.⁴⁶ The ADF instruction on recognition of de facto relationships explicitly defined a spouse as a member of the opposite sex. Mike explained what this meant in terms of benefits denied to same-sex couples: "So, if you are away for a course or you're travelling, you get different rates of allowances. For moving, you had your partner moved and all those sorts of things as well, so all that wasn't going to follow if you were technically single."⁴⁷ Other benefits denied to same-sex couples included rental allowances or access to Defence Housing, reunions or moving allowances for overseas deployments, compassionate leave, access to education courses, and veterans' pensions or death benefits.

Mike was one of a few G-Force members who actively challenged this policy. He explained in the interview what happened when he lodged an application to recognize his same-sex de facto spouse: "You put the application in and it gets rejected, and then it went through a redress of grievance. It went through a redress of grievance up to the headquarters to the next level of authority, and then it went to chief of air force and then it went to chief of [the] defence force."⁴⁸ Mike did not talk in depth about this process because he had saved all of the documents, from the original rejection letter through to every level of redress, as high as the chief of the defence force (CDF). Mike also wrote a letter to the minister for defence industry, science and personnel and sent a submission to the 1996–97 Senate Inquiry into Sexuality Discrimination. Mike wrote in his October 1995 redress of grievance to the chief of air staff, "All that is required is a change to one word of policy – from opposite to either sex."⁴⁹ One of the most interesting items in Mike's personal archive was the final letter from

46 For more on G-Force, see Riseman, Robinson, and Willett, *Serving in Silence?*, 191–97; Noah Riseman, "'Just Another Start to the Denigration of Anzac Day': Evolving Commemorations of LGBTI Military Service," *Australian Historical Studies* 48, no. 1 (2017): 43–47.

47 Mike Seah, interview with Noah Riseman, 13 November 2016, Canberra.

48 Ibid.

49 Mike Seah, "Redress of Grievance – FLTLT M.T.U. SEAH 0513496 MED 306ABW," 13 October 1995, courtesy Mike Seah.

the CDF rejecting his redress of grievance. General John Baker wrote, “While you argue that the common [social] standard requires that the discrimination you complain of should be removed, I do not believe that common standards make such a demand.”⁵⁰

Due to both privacy reasons and the closed access periods that apply to records in archival institutions, none of these letters would be publicly available had Mike not saved and shared his copies. While there is a legitimate need to protect the privacy of individuals discussed in archival records, this can also perpetuate a cycle of silences because privacy becomes a blanket justification that automatically shuts out researchers. Personal archives, though, are a way to access these otherwise inaccessible records produced in the regular course of business by bureaucratic institutions such as the ADF. Mike’s personal archive was a trove of documents evidencing Mike’s determination before the bureaucratic hoops he faced in challenging a policy, albeit unsuccessfully. Other elements of Mike’s activism for same-sex partner recognition were beyond the scope of the written record and only came out in his oral history interview. One anecdote described an encounter Mike had with the CDF in mid-1995:

So at that time, the chief of [the] defence force came to the base for a visit and, you know, they do their usual PR visits and he was sick, so he came in and saw me. So I knew who he was, and then they had a base meeting where we get everyone on the base and you all sit there and listen to him blahdy blahdy, blah, and then he says, you know, “Have any questions?” So, I stood up and said, “When are you going to have same-sex recognition for relationships in the defence force, Sir?” And then he sort of, “ra, ra, ra,” you know, had to mumble his way out of that one.⁵¹

Mike also briefly mentioned a different tactic he took after his redress of grievance failed: if the ADF would not recognize his partner as his *de facto* spouse, then he would instead apply to have him recognized as a dependant family member. He explained: “In fact, they could recognize anyone as a member

50 General J.S. Baker, Chief of the Defence Force, to Flight Lieutenant M.T.U. Seah, “Application for Redress of Grievance,” 18 October 1996, courtesy Mike Seah.

51 Mike Seah interview.

of your family, so I tried that as well. I did try and say he's not my partner, he's just a member of my family and he's dependent on me, to say he's a dependant. They didn't take that either."⁵² Mike did not go into further details about that process in the interview, but fortunately again, his personal archive contains the documents, including his initial application and the follow-up redress of grievance. The ADF responses reveal the way the institution essentially trapped same-sex couples: "By definition, your partner cannot fall within this category [spouse] because he is of the same sex as you. I do not believe that it is proper to circumvent the specific provisions relating to 'spouses' by considering factors relevant to recognition of a 'spouse' against the 'any other person' provision."⁵³ It was not until December 2005 that the ADF amended its policies to recognize same-sex de facto relationships.

Mike Seah's example reflects the interview-document nexus. The interview gave a broad overview of what Mike was doing and why and provided more contextual information about the effects that discriminatory policies had on his service and relationship. Mike did not want to go into more depth about his challenges to the policy during the interview, partly because he could only remember the general steps he took, but also because he had already agreed to share his personal archive. Cox says that "much of what will constitute our personal archives will be the by-products of activity that creates a kind of virtual or shadow archive in the financial and institutions around the globe."⁵⁴ If we accept that the creation of any archive – whether by an institution or an individual – creates "shadow archives" where the institution or individual interacts with others, then we see that, in essence, Mike's saved personal-in-the-institutional documents were a shadow archive of one particular ADF case relating to recognition of same-sex couples. Without the oral history interview, though, we likely would not have known about the existence of this shadow archive or have been able to see the documents. They would otherwise have remained unavailable in the institutional archives, under the closed access period and for privacy reasons. Whether they will ever be made available through RecordSearch remains an open question.

52 Mike Seah interview.

53 Major General P. Dunn, Head of Defence Personnel Executive, to SQNLDR M T U [Squadron Leader Mike Seah], "REVIEW OF DECISION – RECOGNITION OF PERSON AS FAMILY," 28 April 1998, courtesy Mike Seah.

54 Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling*, 153.

Case Study 3: Matt Cone and Filling in Information Gaps

In the case of Matt Cone, the interview-document nexus played out in numerous directions. It was by accident that I first discovered Matt when I was searching for LGBTI press coverage of G-Force at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in 1996. I came across articles about two navy sailors who had been charged with sexual misconduct after allegedly having oral sex on a ship. The amount of detail about the case before a defence magistrate was striking, and I was even more surprised to see the accused named. I found Matt on Facebook, so I sent him a message explaining our project and how I came across him. The message went into Matt's spam folder, but when he saw it a year later, he responded and said he had never spoken about that period of his life but really wanted to do an interview. Matt's narrative described bullying, sexual harassment, and other challenges he faced as an openly gay sailor in the mid-1990s.⁵⁵ Matt's oral history led me to other documents not listed in the NAA's search database as well as to his small personal archive relating to the 1996 defence magistrate case.

The LGBTI press reports suggested that this was an odd case, and Matt's interview revealed it to be full of intrigue. Whereas the press suggested that Matt and another sailor named Dean (name changed) were charged as a result of a consensual sexual act, Matt explained that Dean was actually a self-identified straight man who had tried to seduce him. Matt had refused Dean's advances before the sailor in the opposite bunk, Stevo, had surprised them and frightened Dean away. Still, the incident had come to the attention of officers, who then initiated proceedings against Matt and Dean. Very quickly, the crew turned against Matt, who recalled taunts and threats:

Just "Troublemaker," "Shit breaker," "I knew fags wouldn't work on this fucking ship," and "Should never be in the Navy," and stuff about "able seaman, able seaman, are you able to swallow semen? You won't." Just, it was that many . . . Yeah, the ship turned on me. They went from, I'm the guilty one. So, "Poor Dean, poor Dean, getting married," and "This dirty little poof's grabbed him on the dick and picked him up," and all this.⁵⁶

55 For Matt's life story, see Riseman, Robinson, and Willett, *Serving in Silence?*, 200–219.

56 Matt Cone, interview with Noah Riseman, 27 May 2017, Port Macquarie, NSW.

The navy assigned both Matt and Dean to the same defence lawyer, which made Matt very uncomfortable. The lawyer suggested that they stood a better chance of being found not guilty if they stood together. He would argue that Stevo had not seen what had happened and was merely speculating based on what he could hear, so there was a more than reasonable doubt. Matt reflected that this approach had made sense at the time but did not validate what really happened:

So, being young and naïve, you're getting told you're getting a freeway pass: "Don't worry about a thing; they can't prove anything." I went with that option, where I should have, in hindsight, put up my hand and said, "No, hang on. Let me set you straight. This man here, I'm sitting here with, he did this stuff to me, and he's trying to get away with it to protect his wife, and the military's helping him because he's a leading seaman, and he's quite well respected and his knowledge is invaluable to the military and I'm just a fucking shit kicker, and you just want to get the poof out, because it's all too much."⁵⁷

Notwithstanding Matt's justifiable sentiments, the solicitor's case was effective: Matt and Dean were found not guilty.

The case before the defence magistrate happened in the closed access period, so before our interview, I requested a copy of the case from the Department of Defence through a freedom of information request. Because I had Matt's written consent, defence released the document to me administratively, with minor redactions. The only documents Matt had saved in his personal archive were his police interview transcript, two witnesses' police statements, and the letter advising Matt of the charges. Given Matt's explanation of what had happened and how his solicitor had chosen to run the case, it is not surprising that the court transcript alone did not reflect Matt's allegations about what really happened. This is a case where the oral history interview reveals a different story, behind the scenes of the written record. As Fogerty observes, "The blending of archival research with oral history may thus be crucial to complete understanding of information in the papers and is the only way to add information that the papers do not contain."⁵⁸ This is not so much an example of documents that are silent,

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Fogerty, "Filling the Gap," 150. See also Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 112.

but rather, of documents that represent a juridical outline of the case, whereas Matt's interview presents a more thorough narrative.

Not surprisingly, Matt and Stevo's descriptions of what happened that night, as presented in the oral history and the written documents, diverge. Alessandro Portelli describes good historical practice when working with different accounts of an event: "The minute fragmentation and recomposition of the voices (and their interaction with other sources) is recreated to convey the dialogic experience of a town's story told by many voices, less as objective reproduction than as creative representation."⁵⁹ In relating the story of what happened to Matt, my co-authored book *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* draws on a mix of the court transcript, records from Matt's personal archive, and oral history. The book purposefully shows the different perspectives and where they intersect, and analyzes how and why they disagree. The reader comes to understand that, just as institutions have silences, so too do the records they produce. The book thus leaves the reader with a reconstruction of the event, which is honest about the existence of disagreements but which also brings the documents and oral history into a dialogue for the reader to resolve.⁶⁰

A second example in Matt's oral history shows the significance of the interview-document nexus: In 1993, an officer groped Matt at a function, then went to the wardroom and fondled two other sailors. Matt explained what happened next:

Well the two gay guys, one of the stewards smacked him, punched him in the mouth. So normally, an incident like that we wouldn't talk about. We'd sort of, "He's being a dickhead, this sub-lieutenant last night." Didn't really bother you that much. But this one steward punched that officer, and another officer saw it, and so they tried to get the steward for assaulting a naval officer. Well, he turned around and said, "No, no, that's not the case. He touched me."⁶¹

The incident sparked an investigation, and the sub-lieutenant was court-martialled. Matt mentioned that the case had made the media, so I went back through old newspaper articles I had downloaded relating to LGBTI military

⁵⁹ Portelli, "Oral History as Genre," 36.

⁶⁰ Riseman, Robinson, and Willett, *Serving in Silence?*, 209–15.

⁶¹ Matt Cone interview.

service. There, in December 1993, were articles about a court martial of a navy officer for sexual misconduct perpetrated against two male sailors at a function. From the media reports, I had the name of the perpetrator and wanted to read the court martial file, but it was not listed in the NAA catalogue. As in the case of the RAAF court of inquiry, I requested the file, and within a few months, the Department of Defence transferred custody of the records, and they now appear in RecordSearch.⁶²

Matt Cone's case represents an example of the interview-document nexus as a cycle, with each source filling in gaps in the other. It started with media reports, and the oral history interview filled in the gaps about what actually happened surrounding the defence magistrate case. Then, the actual defence magistrate court transcript filled in more gaps about how the case was prosecuted and how the defence solicitor secured an acquittal. Both the court transcript and the records in Matt's personal archive also filled in gaps by explaining why such a case even came to the attention of authorities; in conjunction with Matt's oral history, they provided insights into homophobia and the status of gay men in the navy in the mid-1990s. Each source led to another, and it was through the sources' interactions that we were able to reconstruct the story and link it to the broader historical narrative of the ADF and LGBTI service.

Case Study 4: Lucy Kardas and Triangulating the Interview-Document Nexus

The final case study is an even more fascinating example of the interview-document nexus as the bringing together, through a research journey, of official archives, oral history, and personal archives. As with Matt Cone, it was the LGBTI press that first brought me to Lucy Kardas. A small article from 1994 mentioned a straight RAAF airwoman who had complained to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) about having almost been discharged when she was falsely accused of being a lesbian.⁶³ A quick Google search not only found Lucy on Facebook but also revealed that, in 1998, she had testified before the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee Inquiry into Military Justice Proce-

62 NAA, series A2440, 6/136062 PART 1 – PART 8.

63 "Air Force Lesbian Accusations," *Capital Q* (4 March 1994): 3.

dures in the Australian Defence Force.⁶⁴ I downloaded a copy of Lucy's testimony and also recovered her submission to the inquiry through the Australian Parliament's online database. When I contacted Lucy, she was happy to agree to an oral history interview.

Lucy explained that, in early 1992, she discovered that the RAAF Police had been secretly investigating her to determine if she was a lesbian. She was convinced that the false claim had come from superior officers as revenge after she had reported colleagues for sexual harassment and fraud. Lucy rang a friend who was a wing commander to ask if he knew about the investigation, and he responded in the affirmative. She said, "That's when I collapsed. I went to the ladies' toilets, and I collapsed, and I was crying, and I was frightened and panicked. Because I thought, 'This is getting bigger by the minute.'"⁶⁵ Once the RAAF Police were aware that Lucy knew about the investigation, they confronted her using the same intimidating interview process outlined by Richard Gratton and so many others. Lucy contacted a civilian lawyer and then filed a complaint with the HREOC. While the ADF could not legally prevent its members from going to the HREOC, it had policies in place – including requiring its members to notify their supervisors if they lodged any claims – that strongly discouraged it. What ensued was a three-year battle with the RAAF that put immense strain on Lucy's mental health and included a suicide attempt. Lucy's case was on the verge of going before a public hearing of the HREOC when the RAAF came back with an offer to settle. Lucy accepted an undisclosed payment and was medically discharged, which meant that she had access to a veterans' pension.⁶⁶

Through the HREOC conciliation process, Lucy learned that there had actually been two investigations into her sexuality. Lucy said that, as part of her settlement, "I insisted on getting copies of the documents, and after a few years, I got copies of the documents."⁶⁷ Over 20 years later, Lucy has retained a personal archive that includes copies of the first 1991 investigation and the RAAF's 1994 internal investigation into Lucy's cases; letters from the RAAF to the HREOC; correspondence

64 Commonwealth of Australia, *Inquiry into Military Justice Procedures in the Australian Defence Force* (Canberra: Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, 18 May 1998), 85–97, <https://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/hansard/joint/commtee/j1831.pdf>

65 Lucy Kardas, interview with Noah Riseman, 19 September 2017, Geelong, VIC.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

with the minister for defence, science and personnel; and a final letter from the deputy chief of air staff. These documents complement the interview because they help to reconstruct the chronology that included a series of investigations of Lucy, then re-investigations, then investigations into the investigations.

Going through the records while we did the interview opened up an interesting interpretive difference. Lucy insisted that she had never received an apology from the RAAF. Yet one of the documents in her personal archive, a letter from the deputy chief of air staff, says, "The fact that you were cleared of any wrong doing whatsoever was not formally conveyed to you for some time and that is a matter of concern and regret to me. I offer an unreserved apology both for the unsatisfactory administration of the matter on the part of the RAAF and the suffering and distress that you have experienced."⁶⁸ Donald Ritchie argues that oral history interviewers should, when possible, question inconsistencies between the written records and oral histories.⁶⁹ I read that specific line out during the interview, to which Lucy replied, "Yeah. They never apologized for it." I again pointed out that the letter did include an apology. Our exchange went like this:

Interviewer: Because it does say here, he uses the word apology: "unreserved apology for unsatisfactory administration and the suffering and distress." So, you did get sort of one. But that was before the case finished.

Lucy: Yes, and that was as good as it was going to get. That's as good as it was going to get.⁷⁰

Ashmore, Craggs, and Neate state that "in sorting archival materials, things prompt tangents, and allow stories to be told, opening up old and new significances in and of things. Working-with in domestic archives, the (re)construction of these stories could be immediate and intimate."⁷¹ This was an interesting case where, despite the one document being quite clear with the use of the word

⁶⁸ Air Vice-Marshal D.N. Rogers, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, to Flight Lieutenant Lucy Kardas, 9 January 1995, courtesy Lucy Kardas.

⁶⁹ Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 113.

⁷⁰ Lucy Kardas interview.

⁷¹ Ashmore, Craggs, and Neate, "Working-With," 87. See also the mention of recording oral history as part of the

apology, Lucy has composed her memory and remains adamant that she never received an apology. This is not surprising, considering that all of the other documents refer to “regret” for what Lucy went through. From her perspective, even when confronted with the document, she considers that the two sentences buried at the end of one letter do not constitute a proper apology for all that she suffered. Lucy’s response also represents her personal response to a trauma, and in that sense, understanding how and why she has composed her memory this way is as important as the inconsistency with the document.

The Lucy Kardas case and her personal archive, like the other examples, is representative of more than just her story. Through both her oral history and her personal archive, Lucy’s case exposes broader police practices, the role of flimsy evidence in targeting LGB defence members, LGB accusations as a form of revenge, and the barriers preventing ADF members from achieving justice. Like some of Mike Seah’s documents, several of Lucy’s documents were from the closed access period, neither appearing in RecordSearch nor likely to be released in full because of privacy restrictions. In trying to uncover even more official records relating to this case, I lodged a freedom of information request with the Australian Human Rights Commission, with Lucy’s permission, to try to obtain her complete case file. Unfortunately, the commission could not locate the records and indicated that, “in line with the Commission’s current Record Disposal Authority, under the Authority granted by National Archives of Australia to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, records documenting complaints settled through conciliation which did not generate significant public interest are to be destroyed after three years.”⁷² Jennifer Douglas writes about gaps within archives: “Sometimes, this lack of record might result because there was no documentary residue of the activity, sometimes because the documentary residue would not be considered record material according to the tenets of traditional archival theory, and sometimes because the documentary material was purposefully destroyed or removed from the fonds.”⁷³ Lucy Kardas’s case reflects the latter, and it is only because of the personal archive that

process of going through old photographs and papers in Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling*, 55.

72 Graeme Edgerton, Acting Deputy Director, Legal Section, Australian Human Rights Commission, to Noah Riseman, 6 October 2017.

73 Jennifer Douglas, “Getting Personal: Personal Archives in Archival Programs and Curricula,” *Education for Information* 33, no. 2 (2017): 99.

we have even some of the “documentary residue.” The personal archive and oral history thus together gave voice to an individual where the institutional archive was silent.

Conclusion

The four case studies in this article show just some of the ways that personal archives, organizational archives, and oral history interviews can operate together as a nexus. The idea of interrelations between oral and written sources is not necessarily new, and the use of interviews to reveal documents or of documents to generate interviews is common practice in numerous fields. Journalists, especially, practice this sort of methodology: they may learn about a document’s existence through an interview and then request it through freedom of information provisions, or, when receiving leaked documents, they may pursue relevant stakeholders for interview and comment. Historians, too, have taken research journeys across documents and oral histories, but the literature has traditionally treated these sources as oppositional. Rather than thinking about oral and archival sources as opposites needing to be reconciled, conceptualizing them as a nexus generates new methodological possibilities for uncovering new sources that inform each other.

It is not the purpose of this article to provide solutions to the problems associated with accessing information hidden in organizational archives, whether that be because of collection practices, inappropriate metadata, or inadequate finding aids. On the one hand, an observer could consider it problematic that researchers have to rely on the generosity of individual informants to share their personal archives in order to access otherwise inaccessible information, especially in relation to peoples historically marginalized by governments. Yet this is nothing new for social historians. Indeed, this is the very methodology that oral historians regularly employ: taking the time to find interview participants, to build trusting relationships, and to conduct interviews. Accessing personal archives outside of institutional archives is essentially an extension of that methodology, and as this article shows, bringing the personal archives, institutional archives, and oral histories into conversation with each other can expose new layers of the past.

Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott have written about the potential for

archival studies to embrace new ideas and theories that can inform the discipline and practice. They write,

Within the rapidly evolving field of archival research and theory building, there is great potential for research on the plurality of personal recordkeeping behaviours and cultures in the context of their complex interrelationship with corporate recordkeeping in the continuum, and in the online cultures and shared spaces of our digital worlds. There are rich possibilities for further research on personal recordkeeping in these contexts, which could contribute to a transformed practice.⁷⁴

To McKemish and Piggott's list, I would add oral history, not just as another type of record to be archived, but as a source base, methodology, and set of theories that can inform archival studies.

74 McKemish and Piggott, "Toward the Archival Multiverse," 141.

BIOGRAPHY Noah Riseman is an associate professor of history at Australian Catholic University, where he specializes in histories of Indigenous people, gender, and sexuality. This article draws on research he has conducted for an Australian Research Council Discovery project on the history of LGBTI participation in the Australian Defence Force (DP160103548). He is co-author of *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women* (NewSouth, 2018); *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: The Politics, Experiences and Legacies of War in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* (Cambridge University Press, 2019); *Defending Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service since 1945* (University of Queensland Press, 2016); and sole author of *Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012). He has published methodological articles in *Oral History Review*, and this article is his first foray into the field of archival studies.