

UNCOVERING OUR WORK: THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE IN
ACADEMIA AND ACTIVISM

By

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For the best fiancé with one e.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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This thesis considers the disconnect between academia and activism. It attempts to open a conversation about how the two can, and do, connect at the production of knowledge. While both produce different kinds of knowledge by different means on the surface, it is the similarities in the production process that allow both to move beyond repeating what already happens in their discipline and begin to break down disciplinary difference.

In order to think through these ideas, the thesis discusses a number of academic and activist figures and groups, including Denise Riley; bell hooks; Noam Chomsky; Women's Action Coalition; Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatistas; and the Seattle WTO Protestors. Recognition of the similarities between academia and activism may allow both not only to communicate with each other but to better understand their own work as well.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For the past year (and probably longer), I've felt a disconnect in my life. I pursued a route of study I was excited about and challenged by, but I felt that for all the angsty effort I put into my reading and writing, my scholarly work was not "doing" enough. I had a sneaking suspicion that my work should simultaneously be acceptable within academia and then change the world outside it too. Of course, I had no idea how this might happen.

I have to make my way anew in this work every day; I am not entrenched. Not only am I not entrenched, but I feel an intense pull between my desire to "act" and my desire to interrogate the institutional structures which precipitate the need for action. In other words, I seriously considered dropping out of my graduate program.

However, existential crisis aside, I began to consider *why* I felt this disparity, and why *I* felt it so deeply. This struggle between academia and activism is written onto individual subjects in a way that is rarely discussed in conversations about what academia "should be" and what activism "should be." These "shoulds" usually speak to theoretical ground and rarely, if ever, invoke real subjects; that is, of course, unless it is as a theoretical exercise.

The "shoulds" bring us to a major problem: why "should" academia and activism coincide at all? This is less of a question of "should" than "could," but again the question is why. Why not just let academics do their "thing" and let activists do theirs and be done with the whole mess? That would certainly make this project easier.

In Jonathan Franzen's novel *The Corrections*, one of the main characters, Chip, is a failing English professor who struggles with the "point" of his work:

He'd never quite realized how seriously he'd taken his father's injunction to do work that was "useful" to society. Criticizing a sick culture, even if the criticism accomplished nothing, had always felt like useful work. But if the supposed sickness wasn't a sickness at all . . . then there was no longer even the most abstract utility to his criticism. It was all, in Melissa's word, bullshit. (Franzen 44-45)

Chip's crisis reflects the problem of categorization. Chip is trapped inside "Academia" with all the stereotypes that go along with categories that start with capital letters. He wants "people" to recognize his work as "useful," but, in this passage, he realizes that he doesn't know who those people are or how that may happen. Clearly, "people" are not listening to him like they "should." But what does that mean? Ideas about who can and should listen to you and what your work can and should do begin and end with categorization. How can Chip make his work "mean" something?

Saving the World through Graduate School: "Hey, Why Not?"

How can I make my work "mean" something? Better yet, what is my work? I began my graduate school career a scant two years ago. I leapt directly from undergraduate to graduate work, and I did that in the heady air of idealism. I did my undergraduate work in English and philosophy. I attended a very small liberal arts college where I talked with my professors and my fellow classmates about our ideas constantly. This same group was involved in work outside the classroom too: we wrote letters for Amnesty International, we protested at the local nuclear plant, we each did individual work in the community, we fought for a liberal arts education against impending threats from outsiders, and we did more. It seemed that everyone had a stake in the university and in the community and that there was no other way: one informed the other. It never really occurred to me, in that setting, that this was particularly unusual.

However, this did more than just occur to me when I came to graduate school. It blindsided me. No longer did the connection between university and community seem so effortless. Now the expectations seemed to be more insular. Oh, how I cringe when I think about my naiveté. I chose to continue my graduate work in an English department rather than in a Philosophy department because I saw it as a place more willing to engage with ideas outside its own discipline. What I realize now is that this is true, but that this does not mean what I thought it might. Throughout this argument I will use the humanities as my primary context for the academy because it is what I know best. However, I think the problem of categorization is built into every department of the university, regardless of its subject of study. Although English is willing to engage with Philosophy, Anthropology, Women's Studies, Art History, History, Linguistics, Comparative Literature, Film and Media Studies, and on and on, and oftentimes even encompasses these disciplines, it still remains first and foremost an academic discipline.

I had hoped, when embarking upon a career in English, that I could take all the ideas I work with inside this academic discipline and use them to do more than just talk to other academics--who are as invested as I am in producing more papers. My disappointment and dilemma come from categorization because I see how academia and activism can and do communicate on the same level in many ways.

I am not interested in encouraging academics to become activists or vice versa. Oftentimes a discussion about academia and activism comes out in the theory vs. praxis debate. While I find that interesting for a discussion about work within academia, I think that it is self-defeating for this project because it does not look to how or why academia and activism even *could* do something like that. I am interested in thinking about how

and why people (myself included) who are working on similar issues, but under different guises (academia vs. activism), can begin to talk to each other about how what they are doing is similar. I hope that this can open a dialogue and perhaps offer new ways of understanding our work.

Where Could We Go From Here?

Academia and activism do coincide in obvious and subtle ways. However, we must be careful first to define the projects of these academics and activists. Not all academics who work outside the academy are activists on the left (just as not all activists are on the left); there is also a revolving door between academia and government.

President Bush has just nominated Paul Wolfowitz to become the new president of the World Bank: "[d]uring the Clinton administration he was the Dean of the prestigious School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University" (Pessin). Also, the current First Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Anne O. Krueger, who is the second in command there,

was the Herald L. and Caroline L. Ritch Professor in Humanities and Sciences in the Department of Economics at Stanford University. She was also the founding Director of Stanford's Center for Research on Economic Development and Policy Reform; and a Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution. Ms Krueger had previously taught at the University of Minnesota and Duke University. ("Anne")

Although academia and activism do coincide, we must be careful to define their endeavors.

The idea that these fields are so radically different that they must be narrowly defined so that everyone knows what they are doing--or should be doing--to continue with their work is one of mystification. This is not a project of how to make better academics/activists; instead, it is a project of demystification. For this reason, I avoid a narrow definition of "academia" or "activism." I want to avoid the categorization that I

critique in this paper. Rather than saying what "academia" or "activism" are, I want to consider how their comparable processes of the production of knowledge connect them. These similarities often lead academics and activists into butting heads with each other because categorization forces them to reject their similarities, or to deny they even exist. However, this is a project of exposing the inherent similarities between activism and academia and locating (or beginning to) ways that both academics and activists can use these similarities to uncover their own work in innovative ways.

Many people in academia and activism today discuss the accessibility of scholarly texts and an overarching vision for activism. While I see the impetus in these projects as a positive move away from a narrow vision in either field, I believe they work to force two categories into one unrealizable one, no matter who does the forcing. By avoiding seeing academia and activism as categories with their own internal organization, which is conducive to flexibility but not recasting, workers within each spend too much time trying to mold one into the shape of the other without imagining a new site of possibility. Making academics more activist and vice versa does not result in the same opportunities for change as does revealing their similarities. The former calls for the recasting of characters in the same old roles; the latter calls for new ways of working within those roles.

Rather than trying to force academia to become more politically active and rather than forcing activism to adopt a cohesive theoretical stance, perhaps a more effective strategy is disjunction rather than conjunction. This requires recognition of their similar stepping off point--the production of knowledge--which then diverges onto various paths. This locus of similarity, the production of knowledge, is the site of possibility for

academia and activism for it also examines how both construct meaning. The common ground between the two will be a common ground that identifies and works with individual subjectivities and that places both in their cultural and historical context. This project draws its methodology from feminist theory as it looks at how difference gets written and how exposing difference ultimately leads to more possibility.

Academics and activists coincide at the production of knowledge. Both are constrained in some way by production too--pressure to publish, pressure to have demonstrable results. There is a doubling of production in this case: it is both what we do and what is limiting. We must produce something quantifiable, but we do not realize that we are also involved in the production of knowledge. The production of knowledge builds on the process of material production, but it also goes beyond that in the sense that it is not always contingent upon it. The material production reinforces disciplinary difference; the production of knowledge moves within and beyond disciplinary difference. If this is so, then recognizing that our work is the production of knowledge can be effective for moving beyond narrow conceptions of both our specific area and knowledge--seeing knowledge more on a continuum and recognizing "our" work in other places. This shifting would, not remove knowledge from production, but open it beyond. If, as Henri Lefebvre conjectures, "the concepts of *production* and the *act of producing* do have a certain abstract universality," then demystifying this process for academics and activists will allow us to take more control of the production of knowledge process; it will allow *us* to become apparent in the process (15).

Last week I drove by a church and happened to glance at its marquee. Its sign read: "An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory." Honestly, I'm not making that up.

While I'm not entirely sure what that means, I think I can make a pretty good guess at what it is at least meant to connote: people should get out and "do" something rather than sit around and think about it all day. The problem I see with this injunction, aside from its pithy nature, is that the pithiness privileges one category (action) over another (theory) without considering what either means--much less how they might be similar. This also gets into the theory vs. praxis debate.

Academic production of knowledge needs to be made more transparent. The assumption is that it is all cognitive, but it also involves social relations. Activist production of knowledge also needs to be made more transparent. The assumption is that it is all social relations, but it also involves cognition. This revealing process enables academics and activists to use the production of knowledge as a means of transformation, rather than a replication of disciplinary differences. In order to examine how this demystification may be possible, I will examine a number of academics and activists to consider their production of knowledge. Some of these individuals and groups include Denise Riley, Noam Chomsky, bell hooks, Cherríe Moraga, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), the Women's Action Coalition (WAC), Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatistas, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) protestors in Seattle.

CHAPTER 2
"WE WANT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS _____": ACADEMICS,
ACTIVISTS, AND CATEGORICAL DIFFERENCE

In order to delve into *how* the similarities between academia and activism may be uncovered, we must first look at where the connection usually breaks down. The problem of categorization plagues a number of layers of this analysis, so the first place to begin is with the construction of categories and the power that infuses them. Academics and activists often get caught in the idea that their work springs forth as is solely from the work of others in their field. This results from an acceptance of disciplinary categorization rather than a lived multiplicitous reality. Instead of interrogating the categories that house them, categorization can cause academics and activists to see their work as polarities that work against each other for the same "cause" or "issue." Their disciplinary differences cloud the processes which enable them to work for these issues in the first place.

Categorization

In *Gender and the Politics of History*, Joan Wallach Scott conceives sex and gender as categories which require interrogation. She articulates gender as "the knowledge that establishes meanings for bodily differences" (Scott 2). This definition allows her to move within the sex/gender binary in a new way because it reconceptualizes sex and gender at the level of epistemology. Such a move works to break down the "normal" assumptions behind the categories of sex and gender because it displaces those assumptions; it moves them off bodies and onto categories. This also creates space for a

dialogue about how sex and gender create meaning which can then move into an investigation of *how* that meaning constitutes individuals and is itself constituted.

Scott argues that "[i]f sex and gender are both taken to be concepts--forms of knowledge--then they are closely related, if not indistinguishable. If both are knowledge, then gender cannot be said to reflect sex or to be imposed on it; rather sex becomes an effect of gender" (Scott 201). By asking about the effects, Scott attends to *how* individuals are interpellated.

Scott's work breaks down categories which get written onto individuals. In order to move beyond these categories she points out that "[i]f sex, gender, and sexual difference are *effects*--discursively and historically produced--then we cannot take them as points of origin for our analysis" (Scott 201-202). Scott's argument lays important groundwork for imagining a new site of communication within academia and activism because it foregrounds individuals within the categories that constitute them.

Feminist theory investigates the category of "women" in provocative ways which gives us another perspective on how categories which affect individuals can be troubled. In *Am I that Name?*, Denise Riley reminds us that we cannot look at "women" without also considering historical specificity and other concepts the category is posed against--"Nature, Class, Reason, [and] Humanity . . . which by no means form a passive backdrop to changing conceptions of gender" (Riley 7). "Woman" is therefore a layered category which is irreducible to any one of the aforementioned concepts. She sets forth her argument by asserting the unstable nature of the category of "women," which "is historically, discursively constructed, and always relatively to other categories which themselves change" (Riley 2). In order to prove the historical specificity of "women,"

Riley constructs a brief origin narrative of the historical and discursive construction of the category. She does this on a broader scale by discussing how "women" became inextricably linked with "the social" and "nature" (Riley 18-66). In both discussions she takes care to develop how "women" did not spring forth as an already constituted category; very particular historical and ideological processes were at work in order to fit "women" into the framework of the moment (Riley 67-95).

She delineates the category of "women" in order to show difference. A revelation of difference shows how meaning is created through binaries. "Women" gives people an idea of what it "means" to be a woman. By exposing "women"--as a category--Riley shows how the category creates meaning and how it is defined in a context. The process of locating meaning in the category is similar for academia and activism. In order to maintain their disciplinary difference, their difference remains in categorization. As we unpack "academia" and "activism" as categories we will see how they constitute academics and activists and will see how the categorical meaning is constructed, not fixed.

Riley also considers the effects of categorization. She discusses the implications of "women" for women when she points out that "feminism never has the option of putting forward its own uncontaminated, self-generated understandings of 'women': its 'women' too, is always thoroughly implicated in the discursive world" (Riley 68). She establishes a layered context for "women," and she does not leave women or "women" from the stratification. The naming process itself does much to constitute individually and collectively, and women are not exempt from this. She shows how men and women and (not passive) social processes are all responsible for naming "women" in different ways.

Naming also works against academia and activism in the ways that it consigns people, and the discipline itself, to narrow definitions of what is acceptable. Thus, the idea of effects gets to the crux of her argument, which is that feminism can draw on the instability of "women" in order to negotiate difference, which creates meaning. This understanding can then be harnessed once we break down categories and begin to peel back their layers.

Chandra Mohanty also defines how women can become caught up in constructing "women" in her essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." She points out the danger in feminist theory of collapsing all women into one for the sake of a cause. While this movement can be seen to set up a prototypical woman from which to speak about the plights of women, the danger is in assuming "women" as a category in the first place:

What binds women together is a sociological notion of the 'sameness' of their oppression. It is at this point that an elision takes place between 'women' as a discursively constructed group and 'women' as material subjects of their own history This results in an assumption of women as an always already constituted group, one which has been labeled powerless, 'exploited,' 'sexually harassed,' etc. by feminist scientific, economic, legal, and sociological discourses. (Notice that this is quite similar to sexist discourse labeling women weak, emotional, having math anxiety, etc.) This focus is not on uncovering the material and uncovering the ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as 'powerless' in a particular context. It is, rather, on finding a variety of cases of 'powerless' groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless. (Mohanty 56-57)

Mohanty's discussion of the reductionism of categorization shows us how it is used for inductive reasoning: moving from the specific to the general. Switching our focus permits us to look backward, forward, and around: it gives us the ability to see beyond our immediate context. On the other hand, disciplinary difference (and categorization)

implies stagnation, rather than accounting for the fluidity of what academia and activism contain: people and knowledge.

Riley gives a brief example of how feminism can speak for "women workers" by showing that they have no "fixed nature," and that only in some contexts can they be distinguished from workers in general; feminism can then have a say in these purposes (113). The effect of looking at the category, in this case "women workers" rather than "workers," may or may not be useful in negotiating needs; feminism can then become more politically active and effective. Riley advocates the idea that "an active skepticism about the integrity of the sacred category 'women' would be no merely philosophical doubt to be stifled in the name of effective political action in the world. On the contrary, it would be a condition *for* the latter" (Riley 113). Breaking down the category of "women," for Riley, would become a determining factor for political action because it would effectively destabilize any narratives of naturalized femininity and would locate difference in the category rather than in women's bodies.

I believe that Riley, and other theorists like her who seek to locate the construction of "women" and thus work to break it down, comes a long way towards dismantling some of the problems of categorization. However, I still think she leaves an important category in her work untouched by "active skepticism," and this is the relationship between academia and activism. In the previous quote she conflates political action with this "active skepticism" (or scholarship), and I see it as a mistake not to further investigate the implicit categorization in this claim. For while her academic work lays the path for further thinking about the categorization of "women," it cannot

effectively lay claim to direct links to political action without also troubling the scholarship and activism that must be done for both to occur.

Her understanding locates meaning in the category, but while it calls for change, it does not make the leap to how or who could do that. Surely if "women" creates meaning then the forces shaping the discussion do as well. This process involves looking both into and away from the university.

"Academia" and "Activism"

In order to consider how academia and activism interact, we must first consider "academia" and "activism." In other words, we must think about them categorically. The categories work to inscribe disciplinary difference. We can define academia in contrast to activism (and even subsets of each in contrast to each other) because of this disciplinary difference.

"Academia" comes to be constituted through a set of disciplinary practices whereby the replication of those practices becomes the norm. "Activism" comes to be constituted in precisely the same way. Although "academia" and "activism" comprise varying degrees of internal difference, both are similarly constituted and maintained through the replication of disciplinary difference. "Academia" and "activism" require academics and activists to function within a small circle in order to sustain that circle.

The categorical difference of "academia" and "activism" relegates them to different positions. They cannot be forced into one "academia/activism" because this only works to initiate yet another categorization. However, academics and activists can work to look through the categories, rather than from the categories, and see their similarities at the point of the production of knowledge. These similarities can allow new conceptions of both academic and activist work as it shows each the (hidden) processes of their own.

At first, it seems desirable to merge academia and activism. What could be better than blending together what we're already interested in? However, the fields remain separate because they both retain those degrees of disciplinary difference. If we simply make a new discipline, then we are not calling into question the production of knowledge.

As Stanley Fish states,

It is not so much that literary critics have nothing to say about these issues, but that so long as they say it *as* literary critics no one but a few of their friends will be listening, and, conversely, if they say it in ways unrelated to the practices of literary criticism, and thereby manage to give it a political effectiveness, they will no longer be literary critics, although they will still be something and we may regard the something they will then be as more valuable I say, if you want to send a message that will be heard beyond the academy, get out of it. Or, if I may adapt a patriotic slogan, 'the academy--love it or leave it.' (1-2)

Although branches of activism are seen to have as their mission a reaching out to wider society, the same can be said for activism or any other category which institutes disciplinary difference. Fish's argument proves useful because he reminds us of the ways in which the work is different. However, I will disagree that you must "love or leave" the academy (or activism). In contrast, you must go beyond it and come back to it with new considerations about how it produces knowledge.

The Academic/Activist Divide

In the academic/activist divide people often get quickly classified as intellectuals *or* activists, and while some categories have been created to reflect people who bridge that gap (i.e., public intellectuals and activist professors), even they remain at the level of categorization. The public intellectual and the activist professor are not threats to either category because they are still categories; by creating a new category we remove any threat they are to the old categories. Now these people are free to flit about and be "public" or be an "activist" without bothering anyone else because they have seemingly

bridged an insurmountable gap. Much less do we need to worry about what it means to be an intellectual or an activist (or, god forbid, both). However, what these people have actually accomplished is a strange dislocation of both fields by trying to merge them into one.

I believe an effective way of examining intellectuals and activists would be to first look at stereotypes. When I think of an intellectual I think of one of my college professors; he is a man who is renowned in his field, but whom I rarely saw. His work is so esoteric that it must be brilliant; I just haven't received my pass code to it yet. When I think of an activist I think of one of my friends from college who was always the first to jump on every cause that passed by. She would sometimes protest just for the sake of it.

Now, at this point, I'm even rolling my eyes at how reductive these portraits are. No, I'm not trying to say that every intellectual is a man, or that esoteric work is not beneficial, or that all activists are women, or that it is not productive to effect social change for more than one cause (or any other stereotypes I may appear to have subscribed to in the space of five sentences). What I am trying to say, though, is that, while these stereotypes are remarkably simple in their analysis of each category, they are also remarkably (in the re-markable; say it again, sense) on target in how these categories often get constituted. A certain idea becomes the norm and then sets the tone for how people "should" be or work. Even though individuals vary widely from the stereotype, or categorical assumptions, those assumptions still taint the air because of their uncontested status. They shape individual subjectivities by virtue of the way they define meaning on multiple levels (Althusser 115-117).

In "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" (a title replete with the categorization of intellectuals), Noam Chomsky outlines the myriad roles intellectuals can play:

Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions. In the Western world, at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority, Western democracy provided the leisure, the facilities, and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us. (Chomsky 255)

Chomsky acknowledges the comparatively marginal role intellectuals have in terms of sheer number, but he then infuses them with power unparalleled by anyone next to those in the government. The impetus for Chomsky's article is the Vietnam War. He begins by referencing a question from an article written briefly after WWII by Dwight Macdonald which asks: "To what extent are the British or American people responsible for the vicious terror bombings of civilians" (qtd. in Chomsky 254). Chomsky then uses this question as a springboard for how intellectuals have the responsibility to "speak the truth and expose lies" because they can easily become complicitous. Throughout the article he gives examples of how "in no small measure, it is [complicitous] attitudes...that lie behind the butchery in Vietnam, and we had better face up to them with candor, or we will find our government leading us towards a 'final solution' in Vietnam, and in the many Vietnams that inevitably lie ahead" (Chomsky 291).

While intellectuals do have a privileged position, Chomsky is unwilling to assess them as a whole. Not even most privileged intellectuals are in the same unique position as Chomsky himself and can hope to effect political change. As Stanley Fish reminds us, "Despite occasional appearances to the contrary, the conversation that takes place within the humanistic academy and the conversation that leads to legislative and administrative

action remain segregated from one another" (61). Noam Chomsky's career is one of these exceptions, but from that we cannot extrapolate the powers of intellectuals in general. By defining more "shoulds" than "coulds," his vision falls hopelessly short. A limited conception of intellectuals such as this overlooks the inherent categorical difference it establishes. Difference can be utilized as a way to oppose rigid categorization, but not when it is used to polarize rather than create new meaning.

Antonio Gramsci provides a clearer definition of intellectuals in a broad range of society. He discusses how the historical evolution of traditional intellectuals (i.e. ecclesiastics) came to oppose the "organic intellectuals" who evolved from each class as it developed its own specializations (Gramsci 6-8). Gramsci's use of the term "organic intellectuals" speaks to his question about

What are the 'maximum' limits of acceptance of the term 'intellectual'? Can one find a unitary criterion to characterize equally all the diverse and disparate activities of intellectuals and to distinguish these at the same time and in an essential way from the activities of other social groupings? The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations. (Gramsci 8)

Here Gramsci seeks to put "intellectuals" in a context and avoids categorizing them in a way that looks only back towards what they "should" have been and does not look towards what they are or "can be." This move locates individuals within the category as a locus of change rather than locating the category itself as the only site of that possibility.

Activism is often seen as promoting individualism; however, this category, like all others, seeks to prioritize its categorization. In "Beyond Activism," Liza Featherstone, Doug Henwood, and Christian Parenti argue that today's activists do not lack thought in their action:

[they] do indeed have a creed: They're activistists. That's right, activistists....In this worldview, all roads lead to more activism and more activists. And the one who acts is righteous Activism as an ideology renders taboo any discussion of ideas or beliefs, and thus stymies both thought and action. Activists who treat ideas as important--who ask the difficult questions that push into new political terrain--find this censorious hyperpragmatism alienating and may drop away from organizing as a result. But that's not the only problem. Without an analysis of what's really wrong with the world or a vision of the better world they're trying to create, people have no reason to continue being activists once a particular campaign is over (72-74).

And the problems, folks, do not end there. They go on to accuse activism of a number of crimes against thinking, and they end up calling for "an assault of the stupidity that pervades American culture. This implies a more democratic approach to the life of the mind. We challenge left activists to become intellectuals" (Featherstone, Henwood, and Parenti 75).

Sounds good, right? We are finally going to get rid of reality TV! Oh wait, is that the stupidity they are talking about? Who knows! The underlying problem of their assertions is, again, categorization. They create a new catch phrase, and category, with activistists, that seems to sweep all the old problems of activism (and activists) under the rug. Except that, it doesn't. Activism creates innumerable more problems than activism because it does not bother to define activism, or thinking.

The subtitle of the article is "Why we need deeper thinking in our protests." I withheld this until now because I thought you might find it as intriguing as I did at first. It seems that the authors may discuss how thinking and protest connect. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Instead, they try to make one into the other, which leaves both worse than before.

The Draw of Categorization

I will admit that categorization has its own lure: it quickly becomes easy to work within categorical distinctions (and disciplinary difference) because we know what to expect. I know how I "should" write this paper because I know the academic expectations of it. This is the benefit of categorization: it gives us a prescription to follow from which we do not need to deviate.

However, while prescriptions are tempting, they are also only temporary fixes. They fix us until the problem comes back again; in the meantime, we can forget about them because the problem is hidden. A similar problem exists with categorization. While it appears so easy that we often forget it exists, it only works to fix temporary problems--like who we should include in the literary canon or what the slogan for our movement should be.

These issues are constructs of categorization and only serve to further the division it creates. Categorization is problematic because it does not provide connection; it hides connection. Each category is inevitably shaped by, and in contrast to, another, so disguising the processes which bring us to categorization in the first place only works to maintain it. Instead, we must look to the effects of categorization. Examining the effects obliges us to more critically look at categories themselves; the effects uncover the categories. In turn, the categories uncover context--how and why they are shaped and by and for whom.

CHAPTER 3
"ILL DO IT MY WAY; THANK YOU": INDIVIDUALS IN ACADEMIA AND
ACTIVISM

As individuals are constituted by categories, it follows that shifts in categorization will write themselves onto individuals as well. Soon, everyone will be asking "what is your category(ies)?" rather than "what is your sign?" as the new way of locating difference (and similarity). Well, perhaps not, but this is only because the categories are already so steeped into the individual that such a question is sometimes not very apparent.

Feminist theory attempts to answer this problem by foregrounding the individual in the context of the powerful institutions that inscribe her with meaning. This kind of theorizing hopes to show that not everyone is equally placed in axes of power (Fraser 7).

In order to think about how the individual gets placed in these various contexts, though, we must first think about how these processes evolve in the first place. This requires revealing our epistemology, or theory of knowledge (Harding 2). An analysis of categories requires a candid discussion of epistemology if we ever hope to see the categories of academia and activism unfold a new space for communication where individuals can traverse the space of knowledge production.

Standpoint epistemology begins to open this space where individuals and categories meet and greet. In the individual-category meet and greet, categories tend to be a little shy; they huddle together off to one side hoping no one will notice them. The individuals are hesitant as they have rarely encountered the categories face to face; they

prefer to speak amongst themselves about how they have each accomplished great things free of any outside help (or how they have single-handedly ruined their lives). When one individual has her back turned, a category accidentally bumps into her. What should they do? Should they pretend they never saw each other?

Standpoint Epistemology

In Donna Haraway's conception, "[f]eminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn to see" ("Situated" 583). Thus, the individual and the category sit down for cucumber sandwiches and talk about the ways they constitute each other. "Situated knowledge" allows us the vantage point of seeing through the category rather than seeing from the category. It privileges the individual while not elevating the individual to an unchecked status (Haraway, "Cyborg" 157). Situated knowledge is a formulation of standpoint epistemology, which "refers to a way of conceptualizing reality that reflects women's interests and values and draws on women's own interpretation of their own experience" (qtd. in Naples 70). Standpoint should not be conflated with "viewpoint or actual experiences"; rather, it contextualizes experiences in a way that juxtaposes individual and experience, individual and category--the ways individuals are constituted by experience.

Of course, we rarely wake up in the morning feeling constituted by monolithic categories (except on days when I prefer to stay in bed). Instead, we may feel anxious about going to class (as students), feel excited about having dinner (as friends), feel angry about watching the news (as citizens), etc. These various standpoints are all informed by categorical relationships. More specifically, the categorical relationships are themselves specific--most often to a place. For example, discussions about activist art as public art

have recently become "centered around a notion of the community or the public as the 'site,' and the public artist as one whose work is responsive to the issues, needs, and concerns that define that elusive, hard-to-define entity" (Felshin 21). Activist/public art replies to both the individual and her context by acknowledging the artist and the community.

Standpoint epistemology seeks this dual centering as well: "[M]ost standpoint theorists attempt to locate standpoint in specific community contexts with particular attention to the dynamics of race, class, and gender" (Naples 71). The focus on categories within communities in standpoint epistemology and situated knowledge brings us to how we can diffuse broad categories that continue to define academia and activism. Contextualization also brings us closer to ways we produce knowledge by looking at a network of meaning which includes the individual.

The one danger we must avoid is seeing from the category of the individual. Like academia and activism, the individual can also become a rigid categorization, as can experience. We must actively examine all categories in order better to understand how each one, and all collectively, shape each other and shape us.

Individuals in Activism

A focus on individuals informs activist theory: "There is no single set of attitudes or social group to which all others must conform. Instead, the unifying ethos is one of decentered authority To put these theories into practice, activists need to develop the mutually supportive character of their struggles" (Trend 172). No overarching categorization must inform activism (or academia, for that matter); instead, a push for a focus on individuals and their connections to others and to what they are organizing for is

their standpoint. During the WTO protests in Seattle in November 1999, activists drew on this standpoint:

No centralized leader could have coordinated the scene in the midst of the chaos, and none was needed--the organic, autonomous organization we had proved far more powerful and effective. No authoritarian figure could have compelled people to hold a blockade line while being tear-gassed--but empowered people free to make their own decisions did choose to do that. (Starhawk 54-55)

However, while the WTO protesters drew on contextualized individuals, this conception can itself break down as well if it is only narrowly contextualized (e.g. saying "it sounds like a good idea to me!"--after you state an idea).

In 1991, after a number of attacks on women's rights (the trials of Clarence Thomas, Mike Tyson, and William Kennedy Smith as some examples), "The Third Wave' [was] galvanized...a new generation of activist women declaring their fury, summoning accountability, and demanding representation (Essoglou 335). In response, on January 28, 1992, a group of women formed the Women's Action Coalition (WAC) (Essoglou 333-339). WAC was known for its direct action style, but they were also known because they "appeared to be 'fashionable,' 'confident' women [Their] appearance was no doubt part of WAC's near-instant success. At the same time, it brought with it an unfortunate lesson (and/or reminder) that while appearances can be usefully deceiving, they are nearly always divisive" (Essoglou 341).

WAC's emphasis was on action even though they worked to fact-check that action (Essoglou 358). They held an intense debate to determine that they would emphasize action: "In naming ourselves the Women's *Action* Coalition, we were resolved to emphasize action over our loosely based affinity as artists. It was also suggested that referring to ourselves as artists was more passive, exclusionary, and limiting" (Essoglou 339). Unfortunately, they simply displaced one category for another. While they were

careful to choose action, they were not careful to define action: for whom, by whom, with what means, etc. Rather than defining, they assumed the inclusion of "women" (Essoglou 362); in other words, they did not look to the individuals comprising WAC. They took on a breathtaking number of campaigns during their brief two year existence, some of which include "the Pink Slip Action, the Democratic and Republican conventions, Clinic Defense, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Women Firefighters, the Glen Ridge Rape Trial, Rape is a War Crime, Take Back the Night March, Stop Police Brutality, Tax Reform for Health Care, and more" (Essoglou 351). With all these campaigns, though, the driving force of action caused them to keep pressing forward despite dissent within their ranks that not even everyone their was being heard.

WAC's downfall was its inability to conceive situated knowledge. While they artfully utilized direct action techniques from the ACT UP and Women's Health, Action and Mobilization! (WHAM!) who had gone before them, they did not link their work along other categorical lines as well (Essoglou 336). This failure to establish a firm standpoint based on women's interpretation of their experiences in relationship to their community led to categorization within WAC and ultimately to their inability to act effectively. This was due to a limited understanding of various standpoints, not just one. While individuals were a focus, they also became *the* focus, which is just as problematic because neither situation provides context.

Individuals in Academia

Academics often signal their individual experience to the broader community of academics in their research strategy. They do this through a conscious process of placing themselves--their "method (techniques for gathering evidence) . . . methodology (a theory and analysis of how research should proceed) . . . [and] epistemological issues

(issues about an adequate theory of knowledge or justificatory strategy)"--in a discursive center (Harding 2). Method is privileged over experience here--which also leaves out part of the equation.

From the perspective of standpoint epistemology, this emphasis is a necessary component of research:

Another way to put this is that the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of the research. *This* evidence too must be open to critical scrutiny no less than what is traditionally defined as relevant evidence. Introducing this 'subjective' element into the analysis in fact increases the 'objectivism' which hides this kind of evidence from the public. (Harding 9)

When writers emphasize their own experience in academia they highlight the potential for merging categories. However, they are also open to critiques of the strategy "as an attempt to create a more 'true' or 'authentic' depiction of the field encounter, thus once again privileging the researcher's voice over others whose lives were the subject of inquiry" (Naples 31). Academics must be careful to place their individual experience and work in the ever-broadening context of that which informs it. Laying out the "facts" for examination opens them to a critical examination of how they are informed by categorization and how they might move from the delusion of severance to a place where they can view their work anew--through the categories

This examination does not happen, however, without dislocation. Whenever a paradigm shift is involved--from a focus on categories to a focus through categories--invariably people will become grumpy, at least. This is to be expected; for example, right now I am cozy inside writing, but my dog wants to drag me into the cold. While this may appear on the surface to be much less complex than a categorical shift in perspective, it still requires me to change my perceptions of how things are "supposed to be" at this

present moment. Similarly, when academics' and activists' focus shifts off categories the results may be jarring--at first. However, by examining how they are both entangled in the production of knowledge they can begin to move from dislocation to a location of possibility and from the replication of disciplinary difference to a new conception of disciplines, and knowledge, on a continuum.

Forcing Academia/Activism

Activists experience this categorical dislocation between assumptions over what their action should "do" or "be." At a conference after the WTO protests in Seattle and the World Bank and IMF protests in Washington, D.C., people such Ariana Huffington, Michael Lerner, David Korten, Cornel West, and others gathered to discuss the "lack of 'unity of vision and strategy' guiding the vision against global corporatism" (Klein, "Vision" 265). The participants were supposed to "give birth to a unified movement for holistic social, economic, and political change" (Klein, "Vision" 265). Not only does this goal sound difficult, near impossible, in the space of a few days, but it is also counterintuitive for activists who define their work in terms of individual response:

When critics say that the protesters lack vision, what they are really saying is that they lack an overarching revolutionary philosophy--like Marxism, democratic socialism, deep ecology, or social anarchy--on which they all agree. That is absolutely true, and for this we should all be extraordinarily thankful....It is to this young movement's credit that it has as yet fended off all of these agendas and has rejected everyone's generously donated manifesto, holding out for an acceptably democratic, representative process to take its resistance to the next stage. Perhaps its true challenge is not finding a vision but rather resisting the urge to settle on one too quickly. (Klein, "Vision" 272-273)

These activists move from situated knowledge into their action. The dislocation comes when their action has not been defined--not by outside influence--but by an internal breakdown of the category.

Other activist groups feel similarly to the participant at the conference: "ACT UP never entertained the notion that a group must hammer out its analysis before it takes action; it instinctively disdained rallies, where speakers drone on to the already converted" (Kauffman 38). Instead, they preferred to enact their high-profile style of direct action for maximum results (Kauffman 38). This is not to imply that ACT UP had no goals, but rather that they, like many other activist groups "consciously sought to emphasize activist work and praxis over long discussions about philosophy or ideology" (Shepard and Hayduk 8). The dislocation between activist work and knowledge, though, is where we really meet a point of contention in this discussion.

An emphasis on action creates a very particular kind of knowledge. It values specific acts and devalues others. This hierarchical relationship is in direct opposition to activism's self-declared goals of a focus on individuals. By not first examining what activism is and other categories that shape its meaning, activists lose any say in reshaping its meaning. This is because they do not perceive it as something with an overarching meaning to be queried.

The same may be said for academic work that speaks for social change without considering the effect of academic writing or how it links with social change. Writing the paper or doing the research without considering the category of academia (or what social change might be) disregards the myriad forces within and outside the university pressing on our work. Categorization draws a distinction between these two practices, but they may not be so different in the end. When we examine categories and how knowledge is produced within those categories, we see the similarities in practice within each. This is not to say that academia and activism are the same or that they will become one happy

category (which would be an oxymoron anyway). Rather, it is to say that locating their common practice as the production of knowledge allows people who work within academy and activism to think about their work beyond the confines of categorization.

CHAPTER 4
"HOW DOES SHE DO IT?": PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE IN ACADEMIA AND
ACTIVISM

What is the production of knowledge, anyway? It sounds like another abstraction made up to confuse a simple process. Isn't knowledge either just intuitive or a memorization of "facts"? And while it is often made to appear that way on the surface, it is because of this seeming ease of acquisition that knowledge must be examined further. Its processes are so bound up in production that they become obscured, accepted, and replicated without notice.

Production and Knowledge

As a graduate student, I feel that I can only rarely escape the pressures of material production: "Read more books, Anna;" "Write more papers, Anna;" "Publish and go to conferences, Anna." I hear this internal refrain now due to the structures which support it: the university, and more specifically, disciplinary demands.

While the people within this circuitous structure may feel that they are working to produce new papers and even new ideas, what they are now doing is not the production of knowledge: it is the replication of disciplinary difference. These are not just nuanced versions of the same thing: the replication of disciplinary difference privileges categorization. It does this by making phrases such as "academic enough" possible--it enacts and sustains discipline specific standards. It also removes context from knowledge by only looking within the discipline as a source.

In contrast, the production of knowledge is grounded in specificity: it centers individuals and other ideas which inform its own. The effects are quite different as well. The effect of the replication of disciplinary difference is more additions to the knowledge base which sustains that discipline as set apart. The effect of the production of knowledge is seeing what informs those ideas, that knowledge base, and each discipline, and then taking that information to arrive upon a layered version of knowledge. When we locate the similarity between academia and activism at the production of knowledge, we acknowledge the processes that sustain those categories. For example, both participate in creating knowledge, albeit with seemingly different tools because of their categorical difference. To be reductive but make a point, academics write papers and activists protest. In both examples, they are working to get out ideas to other people and to further their own thought about those ideas. So even though protesting or doing door-to-door campaigns about an issue may not look the same on the surface as this paper, at the bottom it does something very similar. When we recognize this similarity, we then have to acknowledge how we don't have the lock on those processes; the production of knowledge is not categorically exclusive. When we see that the production of knowledge does more than sustain our own work, we can begin to make our work (whatever it may be) more concrete as it looks to sources outside its own genesis and category for further continuation.

The same dangers in academia can be said for activism as it works within itself. Both areas produce specific kinds of knowledge, but that knowledge is constructed in support of and as a structure for more of the same. Thus, the main danger when

considering the production of knowledge is removing meaning from the phrase and leaving it open to any interpretation:

On the other hand, it must be said, in response to the left-wing or 'leftist' notion that words, dreams, texts and concepts labour and produce on their own account, that this leaves us with a curious image of labour without labourers, products without a production process or production without products, and works without creators (no 'subject'--and no 'object' either!). The phrase 'production of knowledge' does make a certain amount of sense so far as the development of concepts is concerned: every concept must come into being and must mature. But without the facts, and without the discourse of social beings or 'subjects', who could be said to produce concepts? There is a point beyond which reliance on such formulas as 'the production of knowledge' leads onto very treacherous ground: knowledge may be conceived of on the model of industrial production, with the result that the existing division of labour and use of machines, especially cybernetic machines, is uncritically accepted; alternatively, the concept of production as well as the concept of knowledge may be deprived of all specific content, and this from the point of view of the 'object' as well as from that of the 'subject'--which is to give *carte blanche* to wild speculation and pure irrationalism. (Lefebvre 72-73)

We must place knowledge solidly within its various contexts in order to examine it. As Lefebvre points out, when you remove context from the production of knowledge (for example, why did I start this project?) you are left with an empty phrase that can then be used to mean any old thing. When we remove the production of knowledge from its context then we are left with either (a) disciplinary difference; or (b) the actual *production* of knowledge--with all the accompanying ominous images of isolated people cranking out obscure ideas. When we place the production of knowledge in its context, we place ourselves in the process, not behind it, and this gives us the possibility of changing it from within and recognizing similarities in how we construct it.

When the production of knowledge is placed within its context, the people involved in the process can begin to see its negative effect on their work: they are forced to produce in order to move ahead in their work. Academics and activists speak their own language, so to speak, in that they both have technical jargon which is (at least

relatively) inaccessible to outsiders. They use this language as a kind of shorthand; however, it also serves to obfuscate the processes which get them there in the first place: "One of the primary causes of academic mystification is the tendency to take academic discourse for granted, as if it were a transparent vehicle of information or ideas" (Graff, *Clueless* 25). This language is confusing because it presupposes disciplinary difference and replicates it. It is removed from the processes which initiate it: "There is therefore one language which is not mythical, it is the language of man as a producer: wherever man speaks in order to transform reality and no longer to preserve it as an image, wherever he links his language to the making of things . . . and myth is impossible" (Barthes 146). When we link the production of knowledge concretely to those who produce it and to its processes then workers within academia and activism can move from replication to transformation: with the processes revealed, they can see their similarities and use them to re-imagine their work--and not only see it as "theirs."

Academics and the Production of Knowledge

A prevailing myth about academia is that knowledge produced in the sciences, humanities, business fields, etc. is obviously disparate: it is generated differently and it concludes with different results. While the processes at arriving upon knowledge may appear different, they are actually quite similar: in all cases, the tools of the discipline, and the work of others in that discipline, are used to further the process wherein they produce more knowledge that contributes to that discipline. The replication of disciplinary difference in "academia" makes the production of knowledge appear to be all cognitive. The problem we confront now is the hidden "how." The how seems to get lost in the production of academic knowledge in favor of the final result. Knowledge appears

to be the result of people who are smart sitting around thinking about things, when in reality more takes place.

Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar are anthropologists who set out to uncover an "anthropology of science" in their work *Laboratory Life*. In the introduction to this book, Jonas Salk (who oversaw the laboratory they observed during the course of their research) puts out a call for the clarification of scientific processes:

If the public could be helped to understand how scientific knowledge is generated and could understand that it is comprehensible and no more extraordinary than any other field of endeavor, they would not expect more of scientists than they are capable of delivering, nor would they fear scientists as much as they do. This would clarify not only the social position of scientists in society, but also the public understanding of the substance of science, of scientific pursuits and of the creation of scientific knowledge. It is sometimes discouraging that although we dedicate our lives to the extension of knowledge, to shedding light and exemplifying rationality in the world, the work of individual scientists, or the work of scientists in general, is often understood only in a sort of magical or mystical way. (Salk 13-14)

Although Salk's request to demystify scientific processes is a positive step, it too contributes to the replication of scientific knowledge because it is cloaked in the very language that creates these problems to begin with. He says that scientists "dedicate [their] lives to the extension of knowledge [and] to shedding light and exemplifying rationality in the world" without ever explaining what on earth that could mean. He says that he wants people to better understand scientists and that they are often viewed as mysterious; however, this very language of exploration and conquest is what constructs that situation.

Latour and Woolgar work in the lab to uncover "the *social* construction of scientific knowledge in so far as this draws attention to the *process* by which scientists make sense of their observations" (32). By revealing the process inherent in the scientific construction of knowledge, Latour and Woolgar are able to link science to other fields

which contribute to its advancement, show how social relations influence this process, and examine how knowledge becomes accepted in the sciences. They point out that

[a]fter the paper which incorporates these figures has been written, and the main result of the paper has been embodied in some new inscription device, it is easy to forget that the construction of the paper depended on material factors. The bench space will be forgotten, and the existence of laboratories will fade from consideration. Instead, 'ideas,' 'theories,' and 'reasons' will take their place. (Latour and Woolgar 69)

Implicit in "the existence of laboratories" are the social relations which allowed the knowledge to surface. The scientific replication of knowledge, however, obscures this through the progression whereby "an important feature of fact construction is the process whereby 'social' factors disappear once a fact is established" (Latour and Woolgar 23). Science thus becomes a category which will not play with others. It evolves a process which maintains the replication of disciplinary difference and "[s]cientists thus appear to operate scientifically because they are scientists" (Latour and Woolgar 153). Although this is an obvious tautology, it reveals the danger of categorization as this is precisely what categorization works to uphold.

The same process is repeated in the humanities, although on the surface by apparently different means:

[The field coverage model's] great advantage was to make the department and curriculum virtually self-regulating. By assigning each instructor a commonly understood role--to cover a predefined period or field--the principle created a system in which the job of instruction could proceed as if on automatic pilot, without the need for instructors to debate aims and methods. . . . It is only the field-coverage principle that explains how the literature department has managed to avoid paralyzing clashes of ideology during a period when it has preserved much of its earlier traditional orientation while incorporating disruptive novelties such as contemporary literature, black studies, feminism, Marxism, and deconstruction. (Graff, *Professing* 7).

The field-coverage model, which attempts to account for variety, can appear to escape categorization--within that particular discipline. If English has specialists for every area,

then it appears to be looking beyond the scope of English, or at least a narrow conception of English. However, the field-coverage model actually enforces the categorization of English even further. It does this by forcing "English" specialties.

Humanities departments are also dependent on social relations in order to produce their work: the workers build on the work of other researchers (this paper is a perfect example) to make their argument. They then take that new argument as evidence of something "new" they have created, seemingly out of thin air, because the new then becomes the basis of a different stepping off point. The new, though, serves to replicate disciplinary difference as it (typically) stays within the confines of that discipline: "Literature thus tends to be placed outside or above the sphere of practical affairs; the stress on formal esthetic properties moves it in the direction of art-for-art's-sake. At the same time, the professionalization of literary criticism--its academic 'disciplining'--has separated it also from the realm of social practice" (Brantlinger 68). This is the catch-22 of categories: they demand attention no matter how you try to recast them. As long as you still accept a categorical premise, you are unable to escape working within that paradigm. This is not to say that the paradigm must be throw out completely; rather, changing how we think about categorical premises can give us the ability to negotiate those premises and draw new ones based on the production of knowledge. This same process is repeated within other disciplines in the humanities and beyond as well; it is not unique to literature because what is being reflected is the replication of disciplinary difference, which is applicable beyond narrow disciplinary definitions.

Within the university, cultural studies attempts to break down some of these entrenched notions of knowledge. It does so by locating meaning in various locations

and by looking for fissures in ways meaning gets written (Brantlinger 16-17). I believe this emphasis on interconnection is useful for breaking down the delusion of severance--so long as individual subjectivity does not get written away in the process. Situated knowledge can be used here as one of the ways we write meaning--and difference. Cultural studies also emphasizes "breaking down intellectual barriers to culture and forging new patterns of intellectual and political critique both within and outside the university. A renewed cultural criticism ought to look beyond the isolated text to the creation of oppositional forms that are simultaneously academic and public, literary and political" (Brantlinger 21). Brantlinger's call for critique inside and outside the university is helpful for envisioning ways that connections could be forged between the two, but only once both are first recognized for their constituted difference. Brantlinger easily links "academic and public, literary and political" in his vision without first considering the internal organization of those structures and how they produce knowledge. One cannot transform into another without considering both how they are constituted as categories and who composes them.

The work produced within each discipline reflects the organization of the discipline: the knowledge produced works to sustain this structure. The same can be said for the university as a whole, as "[t]oday, all departments of the University can be urged to strive for excellence, since the general applicability of the notion is in direct relation to its emptiness" (Readings 23). Of course people want to be excellent, produce riveting papers, conduct breakthrough experiments, and so on. However, when this production is taken out of context and held up as a result of the triumph of knowledge, little is

accomplished. Individuals are removed from this process and trumped by how their work "contributes to the conversation."

Activists and the Production of Knowledge

A prevailing myth about activism is that that is all it is about--action. More importantly, the myth maintains the idea that people simply gather together about something they are passionate about and then "do" something about it. They may have to do some internal strategizing, but the action evolves naturally due to the work of the activists. However, this is hardly the case. The apparent ease with which this action takes place covers the process whereby it is possible: an incredible amount of research and theorizing must take place first.

On January 1, 1994, the date of the beginning of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Zapatistas began an armed uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas that "was the first denunciation of a 'new world order' from the viewpoint of that order's victims" (Hayden 2). This uprising would have been impossible without the previous years of organization and theorizing by its members. The figurehead of the movement, Subcomandante Marcos, describes how the position of the Zapatistas differs from other uprisings: "In previous armies, soldiers used their time to clean their weapons and stock up ammunition. Our weapons are words, and we may need our arsenal at any moment" ("Hourglass" 12). The Zapatistas draw on the power of demystification to give power to their activism. Rather than succumbing to denunciations of action without thought, they consciously expose their processes for scrutiny.

Certainly, they invoke this method as deliberately in the production of knowledge as do methods meant to obscure. However, their self-revelatory process exposes their undergirding:

Speaking and listening is how true men and women learn to walk. It is the word that gives form to the walk that goes on inside us. It is the word that is the bridge to cross to the other side. Silence is what Power offers our pain in order to make us small. When we are silenced, we remain very much alone. Speaking, we heal the pain. Speaking, we accompany one another. Power uses the word to impose his empire of silence. We use the word to renew ourselves. Power uses silence to hide his crimes. We use silence to listen to one another, to touch one another, to know one another. This is the weapon, brothers and sisters. We say, the word remains. We speak the word. We shout the word. We raise the word and with it break the silence of our people. We kill the silence by living the word. Let us leave Power alone in what the lie speaks and hushes. Let us join together in the word and the silence which liberate. (Marcos, "Word" 76)

Marcos's repetition of the word throughout his actions and writings (which are inseparable), show us how an exposure of the processes leads into new forms of activism. It also places individuals and their experiences solidly in the forefront of their movement.

Marcos is suspected to be a "former" academic, a Marxist whose academic status is "former" only because he no longer works within a university. Unquestionably, no matter who he is, Marcos's recognition of the similarities between thought and action, academia and activism, fostered the Zapatistas: "He wrote in a torrent, producing hundreds of texts, quickly disproving Hannah Arendt's claim that 'under conditions of tyranny it is far easier to act than to think.' In less than twelve months, during sleepless sessions on the word processor in the midst of fighting a war, [Marcos] generated enough text for a 300-page volume" (Stavans 389). He produced all this writing to explain the Zapatistas' demands, communicate with people outside the movement, and as or more importantly, to engage with people who are drawn by that. The written word became a seductive tool for taking the Zapatistas beyond another group of indigenous people who could easily be dismissed. The Zapatistas combine the power of action and the power of the word to amplify both.

This amplification occurs because the combination of power and action relies upon the similarities between the production of knowledge. Marcos would have been unable to maximize the processes of academia and activism without working with their similarities in production. The similarities allowed him to see how the two categories could communicate with each other, rather than isolate each other, and then the Zapatistas began to build a movement. The Zapatista uprising was not solely activist or academic; instead, it was both.

Similarly, from November 28-December 3, 1999, the WTO protests relied on months of research: "WTO week in Seattle was a week of scholarship" (Thomas 13). The protestors built on the prior knowledge of each group present and then worked to accumulate new information about how to protest the WTO most effectively. So many groups participated in this protest that it is impossible to name them all. However, what is possible is imagining the interconnection necessary for such a protest to succeed.

While they did rely on social relationships to accomplish their work, Noam Chomsky points out that other factors were necessary for success:

The highly successful demonstration of 'people's power' at the World Trade Organization provides impressive testimony to the effectiveness of educational and organizing efforts designed for the long term, carried out with dedication and persistence, based on open and honest interchange, and guided by careful evaluation of attainable goals and future prospects. (qtd. in Danaher and Burbach 13)

As with the Zapatistas, the WTO protestors in Seattle relied on a network of knowledge to achieve their goal of shutting down the WTO talks. The emphasis on education present in Seattle allowed the protestors to consider what they were doing and why. Again, though, the protests were neither entirely academic nor activist. The protests

relied on the processes of both to work with such a complex number of issues, groups, and individuals.

These two examples show how groups seemingly focused only on action--especially if they are observed through the lens of the media--rely on more. When we see a protest on television, all we see is the action. We forget (or never realize) just as easily as the process of categorization wants us to that the production of knowledge never emerges from a puff of smoke.

What's the Point?

The question of "why are we doing this again?" sneaks up in unsettling ways for both academics and activists. Both academics and activists often work, in their own ways, on similar issues. However, if they're both producing knowledge, then some questions quickly become forgotten as they are caught up in the process of that production: "So far as the concept of production is concerned, it does not become fully concrete or take on a true content until replies have been given to the questions that it makes possible: 'Who produces?', 'What?', 'How?', 'Why and for whom?' Outside the context of these questions and their answers, the concept of production remains purely abstract" (Lefebvre 69). If we begin to answer these questions then we can begin to make the production of knowledge more concrete. So our question now is, "what are these people doing, and why?"

In bell hooks's *Talking Back*, she gives voice to voice: changing from object to subject and speaking for oneself. Speaking becomes both a way to engage in active self-transformation and a rite of passage where one moves from object to subject: "Only as subjects can we speak. As objects, we remain voiceless--our beings defined and interpreted by others" (hooks 12). In *Talking Back*, hooks creates a conscious discussion

between herself, her reader(s), her text, her ideas, and back and forth and in between.

She does this to maintain her goal that "[v]isionary feminist theory must be articulated in a manner that is accessible if it is to have meaningful impact" (hooks 39).

This question of accessibility delves into the problem of breaking down categories. Accessible to whom? According to whose definition? hooks is quick to point out that her goal "as a feminist thinker and theorist is to take that abstraction and articulate it in a language that renders it accessible--not less complex or rigorous--but simply more accessible" (hooks 39). When we think about accessibility we often think of giving more people the ability to render something available to them: "[a]ccess has a physical connotation--approaching, entering, using. The idea of access is represented metaphorically as passages through doors and gates, over obstacles, barriers, and blockages" (Scott 178). Thinking about access physically is especially interesting in light of a challenge to break down categories--another physical metaphor. Accessibility, like categorization, becomes tricky when left undefined. The idea is enticing that we can make our work, no matter what it is, accessible to others (implicitly--make it matter to others). However, the definition of accessibility changes depending on who gives it. Some people may define accessibility in terms of access for others in the discipline whereas others may define it as institutional access--and anything in between. Accessibility functions as a category because it appears to be relatively simple, but that simplicity masks its underlying processes.

Another question related to accessibility seems to be, why write a paper about how social change is, say, reflected in contemporary novels (or the connection between academia and activism), when you could work on actually effecting that change? Why

am I writing this paper rather than "doing" something about the problem I perceive? The answer is simple--because I can. Yet, this is really not a simple answer. The fact remains that, while I can produce this paper, it cannot produce itself. It needs me, it needs the work of other people, and it needs the work of my discipline. In other words, it requires social processes; this is not the exception, it is the norm. And while I can just turn this paper in as the next step on my academic journey and move on without giving it a second thought, I cannot remove it from the production of knowledge. Even if only a handful of people read this paper, it has already interacted in this process because I have engaged in the (multiple) steps necessary for it.

So how does this paper "do" something in its own way? And more importantly, why "should" it? Perhaps we are asking too much of categories. They do not need to interact--they already do. This paper "does" something by interacting in the production of knowledge, which meets up with many other forms of "doing": other academic disciplinary work and various forms of activism. The production of knowledge is the common ground between forms of thinking and doing--it is where they get tossed around and formed into new conceptions of each.

CHAPTER 5
"WE'LL MEET UP SOMEWHERE": THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ACADEMIA
AND ACTIVISM

Categorization works to maintain disciplinary difference. However, as we have seen, exposing the processes which lead to the production of knowledge can help us move beyond categorization. This is not to say that academia and activism "should" meet in the middle. Rather, it acknowledges how they already do meet by virtue of their participation in the production of knowledge. It locates their difference in the category in order to examine how it constitutes those involved. This also allows those involved to see their similarities and uncover their own work from a new perspective.

Moving from "Academia" to Academia

Cherríe Moraga begins *Loving in the War Years* with the sometimes frightening admission/reminder that "[o]n some level you have to be willing to lose it all to write--to risk telling the truth that no one may want to hear, even you" (Moraga xii). While this point of situated knowledge lets her reader know that she is going to position herself within the contexts of her experience, it also implies an action that may or may not be present. Moraga tends to conflate writing and action, but she does not break down the category of action in her work.

Moraga addresses the difficulty of theory and praxis at numerous points throughout her work:

[t]he university allows a benign liberalism, even a healthy degree of radical transgressive thought, as long as it remains just that: thought translated into the conceptual language of the dominant class to be consumed by academics of the dominant class, and as such rendered useless to the rest of us. If the study of

insurrection must occur within the conceptual framework and economic constraints of the patron-university--e.g., tenure tracking, corporate-funded grants and fellowships, publishing requirements, etc.--insurrection can never be fully conceived and certainly never realized. (Moraga 173)

Moraga's anger with academia comes through clearly here; however, I believe that her disconnect comes from categorization. She points out that the university allows varying degrees of thought, as long as it is "just that: *thought*...[which is then] rendered useless to the rest of us." A number of categorical assumptions beleaguer this statement: first of all, she assumes what is "supposed" to get done in a university setting. Rather than assessing it for how it creates meaning, she tries to merge it with activism. Second, she assumes that *just* thought cannot provoke action on its own and that thought is not a form of action. Third, she aligns herself with "the rest of us" when she also works/has worked within the confines of the university and is thus at least a part of both groups she identifies.

She also presumes that the "study of insurrection must occur" at all, much less within the confines of the university, and then she points out that "insurrection can never be . . . realized" within that paradigm. Her equation of study with insurrection counteracts her own construction of privileging action. Here I have my devil's advocate hat on to show how by not first interrogating the categories she so urgently wants to change, she writes herself into a situation which really can never be realized. She does not look at how activism itself is also a site of knowledge production which can be critiqued and utilized.

Nonetheless, Moraga does retain some hope for the university: "There *are* exceptional students and exceptional faculty. There are remarkable moments where 'critical consciousness,' . . . is awakened, where the most visionary and dangerous of

faculty inspire thoughts that directly affect the bodies sitting in front of them. The bodies think. They stand up. They are not afraid of freedom. They act (Moraga 186). However, even this hope is misleading as she places it onto bodies that "act" while never defining the difference between those exceptional students who think and those who act-- or those who think and act. Moraga makes a mistake in writing the hope onto bodies rather than first breaking down the categories, because she gives no definition of what their action is or how it may be "better" than not acting (or what action means). By avoiding the issue of the value she instills in action she is able to invoke it in the name of change in the university without considering *how* that change could occur and *how* it became desirable.

Leslie Salzinger attempts to bridge the problem of categorization in her work, *Genders in Production*. In the beginning of the text she is very candid with the reader about her position as a writer and a researcher:

It would be unbearably ironic to embark on such an investigation without placing oneself within the panorama. Thus, as observer and analyst, both in the field and in my writing, I attempt to define my position and to keep that position apparent. This is not because the book is about me. It is not. Rather, in clarifying my location, I give the reader the chance to understand the social/intellectual vantage point from which this story is told. (Salzinger 2)

She conducts research in four maquiladoras in Mexico and works there in order to gain insight into how gender subjectivities are formed through the work. Her standpoint, therefore, produces the knowledge in the text as much as (if not more than) that of the workers she encounters. She tries to move from "Academia" to academia through references to the political aspect of her work. By engaging her work outside the university, Salzinger sees her work as somehow useful outside it.

In her conclusion she describes her vision of how the information she gathered might be used:

Understanding the selves management addresses and evokes makes it possible to speak directly to the subjects actually working. It also makes a particular version of consciousness-raising available as an organizing tool, as activists themselves can come to see and make visible the processes through which gendered 'manageability' is generated under exploitative conditions. (Salzinger 165)

Even though this description does move towards a common ground between academia and activism, it still retains a discontinuity. There is a disjuncture between what the academic "can do" and what the activist "can do" in this construction. Here the activist "can come to see" only with the academic's knowledge. She can act only with the academic's help. Salzinger does not open space for the knowledge the activist also produces and brings to meet with the academic's knowledge and action.

Salzinger's work comes close to breaking down the categories of academia and activism, but in order to move beyond categorization into a site of possibility we must take her conjectures a step further. Both academia and activism produce knowledge at the categorical level and at the level of individuals. This dual meaning requires a new focus. It requires attention to individual standpoint while concurrently envisioning both academia and activism as producers of knowledge. Rather than forcing one category into the other, which inherently values one over the other, this formula allows for difference because it acknowledges the role of both in the creation of meaning. This new focus opens a common ground between and within academia and activism that individuals on both "sides" can navigate.

Moving from "Activism" to Activism

Within activism, breaking down categorization requires not only movement between movements but also movement within movements. This means that those

involved must be willing to engage both their social relations and their theorizing with multiple layers of people in order to connect their work across--not only activism--but other arenas as well. "Activism" becomes activism when it looks beyond its categorical boundaries and moves into an organization of knowledge processes that translate within and beyond categories.

For the Zapatistas, Subcomandante Marcos became "a one-man Web: he is a compulsive communicator, constantly reaching out, drawing connections between different issues and struggles" (Klein, "Unknown" 119). Through this constant communication, he is able to draw in supporters for his movement. He is also able to generate support for a new kind of movement, one based on communication:

[Marcos] has created his own dazzling image as a masked *mito genial*--his term, meaning an inspired act of mythmaking. He has staged a very real, threatening war on the Mexican state based on almost no firepower and a brilliant use of Mexicans' most resonant images: the Revolution, the peasants' unending struggle for dignity and recognition, the betrayed Emiliano Zapata. (Guillermoprieto 37)

The Zapatistas' move towards communication allows them to extend their movement--even into new ones. Their emphasis on communication underlines the connections made at the production of knowledge by doing just that: communicating. This is not a tautology; rather, this assertion shows how the Zapatistas work to expose their work--how it comes about, for whom, and by whom. As they assert how they produce knowledge, they in turn open new avenues for their work because they do not limit its capacity.

The Zapatistas informed other movements that followed them through their strategy of communication:

The Zapatista movement has generated movements of solidarity across the world. At one level it has coalesced around a defense of the oppressed--the exemplary victims of neoliberalism and corporate greed. That is their symbolic power. An

anarchist friend of mine suggested to me after Seattle that 'this was all because of the Zapatistas.' Did he mean their example? In part that is what he meant--but beyond that he saw them as representatives of a new politics. Zapatismo does not seek power, only justice; Zapatismo does not acknowledge leaders, but it is democratic in the extreme; Zapatismo is not a party, but a living and changing movement; Zapatismo has used the Internet to create an international connection between all those who reject capitalism red in tooth and claw. (Gonzalez 449-450)

In short, Zapatismo lays the groundwork for exposing the process of the production of knowledge. It does this by placing knowledge in the context from which it came and exposing the hidden "how." It moves from "Activism" to activism by decentralizing categorization and centering the production of knowledge.

The sheer number of groups participating in the WTO protest in Seattle required at least some participation between movements: "It's estimated that at least 700 groups were represented at the WTO demonstrations in Seattle. Most of the groups represented civil society; they were not affiliated with governments, although some were agencies that were affiliated with the United Nations" (Thomas 66). This wide network worked to achieve a number of goals in Seattle. It also worked to move beyond Seattle as groups worked together in new ways and were able to take that interaction to Washington, DC and elsewhere:

The mass, nonviolent protests in Seattle represented the culmination of a months-long process of coalition building by organizations that did not initially all know, understand or trust each other. We got to know each other as we discussed the politics of trade and investment, and discussed strategies for confronting the WTO. We won mutual trust and respect as we debated tactics. We became one movement as we took classes in civil disobedience tactics, and laid the foundation for legal defense. That collective and democratic process made possible the unity among environmentalists, labor unionists and many others--groups who had not always worked so well together in the past. (Benjamin 68)

The strategizing and theorizing that took place before Seattle reflects the protestors' dedication to building a new kind of knowledge--one that looks for connections beyond categories.

Connection between academia and activism give us the chance to look at similarities within and between movements, disciplines, ideas, etc. It gives us a new conceptualization of our own work in the context of others. Rather than viewing our work from the named label, academia or activism, we can view it from something connectedly new. This removes the presumption that we all already know what is going on in any area.

CHAPTER 6 "WE LIKE IT. WHO ELSE MATTERS?": CONCLUSION

For both academics and activists, a big question has to be audience. For whom are we producing this work? Even when the production of knowledge is not placed in its context, audience is an issue. Sometimes it does get lost in the shuffle as the demands of material production usurp it, but we always think in the back of our minds, "who will read this paper?", or even better, "who cares about this at all?"

A focus on the production of knowledge, rather than the replication of disciplinary difference, will allow the question of audience (and accessibility) to emerge more fully. It will do so by shifting the focus off a particular category, and thus a narrow idea of why and for whom we do this work, and will enable us to work with and for more people. This will allow us to contextualize our work, and the production of knowledge, even further.

As the production of knowledge moves from replication to transformation and as individual standpoints move to the forefront then we can move towards a connection between academia and activism. With connection, we can see knowledge on a continuum, rather than as something that is produced in a disciplinary vacuum (whatever your discipline may be). When we see knowledge on a continuum, we can include more people in our conceptions of knowledge and see that people already "care" about what we do because they are already working on it themselves with varying shades of nuance. We may not be able to save the world through graduate school, but we can begin to take hold of the possibility already there

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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This June, Anna will marry Nic Jelley and spend the summer relaxing. These are her happiest plans.