SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

Act of Ethics: a Special Section on Ethics and Global Activism

Introduction

WILLIAM S. LYNN

For the last several years, Laura Pulido (Geography, University of Southern California) and I have organized paper sessions on the topic of ethics and activism for the annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers.

The impetus for this began at the 1995 annual meeting in Chicago. Laura was a participant in a set of panel sessions organized by James Proctor (Geography, University of California, Santa Barbara) and myself on 'Environmental ethics and geography'. The panels discussed the overlapping terrain of geography and environmental philosophy, the value-based discourses linking nature and culture and issues of equity and justice. As members of the last panel, Laura and I discovered we shared a history of activism—she in the environmental justice and anti-racism movements; I in movements for peace and justice, environmental protection and animal well-being.

Our post-session conversation quickly turned to the relationship between ethics and activism. As a Marxian political ecologist, she was inclined to see activism as a form of power motivated by class and other identity-based interests. As an ethicist and interpretivist, I wanted to stress the moral sensibility that envisions the flourishing of human and non-human life, and motivates people to act towards these ends. Neither of us is dogmatic, and we quickly acknowledged the wisdom in each other's point of view. Seven years later, our conversation continues, a dialogue from which I have learned a great deal.

The exchange encouraged a continuing reflection on the reciprocal connections between ethics and activism. Which comes first, the ethics or the activism? Are we motivated by moral norms to get involved in charity, philanthropy, protest or resistance? Or do we plunge right in and find our ethics being shaped in practice, a post-term reflection on the meaning of our intentions and actions? Since the answers to these questions seem to be 'both', how then do our moral sensibilities and activist commitments transform each other, and how is this mutual transformation affected by the other experiences, understandings and shifting circumstances of agents? When, as geographers are wont to do, we shift scales, how should this influence our ethics and activism? Is the ethics that informs individual action the same as that for collective action? What activities might we restrict individuals from undertaking (e.g. property theft, assault), but reinterpret under circumstances of struggle or resistance (e.g. eco-sabotage, resisting

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police brutality)? These and many other questions are ongoing topics of conversation, not only between us, but also in a growing literature on ethics, social theory and social movements.

The two paper sessions we organized narrowed these broad issues into two distinct foci. The first session was held at the 2000 annual meeting in Pittsburgh. Its focus was on the relationship between the academy and activism. There has always been a creative tension between these poles. Professors and students have been some of the first to theorize and act on demands for social change. The history of social movements attests to this, as scholars (within and without the academy 'proper') have been central to peace protests, civil rights, women's rights, environmental protection, animal welfare and economic justice. At the same time there is a vibrant debate over the role of faculty in society. Are we intellectual drones in the service of corporate interests? Providers of objective, value-neutral data and analyses? Consultants to government and business? Advocates for various groups and causes? Activists seeking social and political change within the academy, one of many sites in a struggle for liberation of some kind? Neither universities, faculty, students or society are of a single mind on these questions.

Yet how one meets this challenge will arguably have a deep impact on one's view of research, teaching and service. And this might have a pointed effect on one's career, for good or ill. While this is a substantial concern for scholars seeking tenure or advancement, it is an especially treacherous slope for those scholars labouring in research centres, think-tanks, independent colleges and other institutions that lack tenure. All this is complicated by the generational, gendered, racialized and ideological fissures used (with equal vigour on all sides) in the political warfare endemic in virtually all scholarly endeavours. This is not to say that there are not important issues to struggle over in education and research settings. Still, as we are sadly aware, many of the most embittered struggles are driven by personal politics and assertions of power, while clothed in self-righteous theoretical, methodological and disciplinary garb. This is particularly true when scholars are activists, and perceived to be a thorn in the side of their colleagues, discipline or institution.

We held the second session at the 2001 annual meeting in New York City. This was part of a larger set of sessions on globalization, a capacious and highly successful series organized by Richard Peet (Geography, Clarke University). Our session provided a forum to examine a broad range of ethical questions associated with 'global activism'. We began with the proposition that globalization is having ever-wider effects on cultural and natural landscapes, further distorting the global political economy, and negatively affecting the well-being of people, animals and the rest of nature. We wanted to explore whether new forms of resistance, informed by moral sensibilities, had arisen in response to globalization. This topic is particularly timely, for while numerous scholars have focused on the evolving identities, coalitions, strategies and scales of globalism's landscape, few have examined its ethical dimensions. Still fewer have explored moral questions of activism and globalization within geography. As points of departure for conversation, we asked participants to reflect on the goals of global activism (e.g. reform, transformation, revolution?), conflict between multiple constituencies (e.g. animal, environmental and justice movements), new and renewed forms of oppositional politics and reconciliation (e.g. non-violent direct action, truth commissions), new visions of the meaning and implications of justice (e.g. animal rights, environmental justice) and the changing nature of moral authority and knowledge (e.g. identity-based, place-based, an ethics of care). The reflections and dialogue these queries generated were, as you shall read, diverse and trenchant.

The papers included in this special section of the journal were selected from both

sessions, and to one degree or another, represent the mutual articulation of both sets of questions. Participants in the sessions included Steve Chase (Project Director, Environmental Advocacy, Antioch New England Graduate School), Ruth Gilmore (Geography, University of California, Berkeley), Ronnie Hawkins (Philosophy, University of Central Florida), Rebecca Johns (Geography, University of Southern Florida), Richa Nagar (Women's Studies, University of Minnesota), Paul Routledge (Geography, University of Glasgow), Déborah Berman Santana (Ethnic Studies, Mills College), Laura A. Pulido (Geography, University of Southern California) and William S. Lynn (Research Scholar, Center for Humans and Nature). Our sessions were sponsored by the Qualitative Research Specialty Group, Values, Ethics and Justice Specialty Group, the Socialist Geography Specialty Group, *Ethics, Place and Environment* and *Philosophy and Geography*, for which we are very thankful. Because we utilized a modified paper format that prioritized dialogue over lecture, our audience was centrally involved. Our rooms were packed, and there are too many individuals to name, but we extend our heartfelt appreciation for your presence and participation.

Quakers have a saying that no individual effort is wasted, for though it may be a drop in a bucket, the oceans are made of many drops. We are under no illusion that this is the final word on the issue of ethics and activism, with respect to the academy, to globalization or to anything else. What we are confident of, however, is that the role of scholars and activists is central to the well-being of our world. We do hope you will not only find the papers engaging and insightful, but that you will be moved to respond to them with reflections, arguments and cases of your own.

Cheers, Bill Lynn.

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The Interior Life of Politics

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ABSTRACT   *In this essay I critique the absence of ethics in the study of political activism and social movements and argue for their reincorporation. I develop the concept of 'exterior' and 'interior' politics as a vehicle to differentiate between the various factors that influence our political work. While the exterior refers to external forces like political events and demographic shifts, the interior life of politics includes our emotions, psychological development, souls, passions, and minds. Several reasons why ethics are important to political work include practicing the truth, developing a moral discourse, and promoting more fully conscious human beings.*

I have long been interested in how and why people become politically conscious and willing to participate in collective oppositional struggle—a necessary part of social change. It has been my observation, however, that both political activists and social movements are often characterized by a lack of clarity when it comes to understanding the motives driving such action. In particular, individuals and groups working for social justice often do not recognize the centrality of ethics to their political work. Ethics, whether we realize it or not, influence our political behavior and actions in numerous ways. Decisions to support a boycott, to picket a union-busting firm, or to engage in civil disobedience are all decisions that result from a detailed calculus based on a variety of factors, some of which can be considered 'external', such as larger political–economic events, and some of which can be termed 'internal', including things like political passions, consciousness, and ethical concerns. While we know a fair amount about the external factors that contribute to political activism, we know far less about the internal,

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including ethics. Accordingly, I wish to explore what I call the 'interior life of politics' in the hope of clarifying the politicization process so that we can ultimately create both more effective movements for social justice, and more healthy individual participants. In this essay I will first contrast what I mean by the exterior and interior life of politics, and then discuss why it is necessary to bridge these two fields.

The Exterior Life of Politics

Social movements, collective action, and resistance have all become fashionable topics of inquiry over the last few decades. It was not always so. Until the 1960s, collective action and protest were considered largely deviant and irrational forms of behavior by social scientists (Jasper, 1997, chapter 2). In the US it was not until the protest movements of the 1960s that researchers began to view political activism in a new light and take seriously the structural inequalities that people were responding to. Since then, a variety of approaches and frameworks have emerged that analyze who gets involved in social movements, under what circumstances, and why some are more successful than others. Examples include rational choice theory, political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, new social movements, and identity politics. While representing a diversity of approaches and theoretical perspectives, they are all similar insofar as they are oriented towards the exterior, rather than the interior. For the purposes of this paper, I use the term 'exterior' to refer to major social, economic, and political structures that social scientists typically focus on when analyzing political activism, including economic processes, political events, cultural shifts, coalition opportunities, available resources, and demographic transitions. In contrast, I use the term 'interior' to refer to those dimensions of individuals that social scientists typically do not address when studying political activism.

Although social scientists as a whole have greatly enhanced our understanding of political activism, our collective knowledge is still extremely partial. For example, only now are a few scholars beginning to consider the role of emotions and consciousness within social movements and political activism (Hollander, 1997; Goodwin *et al*., 2001; Mansbridge and Morris, 2001). There are numerous reasons why social scientists hesitate to venture into the realm of the interior, but I would suggest that one reason is not only the difficulties of investigating such phenomena, but also our discomfort in acknowledging the fact that parts of us are not necessarily 'rational' or knowable in a way that lends itself to the tools and methods of social science. Despite our reticence to engage such issues, my experiences in political activism suggest that far more goes into one's decision to participate and the nature of that participation, than the concerns and variables identified as relevant by social scientists.[1] While it is true that certain groups may be predisposed to become politically conscious and join a social movement, this does not account for *who* ultimately does and *why*. To understand this we need to turn to the interior life of politics.

The Interior Life of Politics

The interior life of politics refers to those dimensions of political activism that are rooted inside of us as individuals, and that social scientists have not fully considered in their analyses of political activism. The interior includes such things as our emotions, psychological development, souls, and passions, as well as our minds. For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to locate ethics in the terrain of the interior (which I will problematize below). It is my understanding that whether acknowledged or not, ethics is

an important factor in contributing to political action. It is an unspoken and often unrecognized force that compels many individuals to get involved, to take a stand, often at great risk to themselves. To put it simply, once people become aware of specific situations, they make ethical judgements, and sometimes choose to act upon those that they consider to be 'unethical'. By unethical, I mean practices, structures, and events that are not in keeping with how people think we *ought* to live. Individuals become politically active either to transform a particular situation, or because they cannot stand silent in the face of 'unethical' circumstances. Thus, in order to be the person that they would like to be, they must act. As Jasper has noted, a 'central satisfaction of protest is the opportunity to articulate, elaborate, alter, or affirm one's moral sensibilities, principles, and allegiances' (1997, p. 15).

It matters little what the issue is—it could be global hunger, the destruction of a particular species, police abuse, or discrimination against gays/lesbians/bisexuals. And although I limit my discussion to explicitly progressive and left activism, the same applies to right-wing politics. Although there are some who may temporarily join a cause because of a romantic involvement or to pass the time, most committed activists, regardless of their orientation, are driven by deep moral concerns. I do not wish to imply that everyone's judgements are morally comparable, or to deny conflicting positions, but I am saying that moral concerns are real, and that as social scientists, we need to acknowledge this rich terrain of emotions, consciousness, and thought located in the interior, if we wish to grasp the breadth, depth, and dynamic nature of political activism.

Although I have deployed this dualism of 'exterior and interior', I acknowledge that such a construct is highly problematic on several grounds. For one, it is wrong to assume that one's personal ethics are developed solely within the self. In fact, it could be argued that ethics are perhaps best understood as existing at the nexus of the interior and exterior, as our moral maps are developed in conjunction with the social, the physical, and for some, the supernatural. Moreover, I do not wish to imply that ethics can be understood in isolation from other parts of the self. A good example of the interconnections can be seen in terms of ethics and emotions. While these are two distinct fields, they are related insofar as our responses to ethical concerns are often registered through our emotions. Our anger and dismay over certain social and environmental conditions can lead us to voice moral outrage. This can take a variety of forms, but this raw emotion, which is intimately linked to our moral code, is the energy that is often channeled productively into social and environmental change.[2] This raises the larger problem of the relationship *between* the various parts of the interior. Although I have suggested that the interior consists of distinct realms, it is most likely that emotions, passions, consciousness, and moral compasses are all located in the mind and mutually constituted. While working out the precise nature of these relationships is beyond this essay, I offer the 'interior' as a tentative first step towards highlighting a largely ignored terrain, our discomfort with it, and to emphasize its distinction from more conventional areas of inquiry. Perhaps the interior–exterior binary can best be conceived as a problematic but necessary first stage towards developing a more holistic and textured portrait of activism.

Why Link Ethics and Activism?

Although I am arguing for the need to acknowledge the interior life of politics, the truth is that it has taken me some time to come to this conclusion. Initially, I tended to equate ethics and politics. I did this because not only did I not understand ethics, but I did not wish to. The reality was that I saw ethics as a bourgeois idea aimed at depoliticizing both

my concerns and political dialogue in general. It took me several years to appreciate what ethics could add to both political struggle and the study of it.

Not surprisingly, I am not alone in this prejudice. When broaching the subject of ethics with various grass-roots activists and political groups, I have often been confronted with discomfort and hesitancy. Through these experiences I came to understand the extent to which ethics has been appropriated by both the political right and middle-class liberals. Complicating the situation is the fact that the left has largely surrendered this terrain—thus leaving it without a language to discuss part of our reality. This needs to be remedied in order to enhance our theory and practice. At least three benefits can be identified by cultivating a dialogue on ethics in political activism. First there is the matter of honesty, truth, and acknowledgement. If ethics are an important part of the political process, we should be upfront and acknowledge this. While most of us give lip-service to the importance of truth, a real commitment to living and speaking the truth (however we define it) is far more complicated than an initial glance may suggest (see Johns, 2003 (this issue)).[3] Being honest about the role of ethics in political activism is important strategically, as it may help identify appropriate allies and tactics, but more important is developing a larger culture of truth. This is important in terms of political practice and creating a more socially just world, which presumably, would be predicated on truth, among other things. For instance, although the path to racial justice is anything but straightforward, the experiences of other countries suggest that truth and acknowledgement are necessary first steps towards moving in a new direction. Within the US, for example, there is an extreme reluctance on the part of the dominant society to acknowledge racial truths, be it the genocide of indigenous people or the horrors of chattel slavery. Conversely, there is a deep longing on the part of the aggrieved to have such wrongs acknowledged—as seen in recent reparation discussions and the growing popularity of 'truth-telling' projects (Recovery of Historical Memory Project, 1999; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1999; for a critical review, see Ross, 1999). Despite the genuine need and desire for the truth on the part of many communities, we have a very limited experience and set of tools to draw on to assist us in this process. Key towards moving in this direction will be a deepened understanding of, commitment to, and practice of 'the truth'.

A second reason to incorporate ethics into political work is that it allows us to build a genuine moral language. One of the great strengths of the right has been its ability to corner the market on moral discourse, albeit usually reduced to a discussion of values. Regardless, it enables the right to speak to people on multiple levels. In contrast, the left, although I believe it to be equally driven by moral concerns, has largely surrendered this language.[4] We have settled for making arguments based on policy, fiscal analyses, legal precedents, and history, to the almost complete exclusion of ethics.[5] For instance, within the environmental justice movement, I have seen low-income communities and communities of color strategically adopt an environmental justice perspective precisely because it offers them a potentially useful way of addressing a whole range of inequalities. This is not meant to deny the seriousness of environmental problems facing these communities or their concern with them—but it does reflect activists' appreciation that (1) the environment offers a potentially more productive discursive arena than simple appeals to equality, fairness, and human rights, and (2) a more elaborate legal infrastructure exists regarding the environment than other moral concerns. I offer two brief examples. First, early on when the United Farm Workers (UFW) began fighting for union recognition, the UFW learned that pesticide exposure was a serious problem. While the union addressed it in a substantive way, it also exploited the problem, as organizers knew it would resonate with many who did not care about the well-being of

Mexican and Filipino farmworkers (Pulido, 1996). More recently, a group of California anti-prison activists challenged a new prison on the grounds that it would negatively impact the habitat of the Steven's kangaroo rat (a threatened species). While the activists were truly pleased that they could assist the animal and built an impressive coalition with environmentalists, it was only because of the breadth of the California Environmental Quality Act that the kangaroo rat and the prison were linked. In both cases, worthwhile connections were made that were not only strategic, but also valuable in their own right. This does not erase the fact, however, that they were less than genuine and reflect, at least partly, a limited societal moral understanding and discourse. I am not suggesting that ethics should be seen as the *only* tactic, or sufficient in itself, but it should be part of any strategy. One need only look at the civil rights movement to see an example of the power and limitations of a social movement with a highly developed moral discourse. Despite being thoroughly rooted in a moral sensibility and making critical gains, it was not sufficiently powerful to dismantle white supremacy in and of itself.[6] What is needed is a multi-pronged strategy of which moral discourse is one part, albeit a very important one.

A final reason to focus on ethics is that it contributes to us becoming more fully conscious human beings. Consciousness, or subjective awareness, is crucial to the development of political action as well as the production of more fully aware beings. Identifying, acknowledging, and acting upon one's ethical commitments is an exercise in becoming more conscious, as we have to look both inside ourselves and to the external world in an attempt to piece the two together: How do we interpret such events? What is my role? Should I challenge the situation, or accept it? What does my choice say about who I am? There are, of course, various types of consciousness, of which the political and self are just two forms. Political consciousness is distinguished by its focus on the structures, practices, and social relations of societal and global power, whereas self-consciousness refers to self-knowledge, including an understanding of one's past and present, purpose, motivations, desires, fears, needs, and relationship to the larger world. Unfortunately, the two are often seen as totally separate, rather than as two distinct, but related realms of consciousness. Indeed, not only is self-consciousness influenced by larger power relations, but self-consciousness can also provide the basis for altering existing structures. These dynamics have been well documented in the histories and autobiographies of various activists/leaders. Consider the life of Malcolm X. As a young person his life and sense of self were informed by his subordinate racial and economic position. Over time and through a series of concrete experiences, however, both his sense of self and political consciousness were radically transformed (Haley, 1992). So powerful does he become that he plays a key role in initiating a deep and widespread shift in racial consciousness across the US (and other places), which eventually contribute to a new racial reality. Clearly, in order to enhance our understanding of political activism, we need to recognize the potential connection between political and self-consciousness.

Conclusion

As can be seen, the development of political consciousness itself is not enough to build a more socially just world, nor is self-awareness without political consciousness sufficient to change structures of inequality. As James and Grace Lee Boggs have argued, ever-expanding levels of individual and group consciousness are necessary for the human community to evolve and develop:

> A revolution is not just for the purpose of correcting past injustices. A revolution involves a projection of man/woman into the future. It begins with projecting the notion of a more human human being, i.e., a human being who is more advanced in the specific qualities which only human beings have—creating, consciousness and self-consciousness, a sense of political and social responsibility. Yet for so long have Marxists and most radical social scientists relegated morality and consciousness to the 'superstructure', that most radicals are hesitant even to talk about the values that are the product of tens of thousands of years of the cultural development of humankind (Boggs and Boggs, 1974, p. 19).

By paying more attention to the interior life of politics we can hopefully move towards an expanded understanding of political activism. Although political activism is currently seen primarily as an effort to change the external world, or more specifically, to intervene in a particular set of material and social relations, the reality is that political activism is much more: it is also an exercise in creating and changing ourselves. We will never appreciate this particular dimension, however, until we begin developing a new language and discourse to discuss political activism—one that recognizes the centrality of the interior.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. Autobiographies are perhaps one of the best ways to explore the process of political development and consciousness. See, for example, Boggs (1998), Bulosan (1973), Burgos-Debray (1984), Brown (1992), Davis (1974), García (1994), Hayden (1988), and Healey and Isserman (1993).
2. For an extensive list of emotions and their connection to protest, see Jasper (1997, p. 114).
3. This is not meant to imply that there is one truth or that we will all agree with what the truth is: there can be genuine disagreement among those committed to the truth. It does imply, however, that in searching for the truth, people will attempt to be honest, sincere, empathetic, and allow themselves to be vulnerable.
4. It has partly done this in order to distance itself from the Christian right.
5. One reason for this is the terrain of struggle itself, which has been largely circumscribed by the state and hegemonic cultural practices.
6. The civil rights movement laid the foundation for the black power movement, which challenged white supremacy more directly.

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Professional Ethics in the Age of Globalization: How Can Academics Contribute to Sustainability and Democracy Now?

STEVE CHASE

ABSTRACT   *This paper explores the ethical potholes and temptations facing academics who want to make a substantial contribution to movements for justice, sustainability, and grass-roots democracy through their teaching and research. Of particular importance is the process of critical reflection regarding how we teach and conduct research, as well as what we teach and choose to research. It ends with a discussion of my own attempts to create a new master's program in environmental advocacy and organizing that moves beyond critical teaching toward activist training.*

For the last seven years, I have taught courses in ecological politics at one of the oldest interdisciplinary environmental studies programs in the United States. Environmental studies, as you know, is the younger cousin of geography, a discipline that has long focused on the human/nature relationship. It is my hope that my musings about the challenges for professional ethics in environmental studies may hold some value for geographers as well.

First off, I have to say I love my job. I think I would love it anyway, but after 13 years of working at a blue-collar production job, I particularly treasure the autonomy of academic work, the flexible hours, the vacations, the benefits, and the chance to indulge my lust for a rich intellectual life. I would be lying if I told you I did not care about these things, yet what attracted me most about becoming an academic was the notion that my efforts at research, education, and community service could be a way to work for the

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things I believe in—things like democracy, social justice, wilderness preservation, and sustainability. I see our work as a moral calling, though one fraught with many temptations and ethical potholes.

For example, I suspect we can all agree that there are many pressures within academia pushing us away from conducting research *about* systems of domination and the grass-roots social movements that arise to transform them. Other types of research are much more highly rewarded, and people with purely careerist aspirations are likely to follow that path of least resistance in academe. Yet, there is still room in academia for many of us to do politically engaged research if we have a little chutzpah. The pressures grow much more intense, however, if we attempt to become 'public intellectuals' and try to speak directly to concerned citizens and social activists about the ideas emerging from our research instead of just talking at academic conferences or writing for academic journals. These pressures become even more intense when we move beyond doing research for concerned citizens and movement participants and choose to work with citizens and activists as equal participants in collaborative research projects to gain knowledge the group needs to take more effective action. Academics who do such things are often passed over for promotion. They can be refused tenure, they can be pushed to the margins, and they can be fired.

How we choose to face these anti-activist pressures on our jobs thus becomes an important question of professional ethics. How daring are we going to be in the service of our deepest values and ideals? What are we willing to risk? What more could we be doing? Are we censoring ourselves out of fear and narrow careerism? Personally, such questions have dogged me the whole time I have worked in academia. Yet, I have learned to cherish them as inner prompts to critically examine my own work. Such questions have helped me grow and change over time—and they likely will help me many more times throughout my working life.

For me, these inner voices have become much stronger as I have witnessed the enormous global power shift and the acceleration of environmental degradation that has emerged in this most recent wave of corporate globalization. I feel the ante has been upped. As Joshua Karliner (1997, p. 223) of Corporate Watch puts it:

> The path toward sustainability and democracy has not disappeared … [Yet] new road maps, new vehicles, and new tools for organizing within the topography of globalization will be required. It may take a generation or more to forge a passage that can point the way for the world's diversity of cultures to reclaim the Blue Planet. But it can be done.

Karliner's notion that 'it can be done' is a powerful one. Life would be much easier if I had no hope. I would be off the hook then. Yet, when I really let the words 'it can be done' in, I become responsible. What I do or do not do matters, at least to some small degree. I thus face an ethical challenge. The burning question for me becomes: What can I do as an academic to help the world's diversity of cultures reclaim our Blue Planet and create sustainable democratic societies? That is the big ethical question I am puzzling over these days.

Some things seem clear to me. I want to push myself and others to move beyond simply doing research *about* social movements and move toward conducting research that is directly useful *for* people active in social movements. Lately, I have also decided to try to push myself to conduct more participatory action research projects where I work directly *with* citizens and activists to co-create the knowledge and action plans we need to move forward in particular struggles and organizing campaigns.

Yet, I also think it is important to think about the ethics of what we can do as teachers.

For example, David Orr (1994, p. 95), the Director of Environmental Studies at Oberlin College, has criticized many environmental studies educators because, as he puts it, 'we educate lots of in-the-box thinkers who perform within their various specialties rather like a dog kept in the yard by an electronic barrier'. Is this appropriate in an era of corporate globalization?

As Orr (1994, p. 70) notes, the key problem here is that most environmental studies programs focus only 'on the symptoms, not the causes of biotic impoverishment'. These symptoms, says Orr, 'have to do with the vital signs of the planet', something which environmental studies educators are well equipped and comfortable talking about. Yet, he argues that the causes 'have to do with the distribution of wealth, land ownership, greed, the organization of power, and the conduct of public business', topics that make many, if not most, environmental studies educators quite uncomfortable. As Orr (1994, p. 70) concludes, 'These are large, complex, and to some, disagreeable subjects, and there are unspoken taboos against talking seriously about the very forces that undermine biological diversity'.

I have long tried to explore such taboo topics with my students. Those educators who do are working in the tradition of 'critical pedagogy' inspired by such educators as Paulo Freire (1974, 1978, 1985, 1994, 1998), Ira Shor (Shor and Freire, 1987; Shor, 1992, 1996), and bell hooks (1994). Indeed, as Shor (1992, p. 17) notes, critical education 'invites students to become skilled workers and thinking citizens who are also change agents and social critics'. According to Shor (1992, p. 17):

> To be critical in such a democratic curriculum means to examine all subjects and the learning process with systematic depth; to connect student [concerns] to larger historical and social issues; to encourage students to examine how their experience relates to academic knowledge, to power, and to inequality in society; and to approach received wisdom and the status quo with questions.

Moving further in this direction makes good ethical sense to me. Yet, over the last six years, I have also had to learn the hard way that it is not enough to teach critical content. One ethical challenge is choosing *what* we teach. Another ethical challenge is choosing *how* we teach. As bell hooks (1994, p. 147) notes, in her book *Teaching to Transgress*, empowering political education is not 'just about liberatory knowledge', it is also 'about a liberatory practice in the classroom'. This may seem obvious to several people here, but it is not always adopted in practice, even by critical educators who proudly teach 'radical' course content. In one biting passage in her book, hooks (1994, p. 17) expresses how she has always found it 'particularly disappointing to encounter white male professors who claimed to follow Freire's model even as their pedagogical practices were mired in structures of domination, mirroring the styles of conservative professors even as they approached subjects from a more progressive standpoint'. Well, that used to be me. Hopefully, if I am a poster-child for anything, it is that anyone can become a more engaging and democratic teacher if they make the effort.

Yet, in the last few years, I have begun to ask if critical teaching is sufficient in an era of corporate globalization. While I still believe in the vital importance of critical teaching, I have begun to believe that several of us need to move a step beyond critical teaching—into activist training. As Freire (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 134) puts it, 'To change the concrete conditions of reality means a tremendous political practice, which demands mobilization, organization of the people, programs, all these things'.

For most environmental studies educators, the connection of our educational work to this concrete process of political organizing is very indirect. Ira Shor (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 132) argues that this is because 'students in class are a random group of the

school population', not 'a self-selected pro-transformation group looking for a political task'. In such a setting, one cannot appropriately offer social action training or political education that directly prepares people to work as professional social change activists and organizers working on environmental protection, corporate accountability, and social and environmental justice. Most critical teachers thus have somewhat different goals. Shor (Shor and Freire, 1987, p. 34) speaks for many when he notes:

> Often all I can accomplish in each discrete class is a moment of transition from passivity or naiveté to some animation and critical awareness … If students do engage each other in critical dialogue, I see that as an act of empowerment because they chose to become human beings investigating their reality together. If they examine critically some texts or articles I bring in, then I take it as a sign that their resistance to critical culture is declining and their immersion in mass culture is weakening. If they seriously study racism or sexism or the arms race, I read this as a starting point of transformation which may develop in the long-run into their choices for social change. In thinking about what a classroom can accomplish, I see a gradation of transforming moments.

Yet, if more environmental studies programs created professional training programs in environmental advocacy and organizing, we could directly address the educational needs of Shor's 'self-selected pro-transformation group looking for a political task'—just like noted non-academic training centers such as the Highlander Folk School, which proved so vital to the development of the Southern labor and civil rights movements. I, thus, believe that the time has come for environmental studies programs across the country to make a strong commitment to nurturing the leadership capacity of visionary, scientifically grounded, and politically savvy environmental organizers who can help grass-roots movements:

- redirect the global economy;
- promote democratic reform of our political system;
- build diverse coalitions for innovative programs in ecological and community renewal;
- foster a new moral climate that combines deep ecological concern with a strong commitment to social justice.

At the Antioch New England Graduate School, where I work, the Environmental Studies faculty is launching, after three years of research and development, a unique new master's program in environmental advocacy and organizing. Three years ago, I was only just imagining this idea. Two years ago, I could not believe that I could convince the entire faculty to support it. One year ago, I could not really believe we were going to make it happen. In just a few months we will welcome our first cohort of students. It makes me wonder what we will be doing 10 years from now.

Now, I do not offer this idea as the only or even the best approach to meeting our ethical responsibilities as academics. It is not. Indeed, this particular idea may not have any relevance within the field of geography. However, I do offer this vision as an example of pushing ourselves to think creatively and ethically about our work as educators. We need bolder visions that make the academy a more useful tool for a wide variety of activists as they meet the challenges of globalization. That, anyway, is where my ethical imagination is going these days.

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Remembering Our Place: Ethical Activism for Scholars

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ABSTRACT   *Academic scholars have the power to frame critical societal issues, to name social or environmental problems and to propose solutions to those problems in the communities we study. Ethical research requires that we transform our methodologies to reflect an equitable and dialogic relationship between the academy and oppressed communities. Renegotiating this power dynamic begins when we acknowledge inequitable power relations between the communities we wish to work with and ourselves; build trust by participating in service to the community outside of our academic roles; and learn to listen as communities define the most pressing problems they face. True dialogue can only be achieved when we have created structures that allow communities a measure of control over the research agenda and the process itself.*

Introduction

> Our task is to find the place where we belong & do our work there (Native American poet Chrystos, 1995, p. 131).

The most fundamental challenge that we face, as academics who are committed to using the resources, tools and training of academia for social change, is defining ethical behavior based on a deep understanding of our own social, political, economic and cultural positions in a time of globalization.

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Whoever we are as individuals, it is likely that we are divided by some form of privilege from the communities we wish to help, educate or learn from through research. That privilege may come in a variety of forms, but it most certainly includes the differential status afforded someone who has had the luxury of attending and completing graduate school, and is living the rather comfortable, autonomous and rewarding life of an academic.

Traditionally, academics, by virtue of the social and intellectual privilege of our professional positions, have had the power to frame critical societal issues, to name and describe social or environmental problems and to propose solutions to those problems in the communities we study. While this rather imperial approach to the application of knowledge and intellectual training to real life situations has been critiqued, we are far from truly transforming our methodology to reflect a more equitable and dialogic relationship between the academy and oppressed communities.

The persistence of social and regional inequalities demands that we not relax our vigilance, but continue to question our own role in evaluating problems and offering solutions. Indeed, 'For whom do we speak, and on what authority?' is a central question in any attempt to define ethical behavior for activist scholars. I believe that the popularity of the term 'globalization' to describe recent shifts in the global political economy leads to the sense that the social and geographic gap between privileged academics and the oppressed communities they wish to work with has been significantly lessened if not closed entirely.

My own experience working with Florida's Native American communities offers some insights into how activist scholars can avoid the potential dangers of this interpretation of globalization. I write as a white woman, a professor, a member of the middle class born in the United States, and of course I write with the full understanding that the suggestions I make here may not be relevant to activist scholars whose social and geographic positions are different from mine.

In a Time of Globalization

Perhaps the biggest danger I see in this time of globalization is that the tools and technologies available to white activists in the wealthy countries, combined with a perception of globalization as a unifying or harmonizing force, will lead us to replicate within our movements the prevailing social relations of the broader society. This is just as certain a danger for activist scholars, who hope to use their unique training to help oppressed communities.

One of the commonly employed conceptualizations of globalization is of the globalizing economy as a universalizing force, that is, a force that erodes the power of nation-states and hence the meaning of national identities, a force that links disparate geographic groups of people together by way of particular social positions (for example, economic class), a force that destroys landscapes of tradition and cultural difference and erects new, harmonizing landscapes of consumption and production in its own image. It is a force that demands that forms of resistance similarly adopt a global program, uniting working people, peasants, women and indigenous peoples across space.

Reading between the lines, transnational capital is penetrating even remote, traditional places, and making us all its servants.

The contemporary power of capital to move rapidly across space, the technological innovations that have allowed new kinds of capital accumulation and lightening fast financial transactions, the spread of consumerism and the dominance of certain brands and consumer goods in wider and wider spaces—all of these may be characteristics of

the early 21st century economy. They do indeed require our attention. But the overall geography (social and physical) of the social relations that underlie these mechanisms is fundamentally the same as it has been for some time.

In reality, as United Nations development data clearly show, globalization intensifies colonial and neo-colonial relationships. It perpetuates the extraction of resources from the poorer countries and their consumption in the richer countries. It intensifies the search for cheap labor sources around the world, and the continued high levels of consumption of populations in the Northern hemisphere.

Globalization, then, is not a force that is harmonizing the material interests of the majority of people in the rich countries—whether they are working class or communities of color—with the interests of the majority world. While inequalities within rich countries may have been exacerbated in recent years, it is false to say that by and large those of us who are fortunate to live in such places do not continue to benefit from the activities of both corporations and the state around the globe.

How can we be sure our research efforts do not exacerbate those persistent inequalities, but instead contribute to their lessening?

Native Americans and the Academy

> I'm invisible turn away ticking/You won't find us in anthologies of american poets/
> We forgot to sign that treaty/Everybody likes to read the whites writing myths of us/
> Us telling about us is too hard (Native American poet Chrystos, 1995, p. 69).

The relationship between academia and the indigenous peoples of the Americas is one fraught with tension and animosity. This is not to say that there are not individual scholars who have good relationships with tribes or groups of Native Americans. However, historically academics in the social sciences have tended to work on behalf of the colonizers, to perpetuate images and stereotypes of native people that serve to justify land theft, disruption and desecration of burial sites and forced assimilation. Certainly the norm in academia has been to assume with arrogance the authority to tell the history of Indian people, to describe their cultures and customs and to pass judgement upon the quality of their societies or on their very humanity itself. Native Americans have been objectified and rendered as historical relics all too often in textbooks and 'scholarly' works.

Overcoming this atrocious legacy, and working to rebuild a relationship of respect and equity between non-Native academics and Native American communities, has to begin with the recognition of our social positions *vis-à-vis* each other. That is to say, the relationship of white society to Indian society is one of colonizer to colonized; of oppressor to oppressed; of genocide to resistance. Transforming this relationship demands that we recognize that academic practices have been tools in this oppression and that we vow to revolutionize our methods.

We can begin by recognizing the right of people to speak for themselves. Only Native Americans can truly describe their own past and present experience of our shared history. And telling the story is a powerful component of social discourse, forming the foundation for our textbooks and our political debates. Whose voice is allowed to frame the issue to be debated may very well influence the outcome of the debate before it has begun. For way too long, academics have, whether intentionally or not, allowed their privilege to silence the voices of the people we profess to be helping. Our first

commitment as activist scholars interested in ethical behavior must be to using our resources to make room for the oppressed to speak for themselves.

Our second commitment must be learning to listen. Dialogue is needed, of course. But before we can dialogue, we must overcome the centuries in which white society refused to hear what was being said by Native Americans, African Americans and other oppressed groups. All we have done for decades is talk. We have allowed the intellectual power of our 'expertise' to drown out the disagreement from the very people we pretend to be describing, cataloguing, recording, analyzing.

But listening is not enough. We must demonstrate our commitment to the concepts of self-determination, sovereignty and our understanding of the importance of social context and situatedness for ethical activism by allowing Native people to name their own problems, to lead the direction of their own struggles. In short, we can follow, but we cannot lead. As activists supporting grass-roots campaigns in Native communities, we must respect the right of those communities to prioritize their efforts, choose the tools of the struggle and design the goals toward which they work. We can utilize the resources and intellectual tools at our disposal on their behalf.

The Florida Native American Education Project

Indians are rarely allowed to be 'complicated' in popular or academic culture, and we are never allowed authority in determining or commenting on how our images are displayed or defined (Alexie, 2000).

My efforts to conduct activist scholarship over the last several years have been an incredible learning experience for me, a very humbling experience. I recognize that my comments may apply only to activist scholarship and education that deals with the issues of indigenous peoples, though I also suspect there may be some overlap with the issues faced by white academics who wish to use their talents and training in support of other non-white, non-European communities.

As a white person seeking to support Indian rights in my state, I began by listening. I attended community meetings, sought out Indian activists and listened to their concerns. Through this listening, I became involved in supporting a variety of campaigns—for protection of burial sites, for elimination of racial mascots, for economic sovereignty, for reform of educational curricula dealing with indigenous culture and history.

As part of this listening, I learned that some groups of Indian people were interested in having a Native American studies program or center of study in one of our state universities. Florida has 10 state universities, and none of them has a program or focus on Native American issues, despite the fact that the number of Native American residents in the state is near 40 000.

In consultation with people living in the state who were Kiowa, Anishinabe, Lakota, Seminole, Muscogee and Wyandot, I decided that before a degree program could be proposed or developed, it would be necessary to do some kind of a survey of Indian people in the state to see if they agreed that such a program was warranted, and if so, what its focus would be.

I applied for and received a grant to research the reasons why Indian people living in Florida do not participate in larger numbers in the state university system, and if the development of a Native American studies degree program would help to rectify that situation. The Florida Native American Education Project is fundamentally about the access of minority populations to public space and public resources; politically and

philosophically it touches on a variety of issues, ranging across the relationship between sovereign nations colonized by the US, the general public and the state, differing cultural perceptions of the value of education and of certain types of education, the disparate goals of different groups of native peoples.

The project was funded by the University-Community Initiative Program of the University of South Florida (USF), and is still underway. The terms of the funding require that the research be conducted as a partnership between USF faculty and relevant community partners, though the structure and operation of that partnership are left up to the faculty. While the program encourages faculty to seek out community partners and community involvement in research, it does not prevent the common problem of faculty simply requesting community partners to 'sign on' to research that is already underway. The program does not require true participation and does not necessarily promote community identification of problems or control of research methods.

I chose to put together an advisory board of community members representing a diversity of Indian communities throughout the state, and attempted to involve those communities in every aspect of the research.

The input from the community into the conceptualization of the project, and then into the proposal and into the survey design, was invaluable. It is obvious to me now that I could never have crafted this project without their assistance. That is to say, whatever illusions I might have about myself as a progressive person, as a sensitive and well educated person committed to activist scholarship, I could not foresee or predict the concerns of the people I wished to serve; only they could voice their struggle and their vision accurately.

Trust had to be earned. The distrust that Native Americans feel for white academics is grounded in the realities of the role that archaeologists, anthropologists and other social scientists have played in disenfranchising Native peoples, robbing them of their past, portraying them as vanished, vanquished and less than civilized. Overcoming this legacy is very difficult. It has only been through years of work, of offering to support and be of service without trying to direct, control, dictate or otherwise assume positions of leadership and authority in their struggle, that I have gained enough trust within Native American communities in my state and in some other locales around the country, to actually effect change.

Specifically, without the involvement of the community partners, it would have been difficult for me to actually get the written surveys and oral interviews completed. I visited the Seminole and Miccosukkee reservations and attended a variety of tribal fairs and events seeking individuals to interview. Without one of the Indian people on my community board present to introduce me and the project, in most cases I would have been turned away.

Part of the way that I have gained trust in the community was through my prior work as an activist outside of academia. That is, I was willing to do the less glamorous work of grass-roots organizing. But the other critical factor was that when I offered my services as a faculty member and researcher, I did so by stating that I was willing to leverage those resources to support activities, programs, events and projects that the community itself deemed necessary and important.

I have continually been reminded, at first in a harsh way and later with affection, to remember my place. I do not take that advice badly at all. I think it is precisely what is required of us: that we not trivialize or ignore the power of our social positions in this new global economy, that we constantly remain vigilant and aware of the power we hold, and remember that one of the most critical uses of that power is to offer it as a service to those who traditionally have been kept out of positions of privilege and authority.

Truth Telling

> We live in a culture of denial, of putting the right spin on things while bending the truth. As a culture we haven't exactly told the truth about who discovered America (Armstrong and Stitt, 2001, p. 4).

It is our responsibility to transform our research questions and methods so that the process of conducting research does not reinforce the intellectual, social and spatial separation between the academy and the communities it serves and studies. Remembering who we are, where we are and why we are will help us ensure that the product of our research is a truer reflection of the realities of all of the world's people.

When we accept the idea that we view the world from our own unique cultural, social and geographic positions, we will understand the need to work in cooperation with people from a variety of communities in identifying and solving problems. We will reject the notion that we have a monopoly on truth, and that because of our training we can define and solve problems of society, whether local or global, without true dialogue with other social actors. Dialogue, however, cannot be achieved until power relations have begun to be transformed. Dialogue that simply pays lip service to including diverse groups in research will not be adequate. For example, it is not sufficient to ask community groups for their approval of a preconceived project. It is insulting and alienating to ask community partners to come on board as figureheads rather than as participants in the process of conceptualizing the community's needs from the beginning.

In retrospect, I can see that I had a preconceived notion that the low rates of recruitment and retention of Indian students in Florida were a problem deserving of the attention and resources of the academy. While some Native Americans from the communities I have interviewed share this perception, not all of them do. Some of them are quite clear that this is a 'white' problem, not an Indian problem. Perhaps it would have been more ethical to have approached the Native American community *without* a preconceived idea of the most pressing problems they face.

I come to this discussion from a position that upholds that self-determination of communities is an important ethic. That is to say that I believe that we ought to support community and national self-determination; that people who are most affected by decisions ought to have the most control over them. A corollary of this belief is that academics ought to avoid subverting community self-determination through the application of research grants and the exercise of their expertise.

True community research begins by facilitating dialogue with and within the community to identify the problems that are most urgent. Methodology for addressing the identified problems is then also negotiated and devised cooperatively within the context of community meetings.

If we are interested in research for a better world, for social change, then we must begin by transforming the very power relations in which we ourselves are embedded. To be an activist that inadvertently reinforces the existing power relations in society through grass-roots activism or community research is not to be an activist at all. We must begin where we are, by using our privilege to empower communities to speak for themselves, to determine their own priorities and to devise and carry out their own remedies to local or national problems.

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Global Ethics and the Activist Geographer: a Personal Account

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ABSTRACT   *This essay offers one activist geographer's perspective on how we choose our academic and activist work, weaving the personal and the political, the intellectual pursuit with the activist's passion for working for positive change. Since academic work often reveals more about the researcher than the research topic, the essay begins with personal struggles. It then expands to include my activism in defense of my people and homeland (Puerto Rico), and in support of the global community's search for alternatives to the destructive dominant paradigm. I relate how my career path as a geographer not only addresses geography's contribution to structural racism and colonialism, but also informs my struggle against them. I discuss my work as an activist and researcher, including efforts to breach the wall between the college and the community. I conclude by describing some personal benefits of academic activism.*

How do we choose our research focus and our activism, not only as academics but also as human beings? In this essay I want to share my own perspective, weaving the personal and the political, the intellectual pursuit with the activist's passion for working for positive change. It is important to note that I speak, not only as a geographer engaged in research, but also as a Puerto Rican woman who has long been involved in community-based activism—and who sees her academic and activist work as inextricably entwined. Since through an academic's work we often learn more about the researcher than the subject being researched, I begin with the (very) personal.

   Some people choose therapeutic models to deal with personal issues such as chronic anger or depression, low self-esteem, self-defeating behavior, and so forth. Through individual therapy they focus on such issues as family dynamics and relationship history. Most mental health professionals of color will also trace the effects of living in a profoundly racist society, while those who treat gay and lesbian clients will address homophobia. On the other hand, for nearly 20 years I have been following a somewhat different path to addressing personal concerns, such as: why is life so unfair to most people? Why have I had to struggle so hard to overcome the insistence from most people in authority that I was inferior, and that I should not strive to go 'beyond' myself? Why did even my own family buy into this, to a great extent? To these I added more collective, and ultimately political questions: why did so much of this negative pressure focus explicitly on my being from Puerto Rico? How did 'smaller than' somehow get

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translated as 'less than', not only for myself but also for my island homeland? How did we—myself, my people, my land—come to be seen as socially/economically/politically/ ecologically inadequate, so that we were obligated to depend on a paternalistically benevolent master to sustain us? More generally, why do prevailing notions of progress, development, and globalization nearly always lead to more inequality, more injustice, more environmental destruction, and more social separation for the vast majority of the world's population—and where should we look for more positive alternatives?

My path—a fairly meandering one with many obstacles along the way—has been through academic study and political activism. I am the first family member to have graduated from high school. As a high school student in New York I was interested in academic study (though I detested school), but I was told by a school counselor that I was not college material, because 'college requires critical thinking, and you people are not known for critical thinking'. Years later I began studies in a vocational program at a community college, but I became inspired by academic learning, by 'critical thinking'. In fact, I was so inspired that I eventually earned a doctorate, am today a tenured professor at a renowned liberal arts college, and have published an award-winning book based on original research in Puerto Rico about community struggles against colonial exploitation, and for empowering alternatives. Through my academic studies and political activism I learned that my personal struggle to define, determine, accept, and empower myself—to decolonize myself, so to speak—was very common among Puerto Ricans, both on the island and in the United States. Nor is this struggle limited to Puerto Ricans; the need and desire to see and define (and accept) ourselves, and to gain the power to determine our own lives, is at the heart of all struggles for survival, for sustainability, and for self-determination (political, social, economic, or whatever).

Let me talk more about the need for internal decolonization. It is true that one can find among many Puerto Ricans a kind of cynicism about the ability of the island and its people to make significant progress on environmental, social, economic, or political issues without significant help from the United States. Such low collective self-esteem—where the colonized have internalized the colonizers' view of them as lazy, infantile, and so on—is just one manifestation of a colonized mentality, which government policies have often helped to encourage. Yet Puerto Ricans are certainly not the only people who must deal with an internalized 'master'. World-renowned writers and landmark studies have documented the development of internalized self-deprecation among people who have long been oppressed, and even its (sometimes) unwitting encouragement by political leaders. For example, W. E. B. DuBois (1903) wrote about the phenomenon of 'double seeing', where black people in the US have to struggle against seeing themselves not only through their own eyes, but also through the negative perspective of the dominant white supremacist society around them. Palestinian scholar Edward Said (1979) depicted the struggle of Arabs against seeing themselves as the inferior 'Other', as their European colonizers saw them. And Martinican writer Franz Fanon (1965, 1967) described the process by which the elite leaders of newly independent African and Caribbean nations still looked condescendingly upon their own people, in effect internalizing the values and attitudes of their white ex-colonial masters.

So it should come as no surprise that Puerto Ricans must often struggle against an internalized colonizer who serves as a constant reminder of Puerto Rican inferiority, helplessness, failure, and utter dependence upon resources and 'know-how' from '*Tío* [Uncle] Sam'. With such a history, and in such an environment, what is most striking about grassroots initiatives and activism in a variety of political, social, and economic arenas is not that they do not have more support, but that they have any support at all. (And they most certainly do: the struggle to oust the US Navy from Vieques is just one

internationally known example, among many environmental, labor, health, economic, and social campaigns currently being waged in Puerto Rican communities.)

In my research I have been actively involved in considering local, regional, and global issues particularly faced by peoples of color, as well as exploring creative alternatives to our unsustainable *status quo*, in a variety of settings. My first book (Berman Santana, 1996) analyzed the role of community power in sustainable development, using an actual case study (Salinas, Puerto Rico, a Caribbean coastal community experiencing transition from agriculture and fishing to industrialization and tourism) to inform my theoretical direction. During my field research for this book I had the opportunity not only to observe, but also to actively participate in grassroots organizing and education, community-based and defined economics, coalition building, policy analysis, and interaction with government, business, and non-governmental organizations. The book discussed why maintaining social diversity is key to both maintaining biodiversity and increasing global sustainability. Moreover, because economic policies and their ecological and social effects are ultimately experienced by real people in specific places, I also emphasized the local foundations of global sustainability and explored their practical implications. This experience impressed upon me the need to explore how social diversity is expressed through collective and place-based identity, as well as how community empowerment can increase acceptance of individual responsibility for maintaining the social and ecological bases for long-term survival. It is with such concerns in mind that I have become involved as both activist and scholar in the campaign to halt permanently US Navy bombing of the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, and to end military occupation of three-quarters of the island.

During the past three years Vieques has made headlines and increasingly gathered support from environmental and social activists, government officials, and religious leaders worldwide. However, I have long been acquainted with the decades-long struggle to demilitarize the island, which is located just six miles from where I lived as a child. The significance of the Vieques struggle reaches far beyond anti-military concerns and the contentious issue of US–Puerto Rico relations. It is also a powerful case study of movements against separation of communities from the environment that sustains them, which they must protect—and for which they require the means to do so. It speaks to struggles against separation of people from their homelands, and from their communities. Such separation not only benefits a rich and powerful elite; I would argue that it is also unsustainable.

I belong to the network of activists providing local and global support; in this capacity I conduct and share research on military activities and environmental and land use assessment, as well as on strategies for community resistance, publicity, and fundraising. My activism includes spending considerable time at the Peace and Justice Camp located directly in front of the main gate to the military base on Vieques, where I have done everything from making coffee and answering the telephone, to photographing arrests and providing expert testimony at press conferences. As a direct participant I have been fortunate to forge personal relationships with many members of the Vieques community: teachers, senior citizens, youths, government employees, housewives; they have graciously shared their extensive knowledge of the island's history, problems, and plans for a more socially and ecologically sustainable future.

With the increasingly successful pressure to end military occupation and activity on Vieques, I am also directing my attention toward what might happen to the lands once the Navy leaves. Understanding the complex forces involved requires a detailed historical overview—including extensive archival review—in order to bring some perspective to the ongoing struggle for control of those lands. It also requires an

informed description and analysis of the competing interests and plans of the various actors—both public and private, Puerto Rican and North American (and others). The fate of the lands of Vieques after the Navy should not only greatly interest *viequenses* and Puerto Ricans, but should also be helpful for understanding the relationship between a community's survival and the degree of its control over planning and resource use.

The Vieques struggle also advocates for connection, for supporting the local foundations of global sustainability. It argues, for example, that economics should be for the benefit of humans and the natural environment, and not vice versa. It asserts that some safeguards must be in place to allow local communities a chance, because it is unjust and unhealthy to allow colonialist market forces to give outsiders and speculators an unfair advantage. Endangered species include not only plants and animals, but human communities as well—and their knowledge of and love for their homeland are an indispensable resource, which no land can afford to lose. Finally, this struggle—and similar struggles not only in Puerto Rico, but also worldwide—is for indigenous survival, and for those who care not only about short-term profit, but also long-term effects. It is pro-people and pro-environment, together. It challenges gentrification and separation. It affirms that people of color should have the right and the means to remain in their communities—even after conditions improve! It affirms connection, cooperation, community, and justice. Community-based movements for ecologically and socially sustainable economic development are calls for self-determination, which I argue is the heart and soul of global sustainability.

My current activism is not only limited to Puerto Rico. Since my personal ethics of activism includes service to the community where I reside, I have always made myself available to the community where I teach. For example, as Assistant Professor of Geography and Planning at the State University of New York, Albany, I was actively involved in the community beyond the campus. As a board member of the Social Justice Center I helped design a strategy for government/private/community cooperation regarding research, education, and remediation of PCB-induced environmental and health hazards in Hudson River communities, part of the largest Superfund site in the United States. Additionally, as a member of the 'Dismantling Racism' Training Collective, I helped create a curriculum for a series of workshops aimed at overcoming one of the most persistent obstacles to effective coalition building for creating a more just and sustainable society. This project involved a considerable amount of community activism, as well as research and education on multicultural issues, roots of racism, and building anti-racist alliances.

Currently Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at Mills College (located in the San Francisco Bay Area), I helped found the Bay Area Vieques Solidarity Coalition; in that capacity I have organized and spoken at numerous public events and media presentations. I have also supported my departmental colleagues in their service-related projects, such as serving as driver and Spanish translator for a project bringing students and artists together with incarcerated women at the nearby federal penitentiary. I have started working with a variety of Bay Area community organizations, such as the San Francisco-based Southeast Alliance for Environmental Justice (Bayview–Hunter's Point) and *Centro del Pueblo* (Mission District). Besides learning about their concerns, I offer to help in whatever capacity that these organizations decide best suits them—and I include them in my networking efforts among local, national and international community groups with shared interests. Among other benefits, my activism helps expand service learning opportunities for my students and brings local communities into closer contact with the college, thus helping to breach the 'ivory tower' as much as possible. Community service not only allows me to continue as an activist; it also enriches and

informs my teaching and scholarship—and hopefully inspires my students to do likewise.

Have my studies and my activism succeeded in decolonizing me? Like everything in life, I think that it is an ongoing process, but I think that I have grown; certainly I am happier than I was when I first started on this path. In closing, I want to offer encouragement to those of you who are interested in history, politics, anti-colonial literature, and other so-called 'academic' topics: go do it! Pursue those interests. Ignore those voices that have told you that you are not 'college material'. Read about your own people, and about other people who have had to struggle against the violence of domination and oppression. Get involved in the struggles of your local community, and—through solidarity work—connect them with similar struggles elsewhere. The personal rewards that academic study and political activism bring will surprise, delight, and heal you.

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River of Resistance: Critical Collaboration and the Dilemmas of Power and Ethics

PAUL ROUTLEDGE

ABSTRACT *The paper considers certain ethical questions concerning criticality and collaborative research with resisting others. The paper considers the author's political collaboration with the* Narmada Bachao Andolan *(Save the Narmada Movement), the principal protagonist resisting the construction of mega-dams along the Narmada River valley in central India. The paper examines certain critical collaborative methodologies, which include embodied collaboration with struggles* in situ*, and negotiating the worlds of both academia and activism. The paper argues that such considerations must be attentive to the problematic power relations that exist between research collaborators, and the ethical questions that ensue as a result.*

An Ethical Dilemma

For the past three years I have been conducting research in collaboration with the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (Save the Narmada Movement, hereafter NBA), a peasant-

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based social movement which has been conducting resistance against the construction of dams along the Narmada River in India for the past 15 years. The NBA has a history of welcoming academics to its struggle from both India and the rest of the world, seeing it as a means to educate others about its plight and also spread the word of its struggle, enabling a further circulation of action and solidarity. While visiting the Narmada valley, I was asked by one of the leaders of the movement to draw up a set of ethical protocols to be applied to future visiting academics who wished to conduct research on the movement. The request came about because of several academic publications which had been critical of the NBA's structure, organisation and gender relations (for example Baviskar, 1995; Dwivedi, 1999). The movement felt betrayed and undermined by those whom they had considered collaborators. This was accentuated by the movement's self-perception as underdogs ranged against very powerful state and capitalist institutions. To vitiate against this happening in the future, movement activists had decided to begin to apply a set of 'rules' to visiting academics.

I complied with the request, seeing it as an opportunity to use some of my intellectual training to contribute to the movement. The protocols which I drew up stated that: (1) researchers should send their previous work to the movement when asking for permission to do research with them; (2) researchers should collaborate with the NBA on the types of research to be conducted once in the field; (3) researchers should engage in some form of collaboration with the NBA while in the field in addition to their personal research; and (4) all research concerning the NBA should be shared with the movement before it was submitted for publication. These protocols seemed ethically sound to me; however, one of the NBA leaders saw them as a means of censoring that academic work with which the movement disagreed. My (unwitting) participation in potential academic censorship raised a series of wider ethical questions concerning criticality and collaborative research with resisting others, which I will discuss in this paper. Before doing so, let me briefly describe the context in which collaboration took place.

Resistance along the River

The Narmada River spans the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat, and provides water resources for thousands of communities. The Narmada River valley project envisages the construction of 30 major dams along the Narmada and its tributaries, as well as an additional 135 medium-sized and 3000 minor dams. When completed, the project is expected to flood 33 947 acres of forest land, and submerge an estimated 248 towns and villages. According to unofficial estimates up to 15 million people will be affected by the project when completed—either by displacement from their homes and lands, or through serious damage to their livelihoods:

> In representing a threat to the ecology of the area surrounding the Narmada river, the construction of the dams also threatens the economic survival of the *adivasi* (tribal) and peasant peoples who will be evicted from their homes and lands—from which they earn their livelihoods—when the land is submerged. Moreover, these inhabitants have a profound religious connection to the landscape around the Narmada river. This spiritual connection to place—which eviction threatens to sever—intimately informs their customs and practices of everyday life. Hence opposition to the dam also articulates the inhabitants' desire for cultural survival. In

addition, many of the villages that border the Narmada are demanding a level of regional autonomy, seeking 'our rule in our villages', thereby articulating political demands as well (Routledge, 2003, p. 257).

The movement's repertoire of protest has included mass demonstrations, road blockades, fasts, public meetings and disruption of construction activities. While the movement has been almost completely non-violent, its leaders and participants have been harassed, assaulted and jailed by police. Each summer monsoon, since 1991, the movement has established *satyagraha* camps in those villages faced with imminent submergence by the rain-fed reservoir waters. *Satyagraha* is a Gandhian term meaning 'truth-force', a morally based form of non-violent resistance. Here, activists pledge to 'face the waters' by refusing to move even when faced by drowning by the rising water level (see Roy, 1999; Sangvai, 2000). While localized protests have occurred along the entire Narmada valley, wider public attention has been drawn to spectacular events such as mass rallies. Indeed, the movement has attracted widespread global support from various environmental groups and non-governmental organizations such as Survival International. It was in answer to a request put out by the NBA—in the media and over the internet—for international support for the monsoon *satyagraha* of 1999 that my collaboration with the NBA began.

Critical Collaboration

Elsewhere, I have attempted to address the issue of critical engagement with resisting others, and more particularly to reflect upon that ambiguous third space within and between academia and activism. I have argued that it is important for academics to be *with* resisting others as well as *for* them, that there are myriad avenues of affinity between academics and activists and that, as critical geographers, we need to be attentive to issues of representational, ethical and political practice that attend such collaborations (Routledge 1996, 2001a). This is because activism cannot simply be bounded off from other aspects of everyday life: our lives are entwined with the lives of others—through the legacies of colonialism, through flows of capital and commodities and through modern telecommunications, etc.—which demands that academics become politically sensitive to the needs and rights of distant strangers (Corbridge, 1993; hooks, 1994). While Corbridge deals with development aid issues (amongst others), in this paper I want to address the engagement with distant others in localized terrains whereby they cease to be strangers, and become, instead, collaborators.

Such demands imply an engagement with critical collaborative methodologies, which, for me, comprise: (1) a politics of representation which involves critical deconstruction of state/elite discourses and practices, and whose critical theories are placed in journals, conferences, classrooms and activist writings; (2) the teaching of critical consciousness within the academy; and (3) a politics of material political engagement. Such methodologies imply living situated theories in places beyond words in order to link critical discourses to lived struggles. Such work is critically collaborative in several senses. First, it entails embodied collaboration with struggles *in situ*. Secondly, it entails linking such struggles to broader networks of resistance through activism at 'home' (within and without the academy). Thirdly, it entails being constructively critical of struggles through sharing our research with social movements and through the consequent exchange of ideas. Fourthly, it entails the forging of networks between academics (individually and collectively) and activists. Finally, it entails negotiating the worlds of both academia and activism. As I will discuss below, such considerations must be attentive to the

problematic power relations that exist between research collaborators, and the ethical questions that ensue as a result.

Relations of Power

Power circulates through social relations; it is ubiquitous and productive (Foucault, 1978, 1980). However, power is not an absolute; authority is always incomplete and is part of a web of discursive interpretations, imbued with different and differing meanings (Gibson-Graham, 1994). We are, as researchers, situated in a webbed space across gaps in understanding, saturated with power and uncertainly, 'a fragile and fluid net of connections and gulfs' (Rose, 1997, p. 317). When conducting research in developing settings, researchers cannot escape the power relations that exist between their own societies and those in which they conduct their work, nor those between themselves as academics and their research subjects, even when they wish to do so (see Women and Geography Study Group, 1997). As such it becomes crucial to theorize and negotiate both the differences in power between researcher and researched and the connections forged through collaboration. It is important to note that these differences in power are diverse and entangled (see Sharp *et al.*, 2000). Such differences and entanglements mean that power may not accrue solely to the researcher within a particular research context.

For example, while working with the NBA, I still retained a range of privileges that accrue to the (white, male) Western academic—for example, financial (funding) re-sources, the ability to travel, the time to engage in critical evaluation while activists were resisting the destruction of their local environment and the ability to leave India whenever I wanted to (see Nast, 1994). In this sense the power to define the field of research was mine. However, the power to define the field of collaboration belonged as much (if not more) to my collaborators as to me. Their local knowledge (concerning issues of development, politics, resistance and research contacts, etc.) gave them a certain power over the construction of the parameters and dynamics of our collaboration. In addition, the NBA possessed the power to participate in my research or not, to grant interviews to me, to create time and space for dialogue and to reply to communications when I had returned to Glasgow. This, together with my dependence upon information, research contacts, advice and the good graces of my collaborators, acknowledged that they had a certain power within the collaboration process.

Such an acknowledgement entails a shift of power from the researcher to the researched, and can cast the researcher in the role of a supplicant. However, this seemingly altruistic role may submerge certain exploitative relations within the research process, such as the intentional disruption of people's lives brought about by the researcher's intrusion into other's life worlds (see England, 1994). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that activists are fully capable of locating the activity of intellectuals into their broader strategies and agendas. For example, the NBA has elicited academics' collaboration in conducting village surveys in the Narmada valley (regarding the effects of afforestation on *adivasi* communities), writing supportive articles (for example see Kala, 2001) and preparing documentary evidence for the International Labour Organization on the economic effects of displacement.

Thus there is a power/lessness in the collaborative research process. A differential power is at work, which privileges research collaborators unequally under different circumstances. This raises crucial questions concerning the extent to which, even in collaborative research, researcher and researched become equal co-subjects in the research process. Just as 'we need to listen, contextualize and admit to the power we bring to bear as multiply-positioned authors in the research process' (Nast, 1994, p. 59),

so we also need to be attentive to the power that our collaborators bring to the research process.

Relational Ethics

Within this context of entangled power relations, research ethics that are deployed in collaborative methodologies need to be relational and contextual, a product of reciprocity between researchers and researched, negotiated in practice (Bailey, 2001). Since no social scholarship is independent of political action (see Kobayashi, 1994), concerns over the ethical nature of research practices are entangled with questions concerning whether the researcher should be attempting to effect change within societal relations (Kitchin, 1999).

Recognition of what some feminist geographers have termed the spaces of 'between-ness' between researchers and the researched (England, 1994; Katz, 1994; Kobayashi, 1994) highlights the fact that we must always negotiate and interact with difference. In the context of fieldwork, this requires a relational ethics of research to be adopted that is sensitive to various degrees and kinds of difference (for example gender, ethnicity, age, class and sexuality, etc.), but also to the problematic and unequal relations of power that exists between research collaborators. In addition, such an ethics needs to be attentive to the importance of collaboration with research subjects. This necessitates working with the differences between collaborators, searching for mutual understanding. It is based on the notion of difference in relation, constituted in an inter-subjective manner in the context of always/already existing configurations of self and community (Whatmore, 1997).

Difference is not denied, essentialized or exoticized but rather engaged with in an enabling and potentially transformative way (Katz, 1992; Kitchin, 1999). A relational ethics is attentive to the social context of the research and the researcher's situatedness with respect to that context. It is enacted in a material, embodied way, for example through relations of friendship, solidarity and empathy. However, such connections are invariably enacted in an asymmetrical way, emerging as they do from the performance of multiple lived worlds, whose interactions are forged under unequal relations of power (Whatmore, 1997). A relational ethics thus requires that we are sensitive to the contingency of things, and that our responsibility to others and to difference is connected to the responsibility to act (Slater, 1997).

Such a responsibility, within the context of political struggle, implies that researchers take sides, albeit in a critical way. Certainly I was attentive to the social context of my research with the NBA, and attempted to enact relations of solidarity and empathy with those with whom I collaborated. I took sides in the conflict over mega-dam development—itself an act of constituting difference—and attempted to work with the differences between myself and my collaborators. My willingness to collaborate with the NBA served to enable what Gibson-Graham (1994, p. 218) terms a 'partial identification' between myself and these groups' members. What became crucial was the articulation of a temporary common ground, brought about through such collaboration. This common ground refers to political rather than psychological notions of self, other and difference.

Critical Collaboration and the Dilemmas of Power and Ethics

In my research on and with the NBA, I have attempted to practise critical collaborative methodologies. I have taught about the struggle over the Narmada River in university settings and activist workshops. I have also participated in expanding activist and

academic networks around the Narmada issue, as well as linking the NBA's struggle to wider activist networks, such as the solidarity group Narmada UK, based in Britain. Clearly, the writing of this article is an example of the process of negotiating the entwined worlds of academia and activism which I inhabit. Finally, I am sharing my research with the NBA, and attempting to be constructively critical of the movement in the process. However, constructive criticism raises important issues that bring us back to the dilemma of the ethical protocols with which I commenced this article.

Critical collaboration between researchers and activists can serve to be vigilant to those 'minor' reversals within resistance practices, such as occur with the creation of internal hierarchies, the silencing of dissent, peer pressure and even violence; or in how various forces of hegemony are internalized, reproduced, echoed and traced within such practices. Ideally, critical engagement would be able to confront, negotiate and enter into dialogue with the manifestations of dominating power within resistance formations from a sensitivity to the 'feeling space' of one's collaborators (see Sharp *et al.*, 2000). The extent to which this can take place is strongly influenced by the unequal relations of power that exist between collaborators—which favour different parties under different contexts. Moreover, such collaboration also raises several ethical dilemmas—each of which I have had to consider when working with the NBA.

First, there is the issue of criticality versus censorship. In other words, how critical can one be and still continue to support rather than undermine a movement? Constructive criticism within the context of private conversation and dialogue between collaborative parties has not proved problematic in my relations with the NBA. However, of crucial importance here are the ethical questions raised by the practice of self-censorship by academics, when writing about a movement whose goals they support. In addition, there is the issue of the movement wishing to censor the criticality of academics with whom they collaborate, as implied by the potential use made by the NBA of the ethical protocols that I suggested.

Secondly, there is the related issue of criticality versus being a propagandist (or symbolic mouthpiece) for the movement. For example, writing about resistance formations in scholarly journals needs to tread a fine line between support for a social movement and the professional and ethical requirements to be constructively critical while also not providing help to the movement's opponents.

Thirdly, there is the issue of careerism versus collaboration. In other words, how do these, at times, opposing dimensions to our professional life worlds fit together into a meaningful assemblage when ranged against institutional responsibilities? How do we balance our personal interests and desires with those with whom we work? We need to acknowledge that we cannot see into the future to know what are the long-term implications of our research practices for research participants' lives as well as our own (Bailey, 2001).

Finally, collaboration may entail an ethics of deception whereby openness and transparency may not be the most appropriate ethical choice in a particular situation, for example when conducting collaborative research on a tourist visa, protecting the identities of certain sources when dealing with the authorities and balancing our activism with the ethical responsibilities that accrue to being a representative of an academic institution.

These are important ethical questions that do not have easy, clear-cut answers. I have found that they must be worked through—often unsatisfactorily—within the contingencies and contexts of particular struggles, and the relationships forged between activist and academic collaborators. If we return to the ethical protocols that I was asked to draw up for the NBA, I would argue that all of them are in keeping with a critical

collaborative methodology. However, cognizant of the differential power relations played out between activist and academic collaborators, a further protocol could be added. This would call for the integrity of academic freedom (for example to be critical) to be respected by activist collaborators. However, the research to be published as a result of such criticality should be a product of negotiation and discussion between academic and activist collaborators within the context, and given the contingencies, of particular struggles.

Baviskar (1995) has argued that a sensitivity to power inequalities between academics and activists serves to undermine scholarly pretensions about collaboration, because, while we acknowledge the ethical dilemmas of research, we rarely resolve them. While recognizing this dilemma, she forcefully argues that we cannot let our ethical dilemmas immobilize us. Critical collaboration may certainly give rise to ethical dilemmas, such as authoring a set of protocols that may be used to censor academics' research. However, I would suggest that, to help academics negotiate such dilemmas, an inclusive ethics might be deployed—a relational ethics of struggle and academic responsibility that is for dignity, self-determination and empowerment that is non-dominating and environmentally sustainable. In so doing, we might temper the academic responsibilities to publish and further our careers with those of finding common ground and common cause with resisting others.

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Third World Non-governmental Organizations and US Academics: Dilemmas and Challenges of Collaboration

DAVID FAUST AND RICHA NAGAR

ABSTRACT   *Can scholars based in Northern academic institutions really collaborate with non-governmental organizations in the rural South? We draw upon our fieldwork in north India to reflect on the key factors that create diverse agendas, priorities, and commitments in the context of such collaborations, leading to ethical and political dilemmas for researchers. We suggest that social science epistemological norms and accountability structures underlie some of these dilemmas. To change such norms and structures, we must recognize the centrality of collaboration between stakeholders and researchers in all stages of the research process, from formulating the research agenda on through fieldwork, analysis, dissemination, and evaluation.*

Chitrakoot district, UP [Uttar Pradesh] India. December 15, 1998. It is my second day with folks at *Mahila Samakhya* [MS], a grassroots non-governmental organization well known for its work with rural women from the *scheduled castes* and *backward classes* in the area. We are about to pick up one of the workers, Rita, and then head for a women's meeting in the Harijanpur village. As we arrive at Rita's house, the two young women, Surajkali and Durga, run out of the jeep with their babies to fetch Rita. I wait in the jeep with two men: Khajan, my research assistant, and Rajkaran, the driver. Rajkaran asks, 'Have you heard the famous couplet about

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our women "Gagri na phoote, chahe khasam mar jaye" ' (I can't bear to lose my pitcher of water, even if I have to see my husband die!). 'Yes', we nod; the same lines had been repeated to us by several people. 'There's another one which really captures the essence of this place', says Rajkaran, 'Darakht phaldar nahin, dharti kirdar nahin, mard wafadar nahin …' (the trees are fruitless, the earth characterless, the men unfaithful …). And then realizing my presence, Rajkaran stops abruptly, but Khajan chimes in to finish the couplet, 'Aur aurat beniyar nahin' (and the women, shameless). 'That's exactly right', grins Rajkaran sheepishly. [From Richa's journal.]

This anecdote from one of our fieldwork sites provides a backdrop for understanding some of the ethical and political issues we address in this essay. We reflect on the multiple agendas, priorities, and commitments emanating from our various institutional, geographical, and sociopolitical locations, and the dilemmas and contradictions these generate. Specifically, we draw upon our own experiences as US-based academics engaged in collaborative fieldwork with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in rural north India. Our aim is to highlight broader structural issues that create ethical and political dilemmas for researchers whose projects entail similar boundary crossings, not simply across the so-called First World–Third World (or North–South) divide, but also within these very diverse worlds.

The increasingly pervasive 'NGO-ization of grassroots politics' at the national and global scales (Kamat, 2002, p. xii) has generated much concern and debate among the academic and activist left throughout the global South. Despite these critiques, however, many US-based researchers continue to consider collaboration with NGOs as an important and attractive vehicle to get involved in struggles taking place in the Third World. NGOs can be important mediators of a variety of processes at the local level; they frequently espouse progressive values, goals, and methodologies; and they often welcome academic researchers from the North. As a practical matter, given the constraints imposed by time and institutional and geographical locations, many northern academics view NGOs as the most straightforward medium to become immersed in a particular issue and place of interest without imposing their own research agendas or priorities on a group of people. While such academic–NGO relationships may be mutually beneficial, they are often riddled with ethical dilemmas and challenges that emerge from the particular locations and commitments of both the academic and the NGO. These dilemmas are frequently shaped by a range of social and natural processes operating on different spatial and temporal scales, and being reflexive about their political and social implications is a necessary first step to addressing them in our academic and non-academic work.

Here we elaborate on one specific and multi-layered dilemma that is central to such collaborative endeavors—the dilemma of accountability. The questions of accountability surface for the researcher when the leadership of an NGO, its staff, and the community for which they work find themselves in oppositional or contradictory positions, and/or when the academic research seeks to align itself with the interests of a community, which may be partially or fully incompatible with those of the donor agencies (which the NGO leadership and staff feel responsible toward) or which might not be in line with the latest theoretical languages and trends of the academic industry.

Specifically, we draw upon Nagar's fieldwork in 1998–99 with MS in the Chitrakoot district of the Bundelkhand region of north India to discuss the different ways in which researchers, NGOs and their workers, and heterogeneous members of the community are embedded in multiple social and biophysical processes at differing spatial and temporal

scales, and how this embeddedness can create irreconcilable dilemmas for researchers both in and outside the 'field'.

The Story of MS, Chitrakoot (Bundelkhand): the Contradictions of Empowerment

The Bundelkhand area was consistently underdeveloped and marginalized by the policies of the colonial and post-colonial Indian governments. Characterized by a very harsh climate, this region is recognized as one with the hottest summers in the country (maximum temperatures of over 110°F, 43°C, are common between April and June) and suffers from an acute water crisis, which has progressively worsened due to deforestation and the arrival of tube well irrigation, which has both undermined traditional institutions and methods for water harvesting, storage, and conservation, and allowed increased groundwater extraction (Prakash *et al.*, 1998). The economy of this region is dependent on agriculture, minor forest produce, and the sale of tropical hardwood.

This picture of harsh climate and barren and thirsty lands is further complicated by a long history of bonded labor, and deep socio-economic divisions between landowning castes and landless workers. In addition, the presence of armed bandits and powerful men called *daduwas* has led some to label this region as a 'society driven by the rule of the gun' (Vanangana, 1998, p. 1). For grassroots organizations working in this region, violence against women has been one of the most serious concerns—especially the economic, social, and bodily violence against women of the poorest *dalit* castes and the local Kol tribe. These inequalities have translated into lack of access for the poor women not only to resources such as land, health, and literacy, but also to something as basic as drinking and cooking water for everyday survival of their households.

MS can be loosely described as a left-inspired feminist intervention. Although begun in 1989 with funding from the governments of India and the Netherlands, the organization is unique in that it was designed to be a truly decentralized effort. Local units received broad autonomy and local organizers made a serious effort to ensure that they allowed both the leadership and priorities to emerge at the grassroots level. MS created a space for women's political potential to grow at the bottom-most rungs of the social hierarchy.

As the organization began working in Chitrakoot, local women made it clear that water was their first priority. The first struggle that the MS women chose for themselves, then, was a struggle over technology: they decided to master the technology of fixing hand pumps. The training of the poorest and most downtrodden women as hand pump mechanics had many important sociopolitical implications. At a local level, it promised the poorest communities access to water; it shifted women's labor from collecting forest produce (particularly fuel wood for sale) to hand pump repair; and the women who were thus far regarded as 'tribal, backward, illiterate, and untouchable' without any social standing, now became the bearers of the expert knowledge: the valued skill of fixing hand pumps. This also meant that customs of untouchability and casteism received a setback, as did upper-caste ideologies of gendered seclusion and segregation.

On a broader scale, as MS publicized its successes, the mainstream media celebrated and exoticized the hand pump mechanics. The women of Chitrakoot became heroines, and this gave an impetus to both new activities within MS Chitrakoot and new relationships between MS and funding organizations. The hand pump repair work gave rise to a literacy campaign in the organization, which later evolved into a movement against domestic violence where women deployed street theater to challenge and politicize the definitions of crime, honor, and justice in their homes and communities.

Women also derived enough confidence to step for the first time into the realm of formal electoral politics in their villages and municipalities.

At another level, however, the increased visibility that came with the publicization of the MS success story brought changes that began to undermine those very gains. MS and the region became attractive to international development agencies. Hand pumps financed by the United Nations Children's Fund crowded this region, as did Indo-Dutch water development programs. While the growth in pumping capacity eased household water shortages in the short run, it allowed groundwater to be extracted faster than it could be recharged, pulling down water tables to the extent that today over half of the pumps are dry. In addition, the World Bank got involved in Uttar Pradesh's MS organizations in the mid-1990s, bringing with it an ever growing organizational emphasis on measurement and standardization, and the concomitant demand for formal reports and collection of statistics on women and villages who had attained various degrees of 'empowerment'. The success of MS, thus, must be seen as provisional and contradictory, drawing upon broader social and biophysical processes to empower local women within local social and ecological processes in the short run, but not freeing them from the negative consequences of engaging with those broader social and biophysical processes in the longer term.

Dilemmas of Collaboration: Ethical and Political Challenges

Let us now turn to questions of ethical and political dilemmas in studying, analyzing, and building solidarities with the women's movement in this area. These dilemmas emanate from structural constraints: of time, resources, and geographical locations; of the languages in which we produce our academic products; and the institutional and locational politics associated with getting involved in struggles taking place in the so-called Third World. At the core of these dilemmas is often a disjuncture between what is valued by our academic institutions and what is prioritized by the communities and NGOs with which we work. Put simply and rather bluntly, on the one hand, our institutional base in the US academy enables us to obtain the resources to work with NGOs and communities located half a world away from us. On the other hand, we are repeatedly confronted with the notion that academic work 'here' is not useful for people over 'there', and work with the people 'there' does not count as academic work 'here'. Below we highlight three sets of such interwoven dilemmas.

First, how does one collaborate with a movement or an organization like the MS when acting upon one kind of ethical and/or political commitment necessarily implies violating another? In the case of MS, for example, the politics of social inequalities necessitated giving the most marginalized women access to water through hand pump technology, but this involved inserting them into an environmentally unsustainable technology complex. The question that arises for the researcher in this kind of scenario is about rights and obligations. Does the researcher have a right or responsibility (or both) to adopt an openly critical stance against the environmental or funding politics of the NGO that she is collaborating with? If yes, does she restrict her criticisms to the academic realm (and publish in outlets that the NGO leaders and workers will probably never have access to)? Or is she responsible for sharing her criticisms and concerns in alternative forums such as organizational workshops, newspaper articles, and meetings with NGO staff? Such sharing holds potential risks for both the researcher and the NGO. Leaders or workers of the NGO may consider it a betrayal of confidence and narrow or terminate their relationship with the researcher. There is also a risk that publications critical of the host

NGO will undermine its funding possibilities and, perhaps, generate no benefit for the community.

Second, where if anywhere will the kind of critiques we can make contribute to improving the material conditions of the marginalized people we work with (Patai, 1991, 1994; Wolf, 1997; Raju, 2002)? For example, how can we openly criticize environmentally harmful strategies or the funding politics of NGOs when our ability to make an intervention is often limited to a critique only? In other words, what are the consequences of our limited ability (or sheer inability) to (1) act on our sense of solidarity once we leave the field and come back to our research institutions, (2) make a difference to the communities in terms of their impoverished material conditions and (3) help the NGO gain a source of funding that is compatible with the goals and methods shared by the researcher and the NGO?

The third point is the flip side of the second. The ways in which we can make ourselves most useful to such communities and their struggles is often through products that are least valued by academic institutions. These include organizing workshops on these contradictory processes with the communities, producing reports and articles for multiple audiences in multiple languages and forms, and making use of our locational privileges and resources (such as libraries, the internet and mobility) to learn about and share the political strategies of other movements and protests (Nagar, 2002). How do we reconcile meeting our own heavy professional obligations and career goals at home with the need to be useful to those with whom we collaborate?

Some Concluding Thoughts

Concerned scholars may decide that the best way to address the above dilemmas is by doing more: by fulfilling their professional obligations at home and their ethical obligations to the community and NGO with whom they are working. The cost of this is that attempting to meet scholarly and research obligations involves a degree of self-exploitation that crowds out a personal life and personal, family, friendship, and political relationships outside of work. Such a crowding out impoverishes the researcher as an individual, a community member, and an active, political citizen.

Other scholars might address the above dilemmas by giving up fieldwork. However, it is not at all clear that washing their hands of fieldwork would do any more to advance the causes with which they engage in the field. We suggest that abstaining from fieldwork is no less fraught with ethical dilemmas than engaging in fieldwork, and this point links to our broader argument.

We began this paper by talking about how we are all cross-cut by a range of social and natural processes operating on different spatial and temporal scales. The example of Nagar's work with MS shows how critical reflexivity about their political and social implications is a necessary first step to addressing them in our academic and non-academic work. But reflexivity is only a first step. Researchers can never achieve a transparent reflexivity that will allow us to sidestep the inescapable dilemmas of academic fieldwork collaborations (Rose, 1997).

Our analysis of ethics and reflexivity in a world characterized by difference and by multiple social and natural processes operating on different spatial and temporal scales brings us to suggest that social science *epistemologies* and the structures of *accountability* that support them (for example peer review, in which only a certified expert can judge an expert) are key sources of both ethical dilemmas and systematic bias in research. If this is so, scholars and citizens should unite in working to change the epistemological norms and structures of accountability within the academy to make them more compat-

ible with the needs and obligations of collaborative research with people's organizations. Epistemological norms must recognize the centrality of collaboration between stakeholders and researchers in all stages of the research process, from formulating the research agenda on through fieldwork, analysis, dissemination, and evaluation. Such a change also demands new accountability structures that reward collaborative research processes and are answerable to stakeholders of research.

Perhaps it was our experiences as US-based researchers working with NGOs in the Third World that presented us with sufficiently stark dilemmas to begin to crystallize the argument we have outlined here. The need to engage with the links between ethical concerns, epistemologies, and accountability structures, however, is critical not only for academics collaborating with people's organizations in the South, but also for research in the social and natural sciences more broadly.

Acknowledgements

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