SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL ACTION: GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Randy Stoecker

e-mail: rstoeck@pop3.utoledo.edu
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
University of Toledo
Toledo, OH  43606

Introduction

Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it. (Karl Marx, 1978 [1888])

Lately sociologists have become concerned not just about the lack of a guiding paradigm but about their very futures as members of a subsidized academic discipline. As universities have swiftly closed or slowly dismantled sociology departments around the country, we have all begun to worry about how we can protect our future. And so the popular press, the sociology conventions, and the informal networks have all been pressing the question: what is sociology, why should we exist, and how can we defend ourselves?

The loudest voices speaking to this question have, so far, been those who helped get us into this fix: those who are searching for a paradigm rather than a purpose, for a model rather than a method, for science rather than usefulness, for the middle ground rather than the marginalized voices. As a consequence, we are either invisible to the outside world or seen as useless. Why does our discipline abrogate its responsibility for creating a better world, or why does it do so by adopting hierarchical, exclusionary modes of gathering and distributing knowledge? Why are we trying to do "applied" sociology bought and paid for by governments that resist democracy and capitalists that undermine it?

We are vulnerable as a discipline because we have acquiesced to those powerful forces. Rather than helping to build a power base at the grass roots, we have focused our efforts on those few who pay for access to our classrooms, or fund our grant requests. Thus, isolated from each other, and insulated from the people, we are being individually picked off, and no one seems to care.

Amid the dusty decay of debates without purpose and research without impact, however, alternatives are redeveloping. I hesitate to say there is a new day dawning in Sociology. Indeed, there is little external evidence of that. The job openings are overwhelmingly seeking academics to train police forces, pump out increasingly complex and irrelevant statistics, or study only the symptoms of the problems in families. At the same time, however, a new cadre of activist academics is forming. With a greater cache of methods at hand than their predecessors, and the
benefit of the history made by those predecessors, these academics are forging new relationships with the grass roots. They are filling books and journals with the news of their efforts, packing workshops on the explodingly popular "participatory research" and its many related methodologies, and often working in trenches too deep and heaped with oppression to ever be noticed outside of local circumstances. They are people like Edna Bonacich, who has committed herself to research supporting the organizing efforts of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in Los Angeles; Vicky Brockman, who tirelessly involved herself in the attempt to organize a graduate assistants' union at the University of Minnesota; Rubin Patterson, who has devoted himself to community development activities in Toledo's African American communities; and Ken Reardon, who continues to work with the devastated communities of East St. Louis. They include a minority of us white males who are struggling to further social change in which we cannot have a direct material stake. And they include the variety of university-employed women, people of color, and people suffering other forms of oppression who are trying to not lose touch with their communities of identity or origin while also trying to overcome their outsider status in relation to academia (Collins, 1990; Park and Pellow, 1996).

At a time when so many sociologists have found ways to keep at least one foot in social action and still keep up our academic careers, it seems appropriate to assess what has changed and why. Sociology has always been a curious enterprise. Many of us have argued for the superiority of democratic socialism as a means of eliminating oppression by the elites and empowering the working class. But let someone suggest that we sociologists should submit our academic agenda to the democratic participation of the masses and we cry "academic freedom" so loud that no one could miss the contradiction. We are extremely libertarian about our own work.

There are many reasons why we should overcome this contradiction. Sociology is the most suited of all the social sciences to deal comprehensively and wholistically with social problems, and therefore it has a responsibility to do so. Many of us received our education at the hands of the taxpayers, or receive our salaries from their pockets, and we should return the favor. Additionally, if we help educate and organize communities to empower themselves, they may in turn recognize our relevance and, through their empowerment, save our jobs from the budget buzz saw. Additionally, to the extent we produce knowledge about people while remaining isolated from personal relationships with them, our mistakes and inaccuracies mount (Stoecker, 1991).

Finally, increasing numbers of the next generation of sociologists are asking for something different from their sociological training. They want a greater diversity of voices, from the ground up, involved in their academic socialization. The first time I taught "Community Organizing and Development" at the University of Toledo, a group of graduate students in the class expanded the "volunteer work" option to organize the residents of a neighborhood our university had slated for demolition. I couldn't look them in the face and tell them they could only read about community organizing.

Still, why sociology? How did our discipline come to have such recurring bouts of angst about its essence and its future? To address those questions, we need to understand something about the history of the discipline.
A Brief History of Sociology and Social Action

"Sociology for whom?" is not a new question. It is one that is eternally fresh—as well as controversial. Keen members of each new undergraduate generation rediscover it. When trained sociologists recognize it as a question, it can either trouble them or open up new vistas for intellectual exploration, self awareness, and historical perspective. (Lee, 1978:19)

There have been sociologists engaged in social action almost as long as there has been thinking that we can call sociological. Equally important, those who have been most engaged in activism have also been least likely to be claimed by the gatekeepers of the discipline. From Karl Marx to Rosa Luxembourg to Jane Addams to Saul Alinsky to Myles Horton to uncountable contemporaries, the linkage between sociology and social action has remained strong and tenuous at the same time. Only Karl Marx has ever been fully admitted to the sociological club. The others have been virtually ignored. No matter that many early 20th century activist academics never got a Ph.D. in sociology—neither did many of their contemporaries because there were so few places that offered a sociology Ph.D. Others, like Saul Alinsky and Myles Horton, didn't have the patience to wade through the bureaucratic requirements for the degree when they could already do the work.

Part of what we must do then, to restore the dignity of social action in sociology, is to recover its history.

The most appropriate place to begin that history is with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The quote at the top of this paper was Marx and Engels' loudest (and most concise) proclamation of the importance of integrating intellectual work with activist work. Only two years after this statement, The Communist League commissioned Marx and Engels (1978 [1848]) to write what became known as "The Manifesto of the Communist Party." This statement would become a global philosophy of social activism within Marx and Engels' lifetime (Tucker, 1978:469). But they did not allow their engagement with social change to stop at writing. Engels' (1962[1845]) research in the ghettoes of Manchester, Marx and Engels' speeches at working people's rallies, and their regular involvement with the leadership of workers' organizations has left perhaps the most influential legacy of any activist intellectuals. Neither, however, could find a way to reconcile academic life with activist life, and both eventually chose the path of fully committed social action.

That legacy of linking intellectual activity and social action found its most direct and most famous expression through the works of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao. Perhaps more important, however less known, is the work of socialist women such as Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, and many others. The theoretical work of these women predated similar contemporary models in areas ranging from housework to international relations. And their political work, ranging from the struggle for the rights of women doing unpaid housework to the rights of prostitutes, predated many of the organizing issues of the contemporary women's movement (Morrissey and Stoecker, 1994; Nye, 1994). Again, in almost all cases, they did their intellectual and activist work through left-wing political parties rather than academic institutions.
This coordination of intellect and activism did not go uncritiqued from the halls of academia. The most well known of those early scholars now claimed by sociologists was Max Weber. Weber, writing in the wake of Marx and Engels, was ambivalent about what it meant to be an academic with commitments. He admitted to the right and perhaps even duty of academics to involve themselves in public affairs, especially by producing research that could reveal truths about social issues and guide policy makers to the correct political solutions. But there was a fine, gray line that the academic could not step across for fear of tainting the "objectivity" of knowledge and undermining the legitimacy of the academic enterprise. The professor could do relevant research, but "the professor should not demand the right as a professor to carry the marshal's baton of the statesman or the cultural reformer in his knapsack." (Weber, 1973[1917]:50)

Weber's position, rather than Marx and Engels', most influenced U.S. sociology, but not until after activist impulses invaded one of the earliest and most influential sociology departments at the University of Chicago. Similar involvement could be found in other early sociology departments. At the University of North Dakota, sociologists involved themselves in the populist Non-Partisan League in the early 20th century (McGuire and Dawes, 1983). At the University of Kansas, sociology deeply influenced the development of the Agricultural Extension service, which would provide one of the first nationwide models for rural community-based development (Sica, 1983; Austin and Bettin, 1990).

It was in Chicago, however, where the battle between social action and social science was most documented and the results most decisive. There is some evidence that the founding of the University itself was predicated on social reform, and it attracted academics with missions in its early years. The early men of the "Chicago school of sociology" got absorbed in a variety of social change activities, including Hull House, founded by Jane Addams. Addams has been remembered as a social worker, even though her academic work was as a sociologist and she taught sociology courses through the University of Chicago (though she declined to become a full member of the department). Hull House was the most famous of the turn-of-the-century settlement houses, where young educated women of the upper class partly renounced their backgrounds and set up community based organizations in the most oppressed urban neighborhoods. The full-time members of the Chicago School were regularly involved in Hull House, especially G. H. Mead and W. I. Thomas (Deegan, 1988). So intertwined were sociology and social action at the time that the media characterized Hull House as an "Experimental Station in Sociology" (The New Unity, 1895).

It was not long, however, before Weber's legacy would rear its head and produce four decades of sterile science in sociology. The University of Toledo fired Scott Nearing for publicly opposing World War II (Hubbard, 1996). The University of Chicago split off and isolated from Sociology a department of Social Work where social reformers, and particularly women, could be marginalized. This era commenced with the rise to power of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. They chose Weber's path, arguing that sociologists could do relevant research, but not in an engaged way. Indeed when Robert "Park was asked what help he had given an oppressed group discussed in a sociological course, he replied: 'Not a damned thing.'" (Deegan, 1988:316).

Social science would do worse than "not a damned thing" until the 1960s. Its research reinforced
fears of wage-earning women raising sons alone during World War II, contributed to the intense homophobia of the middle 20th century, and undermined social change efforts by African Americans and antinuclear activists by portraying them as irrational (Pleck, 1987; Lee, 1978; Traugott, 1978; May, 1988; Thorne and Yalom, 1982). But even with the dangerous rightward shift in the 1950s, a vestige of critical impulse remained. Alvin Gouldner (1970:11), responding to the 1960s critics who accused the discipline of being corrupt to the core, retorted: "How can one account for the very radicalism of those sociologists who accuse sociology of being conservative? . . . there are aspects of the character of and outlook intrinsic to Academic Sociology itself that sustain rather than tame the radical impulse."

When the 1960s arrived, the radical impulse would find full flowering. The changes that rocked the country were felt no less within sociology. By the end of the turmoil, as Abigail Fuller (1996) explores in this issue, a new attitude toward social action again grew in the discipline. Just as the conservatism of the 1940s and 1950s could not kill the activist impulses in sociology, however, the expansion of those activist impulses failed to completely mute the Weberian influence in the 1960s and 1970s. Except in rare cases, "sociologists continued to insist that thought was action." (Nelson, 1981:13).

While sociologists eventually became involved in the struggles for justice in the 1960s and 1970s, and many of those involved in the struggles would become sociologists, the gap between thought and action remained institutionalized in the discipline. There are no sociological manuals for social action and my own field of study--social movements--remains distressingly weak in providing practical information for activists compared to its emphasis on developing complex, and perhaps irrelevant, theoretical models.10

Even those sociologists most committed to social change, and most admired by those of us struggling to find a way to bring activism into sociology, seemed to emphasize abstract theories of change over practical strategies. The late Al McClung Lee (1978), whose leadership in progressive sociology circles is legendary, related a story of a business executive he knew. "How," the executive asked, "can anyone learn about people for any purpose only by using standardized research instruments and IBM machines without actually taking part in social competition and conflict?" (p. 11). Lee's response is unsatisfying. He argued that "In serving humanity, sociologists act principally as critics, demystifiers, reporters, and clarifiers" (p. 36). He leaves out the most important role--actor. Criticizing, demystifying, reporting, and clarifying are valuable. However, when sociologists control those activities and do not tie them to specific social change groups and activities, two problems develop. First, people don't learn how to think for themselves, and thus don't learn how to seize and use the means of theorizing (Stoecker, 1989). They remain intellectually disempowered. Second, the gap between our theories and their experience remains unbridged. When only the victims know the situation and only the sociologists know the theories, both forms of knowledge are weakened.

But the 1960s and 1970s were not just about demands for critique. They were also about demands for relevance from a student movement who rightly saw the traditional canons, the conservative theories, and the standard methodologies as justifying oppression by not speaking of and to the experiences of the oppressed. When the economic depression of the 1980s hit, and students fled sociology in a desperate and hopeless search for a degree that would prevent
unemployment, the demand for relevance was perverted into the field we now know as applied sociology\textsuperscript{11}. Just as the demand for critique produced theory that still seemed impractical, though, the demand for relevance produced practice devoid of critique. During the 1980s, when the emphasis on applied sociology expanded, it became a means of training students to work for state and capital managers (see Freeman et al., 1983). I came through both an undergraduate program and a graduate program well known in applied sociology circles—in my time in both places there were no students ever trained or placed in the field of social activism. In addition, those whom I most admired for their critical imaginations were also disappointingly uninvolved in active social change efforts as academics.

Quietly, during this period, a groundswell of change built within the discipline. It was rooted in the work of activist researchers in the colonized world who were experimenting with new forms of community-based development designed to help indigenous communities conduct their own development on their own terms (Hall, 1992). Gradually, this philosophy of "participatory research" made its way to the "developed" world through sociologists and other academics attempting to link their academic skills with grass roots social change efforts.

These were people like John Gaventa, who helped lead the Highlander Center's influential Appalachian land ownership study that exposed the destruction of communities at the hands of mining companies (Gaventa and Horton, 1981). Highlander was long notorious for its popular education programs supporting the labor and civil rights movements under its previous long-term leader and founder, Myles Horton. John Gaventa gradually moved into a full-time sociology position at the University of Tennessee, attained tenure, and helped establish a participatory research program within the academy. Phil Nyden, Chair of the Sociology and Anthropology department at Loyola University of Chicago, helped lead the effort to create the Policy Research Action Group program (PRAG). Linking the University of Illinois-Chicago, DePaul University, and Loyola University, PRAG brought neighborhood activists into the academy and sent students and professors out into the neighborhoods. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign commissioned Ken Reardon, from their Urban program, to make regular 160 mile journeys to East St. Louis to assist local development efforts, which he successfully turned into a participatory research project.

The University of Toledo Urban Affairs Center (UAC) made the bold move of hiring a community organizer whose best asset was that he lacked formal academic training. They also hired me into a position split with Sociology. Though I was an academic, my neighbors in the CedarRiverside neighborhood of Minneapolis had sensitized me to issues of community power in my research there. Together, and with the help of neighborhood organizers and leaders across Toledo, we crafted a participatory research program that led to a coalition of people committed to community-based urban redevelopment. The UAC recently commissioned me to help build a statewide network to connect with and, in some cases, help build similar processes across the seven major metropolitan areas of Ohio.

Many of these efforts, perhaps mine in particular, do not look like the heady high-tension social activism of the 1960s. But that kind of activism may be in the past as capital mobility and conservative politics continue to undermine the resource base and destroy the community bonds necessary to support it. Activism now, for many of us, has to start at the beginning of the
process, trying to build the power base, information base, collective vision, and communal bonds that are necessary for any real social change (see Stall and Stoecker, 1994).

Similar trends are occurring in undergraduate and graduate education well beyond the boundaries of sociology. "Service learning" is the new buzzword for bringing students out to the community to experience concepts in the real world, while also engaging students to assist social change efforts within those communities. There are entire divisions devoted to such programs at places like the University of Massachusetts-Boston's College of Public and Community Service. The University of Tennessee and Loyola University Sociology graduate programs are providing opportunities for their students to conduct participatory research and get a degree. Across the country sociology departments are considering changing their names or their mission statements to reflect this new integration of intellectual activity and social change activity.

That is not to say these efforts are incorruptible. I have seen our work in Toledo undermined by foundations and government controllers who sometimes overtly and sometimes covertly oppose community empowerment. Some work being promoted under the label of "participatory action research" (see, for example, Whyte, 1991) seems as useful for helping management control their workers as for helping workers throw off the shackles of hierarchical work management. Service learning, as Sam Marullo (1996) warns, can quickly degenerate into the worst kind of disempowering volunteer work devoid of both intellectual reflection and any social change emphasis, especially as the Clinton administration restricts it from anything remotely controversial in the Americacorps program.

But these programs are still better than anything we have had in a very long time, and maybe ever. They lead to a model that can both bring together sociology and social action and can sustain the link. It is to that model that we turn next.

**Opportunities and Issues in Linking Sociology and Social Action**

Sociology now has three models dealing with the tension between academia and social action: the participant, the advocate, and the participatory researcher.\(^{12}\)

The participant model, explored by both Al Gedicks (1996) and Amy Hubbard (1996), is a split-lives model. During the day one puts on their academic hat and does academic work. Involvement with a grass-roots social change effort occurs outside academic life. Maybe one teaches and does research to promote the position of that effort, but relevant standards controlling that teaching and research come from the institution, not the grass roots. I found myself occupying this role in graduate school at the University of Minnesota. I became seriously involved in my neighborhood—a counterculture community that had prevented a destructive urban renewal scheme and then went on to conduct community-controlled urban redevelopment. I even wrote my dissertation on the neighborhood and eventually turned it into a book (Stoecker, 1994). I tried as much as possible to involve my neighbors in reviewing my writings. But the standards that mattered came from the University, not the neighborhood, and I fear I got much
more out of the relationship than my neighbors did. They found my theoretical jargon, and my
telling of their tale, sometimes rather sterile. At the same time that I did this research I involved
myself in neighborhood committees, neighborhood celebrations, and some of the controversies
over how to conduct community-controlled redevelopment. I did this as a resident of the
neighborhood, however, not as a sociologist.

Many of us lead these split lives. We sit on boards, attend demonstrations, and maybe even
organize actions. Then we go to school. Often our research is even less related to our social
change work than mine was in Minneapolis. Our teaching is typically removed from our activist
work as we teach courses outside our area and adopt grading systems that promote passivity and
reinforce hierarchy and inequality. This is a hard life to lead because it is so filled with "status
inconsistency." As an activist, one has the satisfaction of being on the side of the challenger. As
an academic one has to deal with the uncomfortable reality that lectures, tests, and grades destroy
minds and disempower hearts.

The second model is the advocate model.\(^\text{13}\) Perhaps stretching Weber, we do focus our research
on an issue. Those who do stratification research or research on legal or legislative issues often
testify and lobby. We do try as much as possible to follow the standards of "science" to convince
power holders that we are telling the "truth." This form of linking academic and social action,
however, is perhaps the most feared by grass roots activists and organizers. I have been through
many community organizer training sessions, and eventually they all take out the mimeographed
sheet that distinguishes the organizer from the social worker and the advocate. The advocate,
they all agree, speaks for a group of which they are not a member and to which they are not
accountable. Institutional actors, not activists, control the rules of advocacy, thus compromising
its effectiveness. Probably the best example of advocacy gone awry is the Moynihan (1965) book
that virtually defined the concept of victim-blaming, as it located the cause of Black poverty in
the structure of the Black family. His work both supported an entire era of social welfare policy
and helped motivate the current anti-poor backlash.

The advocate model is problematic because it does not empower.\(^\text{14}\) I was reminded of this
recently through a long conversation with John Gaventa. I had just received tenure and no longer
needed to feel threatened that my attempts to forge an activist sociology would get me fired. At
the same time, I felt dissatisfied by my work with Toledo neighborhood groups, who did not
share my critique of capitalism. I distanced myself from activist work, hiding in academic
research where I could be more critical, even if less relevant. But this, too was dissatisfying.
Through my discussion with John, I began to realize that the advocacy model had partly
corrupted my activist sociology because I always did the research. Yes, neighborhood groups
helped design the research question, reviewed my research design, commented on rough drafts of
the reports, and took the lead in designing action projects out of the research. Yet they did not
have the opportunity to develop the knowledge-seeking skills, and forge the relationships I was
privy to, by doing the research. This was practical for both of us. Neighborhood groups did not
have the time or resources to do this and I did. Still, it maintained a gulf between academic and
activist that was problematic.\(^\text{15}\)

The third model, which I prefer, is participatory research, discussed in this collection by Lisa
Park and David Pellow (1996), and by Orlando Fals-Borda (1996). I interpret this model broadly
to encompass two essential qualities: 1) the democratization of the knowledge-production process and 2) the use of research for progressive social change (Stoecker and Bonacich, 1992). Democratizing knowledge requires placing control of the knowledge production process with those normally excluded from it, enabling them to become more independent of professionals. In the U.S. this has been done with populations ranging from high school students (Kelly, 1993), undocumented immigrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1993), people with developmental disabilities (Lynd, 1992), and many others. Encompassed under this umbrella are a variety of popular education models (see Horton and Freire, 1990; Lynd, 1992; Williams, 1996; Marullo, 1996). This is not a recent innovation, dating back at least to the turn of the century (Buxton and Turner, 1992). Florence Kelley, of Hull House, used a variation of participatory research to conduct the early Chicago surveys that were completely ignored once Park and Burgess came along (Deegan, 1988). Community organizers have for decades been helping people conduct research on their own communities, learning who owns the buildings in their neighborhood, what proportion of the city budget is devoted to their area, what skills their residents have, what general housing conditions look like, etc. They just avoided calling it research (Beckwith, 1996).

Using research for progressive social change also has a long and distinguished history from Friedrich Engels to the present. So much women-centered research was done since the 1970s on everything from women's bodies to income inequality to housework to childbirth that had such a substantial impact on our culture and social policy (see Reinharz, 1992, Millman and Kanter, 1975). While some may argue the finer points of what would be considered "progressive," I am satisfied by the relatively simple test of whether the research (and the research process) improves the ability of those excluded from participation in society and the realization of its benefits to participate and benefit.

The biggest danger in adopting a participatory research practice is that it may make us, as professional academics, irrelevant. Indeed, there is evidence that people can do their own research without us (Nash, 1993). Hopefully, however, we have the skills to help people become even better and more sophisticated researchers, and can still play a role where the people have too little time or other resources. We are also well situated to bring in knowledge from outside the community, preventing progressive impulses from degenerating into NIMBYism. But even here we must be careful. As participatory research is more widely practiced, oppressed communities are growing wary. They are asking why, if they do so much of the work, the academic gets both the grant money and the credit. They are demanding control over the research results--sometimes refusing to allow its publication--believing that research about them should be owned by them. They are pushing us to the final barrier--our own power. Imagine if we treated our relationship with grass roots groups the same way applied researchers treat their relationships with corporations. The corporation controls the agenda, funds the research, and controls the output. What if the community determined the research project, became the official grant recipient, and was the first author of the research? Now, just like with some applied projects, we might have to educate the "client" about the possibilities and paths for the research to take, so we would not be without influence. However, we would be forced to relinquish unjustly-held power and not contradict the process at the very beginning.
I have yet to meet these lofty goals in my own work. They are goals to reach, not standards to start from. The papers in this collection depict a wide range of activist sociology practices, some closer to the participant model and some closer to the participatory research model.

About These Issues

Sociological Imagination's willingness to devote so many pages to sociologists concerned with social action is a risk. What these authors are doing and writing about challenges all the boundaries of the academic profession. Perhaps, by opening the pages of an academic journal to academic activists, the activism itself may become less risky. The papers that follow cover less militant and more militant forms of social action. They discuss the trials of activism. They explore activism through action, research, and pedagogy. They come to you through an experimental editorial review process. Rather than sending them "out" to reviewers who remain unaccountable because they remain anonymous, I paired contributors with each other to comment on each others' paper--a "buddy system" review process. Not all the relationships work out, but overwhelmingly the readers stick to the author's issues (rather than their own) and make far more detailed comments than has been my experience with the "blind" review process. The reviewers also present themselves with a much different tone. Rather than arrogant statements about what the author did wrong, there are tentative suggestions about what the author could do better. I think the authors also listen more to comments presented this way. I know I did, as this paper benefitted from comments by the contributors to this special issue.

First come three papers that provide historical background covering three different periods and multiple ways of linking sociology and social action. Thomas Jenkins' paper explores the early sociologists involved in professional planning--trying to create a blueprint for a just society from within the academy. This paper recaptures a model of social action that many of us have wished for as the chaos created by capitalism produces ever-increasing fear and loathing. Abigail Fuller's paper recounts a more recent period in history, but one that is increasingly known only through the stories of the participants. Her paper brings many of those stories together, and explores the debates that must produce continuing discussion if we are to build on the successes and avoid the mistakes of the activist academics of that period. Al Gedicks' paper makes history personal, as he recounts the story of one academic risking all for a cause, and with a happy ending for a change. We are desperately in need of models showing how activism can succeed, and how activist academics can survive, and this paper moves in that direction.

Amy Hubbard's paper sets the tone for the second half of the collection, exploring the constraints on, and implications of, linking sociology and social action. She cogently analyzes the different rhythms of academic life and activist life that make linking the two so difficult. For me, the paper also illustrates the dire necessity of completely restructuring the academy to reject, rather than reproduce, split lives and hierarchies.

The first two papers of Part II are in some ways the most challenging to those of us who teach, as they suggest a fundamental change in what we do in the classroom, and even undermine the validity of a "classroom." For every one of us who yell and scream about how stupid our students are and how unable to learn they are, Lee Williams' paper should give us pause. The Highlander Center has been practicing participatory education with people ranging from illiterate to Ph.D. 'ed
for decades. Their methods, founded by the "fallen sociologist" Myles Horton, continued by John Gaventa, and now by Lee Williams and others, put the rest of us to shame. Everyone who has been bored by their own lectures, and fallen asleep grading irrelevant regurgitated test answers, should take a careful look at Highlander. Sam Marullo's paper on service learning suggests no less of a revolution. How many times have we looked out upon a sea of faces and admitted how much time is being wasted in the lifeless space of most college classrooms? This paper suggests that the classroom itself may be lifeless--learning about the streets can only really happen by learning on the streets.

The two papers that follow take the final step of bringing it all together in the form of participatory research. Both papers are unique in the field of participatory research in that they are written not by outsider academics but by insider participants, creating some very different dynamics from the participatory research I have practiced as an outsider to most of the communities I have worked with. Lisa Park and David Pellow's paper explores the ways in which participatory research may actually help manage tensions within social movement organizations. Orlando Fals-Borda's paper is a statement of the building power of the participatory research model. This transcript of his plenary address to the Southern Sociological Society, introduced by John Gaventa, speaks with hope of the changes occurring within our discipline. His international perspective also reminds us that, once again, the United States lags behind in the development of civilization.

Dave Beckwith's paper reacts to the entire discussion. Dave is the community organizer I was linked with when I first arrived at the University of Toledo, and has been a mentor ever since. Perhaps no one knows the tensions between academic and activism better than he. While I have moved into activism as an academic, Dave moved into academia as an activist, and recently moved back to full-time activism with the Washington DC-based Center for Community Change. I hope you will find his thoughts provocative and instructive.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the cartoon by Melissa Jeter that ends this collection may be both the shortest and the longest contribution. Provoked by a discussion in a graduate seminar that inspired her to stay up all night constructing it, this deceptively simple cartoon asks profound questions about what we do as sociologists. I have a new insight and a different emotional reaction each time I look at it on the bulletin board outside my office. I hope it gives you pause for thought as well.

You will likely not agree with all you read in these pages, and you may feel attacked and defensive at times. That is part of our purpose. It is also part of our purpose to widen the boundaries of sociology and academia to allow those of us searching for meaning and purpose in our academic lives to explore alternatives. None of us propose to definitively answer the question "What is to be done?" For the first time in a long time, however, we are all saying it is time to act.
Endnotes

1. Many thanks to the contributors to this issue for reviewing this paper, and especially to Dave Beckwith, Ron Berger, Al Gedicks, Thomas Jenkins, and Lisa Park and David Pellow for their extensive comments on an earlier draft.

2. The Midwest Sociological Society, for example has held plenary sessions on the topic of where the discipline should go over the last three years. In every case, however, the question and the discussion has been limited to what sociologists should think, not what they should do.

3. see Vol 23 #4 and Vol. 24 #1 of The American Sociologist for a sampling of the diversity of sociology and social action, as well as a good array of references to other relevant works.

4 I mean this in the most literal sense. When white males work for the redistribution of power and wealth--i.e. when we return stolen goods--we reduce our chances of taking advantage of those privileges ourselves. On the other hand, I sincerely believe that a society that maintains balanced political, cultural, and economic diversity will provide for far greater health for all its members in the long run.

5 As David Pellow and Lisa Park noted in their comments to me on this paper, us white guys may in fact have an easier time doing socially challenging work because we have more legitimacy to begin with and are not seen as having a self-interest.

6 I hate to waste a note on this, but I have always resisted spelling this term so the root is "hole" rather than "whole."

7 Lisa Park, David Pellow, and Al Gedicks, in reviewing this paper, were concerned I may be too optimistic here. On the one hand, the power structure will be too threatened by the empowerment of oppressed communities, and squash us before we can gain any momentum. On the other hand, we may work ourselves out of a job as we help oppressed communities learn to help themselves. But I see enough examples of successful academic activism out there to make me optimistic. As academics, we are uniquely suited to move from community to community looking for new models and new ideas to spread. That role will not diminish regardless of how successful our social change efforts are.

8 The students behaved in the tradition of the best organizers I have ever known. They organized rather than led, and put residents in the spotlight while they stayed in the background. They did not save the neighborhood, but they helped the residents get higher purchase prices for their homes and better relocation benefits, which many argue is the most they could have hoped for.

9 As noted by Thomas Jenkins (1996), the famous Robert Park of the University of Chicago had only one formal sociology course.

10 Though I have worked to provide useful research in an accessible form, I am complicit in promoting the development of abstract, and perhaps useless theoretical models. See, for example, Stoecker (1995).
11. see Bulmer (1992) for a discussion of the history of applied sociology. Clinical Sociologists have at times distanced themselves from the more conservative applied sociology (see Fritz and Clark, 1989; for example).

12. I follow the distinction between social action and social thought developed by Amy Hubbard (1996). While there are many academics contributing to social change efforts through their writing and thinking, those are activities much more consistent with academic expectations than the forms of social action explored here.

13. see Halliday (1992) for a discussion of some of the issues involved in sociologists as advocates.

14. An exception to this generalization can be found in Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1993) work with illegal immigrants--a group who cannot act publicly and therefore must rely on sensitive advocates.

15. see Stoecker and Beckwith (1992) for a more upbeat discussion of the early years of this program.

16. The Not In My BackYard syndrome occurs when local-based communities oppose intrusions on what they see as their sovereign turf. In some cases, such as opposition to toxic dumps, the opposition may suggest progressive impulses. But in other cases, such as opposition to a bike path, it does not. And in all cases, the opposition does not extend to a critique of broader conditions. People don't want the dump in their backyard--whether it is put in someone else’s is not their concern.

References


Jenkins, Thomas. 1996. "The Sociologist as Public Planner." *Sociological Imagination* 33:


Nye, Andrea. 1994. *Philosophia: The Thought of Rosa*


Stall, Susan, and Randy Stoecker. 1994. "Community Organizing or Organizing Community: Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment." Presented at the American Sociological Association annual meetings, Los Angeles.


The New Unity. 1895. "Reports from an Experimental Station in Sociology." May 3, 1895.


