Getting Beyond the "God Trick": Toward Service Research

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Recent calls for more discussion about "public geographies" highlight the need to understand the epistemologies and methodologies that shape the production of public geographic knowledge. Feminist theory and participatory and activist research methodologies have been used to provide a framework for undertaking the work of the public through research and practice. While engaging in our own public geographies, however, we realized some epistemological and methodological tensions in these frameworks. In this article we draw on Haraway's (1988) critique of the "god trick" to interrogate these frameworks and propose new ways of positioning ourselves within the research context, which we call "service" research. **Key Words: activism, feminism, methodology, public geographies.**

晚近兴起了讨论 "公共地理学" 的呼声, 突显了理解形构公共地理知识生产的认识论与方法论之必要。女性主义理论和参与式行动主义研究方法, 皆已为如何透过研究和实践从事公众工作提供了指导框架。但当我们参与自身的公共地理时, 却意识到了上述框架中的一些认识论和方法论冲突。我们将在本文中运用哈洛维 (1988) 对 "上帝的把戏" 的批判来审问这些框架, 并提出我们在研究脉络中自我定位的新方式—我们称之为 "服务" 研究。**关键词: 行动主义, 女性主义, 方法论, 公共地理学。**

Las peticiones que recientemente reclaman más discusión sobre las "geografías públicas" destacan la necesidad de entender las epistemologías y metodologías que dan forma a la producción del conocimiento geográfico público. La teoría feminista y las metodologías de investigación participativa y activista han sido utilizadas a título de marco de entendimiento del trabajo del público a través de la investigación y la práctica. Por nuestra parte, mientras nos involucrábamos con nuestras propias geografías públicas, nos dimos cuenta, sin embargo, de algunas tensiones epistemológicas y metodológicas de estos marcos. En este artículo nos apoyamos en la crítica de Haraway (1988) sobre el "truco divino" para cuestionar estos marcos y proponer nuevas rutas que nos posicionen dentro del contexto investigativo, propuesta a la cual designamos como investigación de "servicio." **Palabras clave: activismo, feminismo, metodología, geografías públicas.**

The place of geographers in the production of knowledge within and outside of the academy has been the subject of recent discussion and debate within the discipline of geography (Fuller and Askins 2007; Kinpaisby 2008; Kindon and Elwood 2009). In relatively recent presidential addresses to their respective organizations, both Massey (2001) and Lawson (2007) called on geographers to inform their work with the public as researchers, teachers, and activists with alternative epistemologies and methodologies. These calls for action from the leadership of the academic community come after a little more than two decades of geographers in both the United Kingdom and the United States writing about the relationship of geography to social change and exploring the need to make a difference beyond the world of discourse and ideas (McDowell 1992; Dorling and Shaw 2002; Heynen 2006; Blomley 2008).

The calls for more "public geographies"[1] highlight the need to understand and address the production of geographic knowledge within the institutional structures of the academy (James et al. 2004; Ward 2006; Fuller and Askins 2007; Lawson 2007). Generally, academics are expected to generate materials that fit economic modes of production within the increasingly neoliberal university (Castree 2000; Cloke 2002; Pain 2004; Fuller and Askins 2007; Lawson 2007; Kinpaisby 2008). Attempts to integrate activism with research and produce academic work that meets the needs of the public are often met with resistance within the university, largely due to the historical separation between knowing and doing in "science" (Haraway 1988; Harding 1991). Systemic changes within institutions are thus needed to create a research and teaching system that sees "knowing" and "doing" as comparable and connected rather than incongruous and dichotomous.

This article aims to explore how to implement these changes by grounding research that engages with publics in the epistemologies and methodologies of "service." We draw on Haraway's (1988) critique of the "god trick" to expose persistent tensions between knowing and doing that remain in the epistemologies and methodologies of geographic research. Using insights from our own partial, and in many ways failed, engagements with feminist, activist, and participatory methods, we propose ways of resolving these tensions

through reciprocal learning, or what we call service research. Experimenting with service research has led us to new ways of thinking about research design, knowledge production, and the peer evaluation processes.

Feminist, Activist, and Participatory Methodologies and the God Trick

Massey's (2001) lecture revealed two epistemological problems with simultaneously pursuing social change and doing credible research. The first involves making claims to truth and reality through scientific practice, and the second regards the tensions between subjects and objects in scientific method. Massey argued that a commitment to a particular position on "truth" has traditionally been a result of having done the "correct" scientific analysis. The correct scientific analysis requires that the subject separate from the object of research, in an ontological move that is intended to preserve objectivity. This process privileges the production of universal truths that generate from the vantage point of the scientific subject (researcher or scientist). Haraway (1988) referred to this epistemological process as the "god trick" (581). The god trick is performed by the disembodied scientist who sees "everything from nowhere" and who turns the products of knowledge production into a resource to be appropriated by the knower, in this case the scientist.

The god trick is an epistemology that uses the social location of the researcher (that being external to and allegedly above the researched) to evaluate and determine what will become accepted knowledge. Haraway (1988) wrote that struggles over knowledge in the sciences are struggles with questions of "how to see?" and "where to see from?" (587). Feminist methodology has historically promoted approaches that see research participants as both the object of research and legitimate possessors and producers of knowledge, or subjects (Moss 2002). These participants often occupy marginalized or subjugated positions in society, and thus Haraway (1988) urged feminist social scientists to "see from below" (584). Seeing from below and recognizing that research participants possess and construct knowledge throughout the research project requires that researchers adopt and grapple with a radically new subjectivity.

Feminist geographers have long argued that researcher subjectivity is always impacted by the experience of being involved in the research process (Gibson-Graham 1994; Rose 1997; Moss 2002). Creating a social location somewhere between subjectivity and objectivity with research participants, or what is called *intersubjectivity*, is a strategy promoted by feminist geographers to subvert the god trick (McDowell 1999). Relocating the subjectivity of the researcher thus expands traditional notions of objectivity in research and makes an important claim to the partiality of knowledge. Disengaging with the binary structure of subjects and objects also acknowledges that knowledge can be constructed through building affinity with research participants. This strategy, however, is not without its problems.

For example, in an early piece on feminist research methods, Gilbert (1994) detailed the development and implementation of a feminist and antiracist research project that explicitly sought to build intersubjectivity with research participants. In this case, the research investigated how women of color with children built social networks to facilitate access to jobs, child care, and housing. Gilbert found that this process is fraught with difficulty, challenge, and contradictions, specifically related to her position relative to the research participants, with whom she struggled to build affinity. Similarly, England (1994) found that attempts to shift the location of knowledge and power to the researched are tremendously difficult and require a self-critical reflexivity. England sought to investigate the mutuality of space and identity for lesbian women in urban space but encountered ethical and epistemological challenges to her ability to understand their social location and to truly build intersubjective relations with those who might be "other" to the researcher.

Haraway (1988), however, suggested that "the knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another to see together without claiming to be another" (586). Accepting that the subject is incomplete and partial allows for an opening into which a *shared* subjectivity can emerge. This joining of multiple partial selves with others in the research process can yield a composite, yet limited, subjectivity that produces a view from somewhere. This methodology suggests that researcher subjectivity is not fixed or static, or in between researcher and researched, but is simply incomplete, open, and malleable. Finding a place within the research project to allow for shared subjectivities to emerge then requires researchers to renegotiate their social locations of insider versus outsider and, thus, their positions of power within the communities under investigation (Naples 2003).

Indeed, Fuller and Askins (2007) suggested that researchers need to "decolonize the self" to do the work of society as researchers and activists. The objective, scientific self that is created through affiliation with and reward from academic institutions impedes access to positions from which researchers can "see from somewhere" and especially from "below." This underscores the profound inequalities, in both social location and motivation, that exist often within and between communities of practice (Rose 1997). As such, researchers cannot occupy any epistemological location within the research practice without being accountable for those positions. A shift in location, from outsider to insider, and back again is an act invested with power and, according to Haraway (1988), must be facilitated by democratic processes, negotiated with others, and guided by ethics.

For example, Cahill (2006) developed a participatory research project focusing on the lives of young women of color on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The "Makes Me Mad" project was led by the women, who shaped the research from the development of questions

to analysis of the results. The Fed-Up Honeys, as they called themselves, focused their efforts on understanding and overcoming stereotypes and communicated their results through a Web site, a widely distributed research report, and a sticker campaign. Participatory research moves beyond a simple statement of positionality or a desire to build intersubjective social relations to handing over the entire knowledge production process to the researched and allowing the research participants to identify what counts as legitimate knowledge.

Participatory research methods are increasingly implemented to destabilize power relations between researcher and the researched (Gatenby and Humphries 2000). The primary distinction of participatory research is the shifting of the "location of power" toward research participants who direct the process and outcomes of the research in multiple ways without direction from the researcher (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Pain 2004). This strategy carries with it no small amount of risk, especially for tenure-track faculty who must "contribute to the discipline" to attain tenure. But, as Haraway (1988) wrote, research is "about mutual and usually unequal structuring, about taking risks in a world where 'we' are permanently mortal, that is, not in 'final' control" (596). Recognizing limits to power in the research process also, then, recognizes that the research participants exercise agency of the knowledge production process (Haraway 1988).

Research that engages with activism to create social change also requires researchers to tackle risk, grapple with uncertainty, and abdicate control over the research process. Because of its explicit engagement with power and social location in the research process (Kapoor 2002), feminist activists have adopted and adapted participatory action research (PAR) methodologies as a way to work toward social change among traditionally marginalized groups, particularly women (Gatenby and Humphries 2000; McIntyre 2003). Action research is often intended to introduce social or institutional changes, resolution of problems, or the development of other skills in the community of practice (Gibson-Graham 1994; Gatenby and Humphries 2000; Mama 2000; Cahill 2004; Gonzalez, Lejano, and Conner 2007).

For example, a team of geographers at Queen Mary University of London worked with London Citizens, an organization dedicated to obtaining a living wage for low-wage workers in London (Wills 2012). The team conducted research in partnership and collaboration with the organization and helped them to successfully raise the wages of thousands of workers. The experience has also led to the creation of a new Masters in Community Organizing at Queen Mary, which aims to equip students with the tools required for enacting social change. Another example of participatory work toward social change is Pain's (2003) work on changing perceptions of crime and fear of urban homeless populations, although she acknowledged challenges in realizing the goals of social change in the larger community. Likewise, Nagar (Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006) identified unexpected outcomes and identity

politics within the community of practice in her work with Indian women toward overcoming gender-based discrimination.

Armed with feminist epistemologies and inspired by those who had gone before us, we engaged in feminist, participatory, and activist research for our doctoral and postdoctoral work. We both discovered the limitations of these methods as we designed research with participants, collected data, and wrote narratives. We were constantly confronted with deep epistemological issues regarding our positionality and struggled with questions about knowledge for whom and for ultimately what purpose. We both, in different ways, adapted our research approaches to be more consistent with our values and objectives in conducting research with the communities of practice with whom we chose to work.

Case Examples

The Pennsylvania Women's Agricultural Network: Amy Trauger

WAgN is a trademarked acronym for the Women's Agricultural Network, a program begun by Mary Peabody, Extension Specialist in Community Resources and Economic Development for the University of Vermont, in 1994. The Pennsylvania chapter of WAgN formed in 2003 as part of my dissertation project and was largely a response to my prior research findings that revealed the social and geographic marginalization of women farmers in rural communities. WAgN recognizes the growing need to support and educate women who are choosing agriculture as an occupation and works from the assumption that women are important agricultural stakeholders as food producers. Women are generally seen as an underserved population, even in the generally more progressive sustainable agriculture community. WAgN is an organization that seeks to rectify this marginalization by providing the support and resources that existing agricultural organizations are not providing to women. As the Pennsylvania group began to form, who constituted a real farmer in need of Pennsylvania WAgN's mission quickly became a source of heated internal debate, about which I was not a neutral or disinterested participant.

I intended that my research with this group would enable me to provide an organizational service (calling and chairing meetings, organizing educational events, facilitating the growth of the organization) at the same time that I gathered data. In many ways this is similar to a focus group, and research continued in this vein after WAgN received funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which included a postdoctoral fellowship to fund my work under the direction of PA-WAgN. In the first instance, however, my labor and organization was voluntary and thus more akin to community or public service, and I intended it to be such, as opposed to a participatory research project where participants set the terms. I wanted to alleviate the isolation for the women farmers about whom I had come to care,

and I wanted to make a long-term structural change in the culture of agriculture. Although I never thought this research and service would be devoid of problems, several epistemological issues, for which I was not prepared, presented themselves rather quickly to me.

The first issue regarded my position as researcher in relation to others, as political factions opened within the group. I grappled with what it would mean for the organization, of which I was a part, if I participated in (and ultimately revealed) these cleavages around identity. I was not in "final control" of how and what knowledge was brought into existence, which surprised me and revealed to me my own position of assumed power within the group. I had to take responsibility for generating this knowledge with them and find a way to position myself in relation to it and them so that it emerged as shared knowledge. The second, and related, issue regarded my own agency. I did not anticipate that my own arguably biased agenda of empowering the women who I considered farmers would be subverted. In this situation, I became sensitive to the fact that I was only one voice among many. In many ways I had become enrolled in their project, rather than enrolling them in mine. Lastly, I struggled with how to put my experience in the research narrative in an honest way that also conformed to some degree with the expectations about writing up research results. Ultimately, I learned that the research results are a series of narratives (of which this is one) that run through time and space and continue on with the sustained life of the organization. It also lives on in the empowerment, education, and improvements in the lives of women with whom this research was conducted. In the process, I found that research results are much broader and livelier than any manuscript and should include this organization that lives and thrives beyond the initial research process.

Rubia: Jennifer Fluri

Rubia is a small, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization (NGO) located in the United States and conducting economic and social programs with a local partner organization in Afghanistan. Rubia operates with a cooperative model that allows their Afghan partners relative autonomy to run programs in communities, while Rubia in the United States raises funds and helps to market products produced by workers in Afghanistan. This is done through family enterprise, which enlists Afghan women's embroidery work and the management skills and support from men within kinship and community networks.

I met the co-founder of Rubia, Rachel Lehr, at an Afghan women's leadership conference in 2005. After discussing our own frustrations and disconnections with the misinformation and orientalist ways in which Afghanistan was portrayed in the popular U.S. media (and best-selling book circuit), we embarked on collaborative efforts to educate and share with public audiences some realities of daily life in Afghanistan. This partnership was made possible by our respective loca-

tions in the United States and our regular research and work travel to Afghanistan. We collaborated with the U.S. Rubia board and workers and associates of Rubia Afghanistan to combine academic approaches with personal experiences and community in Afghanistan (with whom Lehr had developed a close personal and professional relationship since the inception of Rubia in 1996).

As part of our collaboration, Rubia became one of my research case studies on gender and economic development in Afghanistan. I also joined the board of Rubia U.S. and provided assistance to Rubia Afghanistan while conducting research in Afghanistan. Lehr also works with my students though their course work and specific projects related to geographies of gender and development. By combining my research and teaching with service to Rubia, and through collaborations with Lehr, we work collaboratively on several interrelated projects. These include (1) countering existing stereotypes and assumptions about Afghan women, men, and families; (2) critically examining gender and development ideologies and praxis in conflict zones; and (3) considering how to improve and grow Rubia's activities in Afghanistan without falling into the pitfalls that have befallen other organizations with similar missions.

Working with and educating individuals and groups who wish to assist Afghan women remain our largest, continued, and unexpected challenges. Those who seek to help women in Afghanistan often expressed the most vocal opposition to alternative narratives about Afghan women's lives. These challenges also caused us to question our own methodological approaches and "goodwill" projects for Afghan women. We interrogated the use of strategic essentialism and our own ability to complicate existing knowledge and provide alternative ways of knowing and learning about Afghanistan. Our approach thus far has consisted of public (library) and classroom lectures. This approach provided alternative knowledges that were bound by locational fixity (i.e., New Hampshire) and the tyranny of this small-scale dissemination of information. Thus, we are currently seeking additional applications for presenting (un)popular knowledges about Afghanistan into the public through the use of video and Internet technologies.

In addition to these methods, working with Rubia board members on the mission and direction of the organization and the manner in which products would be marketed and sold provided rich data for my research as examples of conflicting ideologies. Rubia's marketing and selling techniques use strategic essentialism to tap into the benevolence of potential buyers (who are predominantly women). The enormously skewed public understanding of Afghan women's deprivation has proven to be an effective method for increasing sales, which ultimately benefits the organization in Afghanistan and its female and male employees (Rubia U.S. is currently an all-volunteer organization). This confounded our attempts to avoid essentialist representations of Afghan women and men, however. It

became evident from our collaborative work that countering entrenched notions about women and gender in Afghanistan was much more difficult with individuals and groups that have a vested interest in helping Afghanistan and Afghan women specifically.

A service research approach allowed me to identify Rubia customers' (and the general public's) (mis)understandings (or partial knowledge) about Afghanistan while assisting Rubia in countering these existing stereotypes. In cooperation with the Rubia board, we developed a survey and interview structure to conduct at Rubia Sales and with their existing network of supporters and customers. The board will use these data to develop products and market them while also reconsidering "sales" of Rubia items, as an opportunity for buyers (or potential buyers) to gain (un)popular information on the everyday lives of the women and men associated with Rubia in Afghanistan. In this way, I hoped to generate new knowledge about Afghan women and their lives (with U.S. and Afghan women) while assisting in fundraising for projects in a community in Afghanistan. The key aspect to this project is its continual flexibility, which is also informed and negotiated by service research successes and failures.

Toward Service Research

Service research is a framework that identifies research participants as agents embedded in a landscape of power, within which the researcher is only one actor in the production of knowledge. Taking this place in the research process enables us to engage in collaborative projects while acknowledging that we occupy partial, active, and subjective positions in the research. We are one actor with influence in the research, perhaps with a different set of (clearly communicated) imperatives than other actors. Knowledge production becomes a collective and relational process, albeit fraught with conflict, unpredictability, and "indefiniteness" (Prawat 1992), which make democratic or egalitarian processes and practices essential. Engaging in this way requires us to be self-reflexive and critical, not only in our actions but in our writing and publication of research results. We take inspiration for these changes in research practice from the established traditions of service learning within our institutions (Wellens et al. 2006).

The epistemological underpinnings of service learning include democratic engagement and volunteerism as ways to educate students about social problems and their solutions (Sigmon 1979; Mohan 1995; Butin 2003; Wellens et al. 2006). Writing in 1979, Sigmon argued that experiential education is an approach that is premised on "reciprocal learning" and is based on the idea that those who provide service and those who receive it are uniquely positioned to mutually learn from the experience. Service learning theory takes inspiration from Freire's (1970) insights that students exist as "men and women as beings in the process of

becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (65). An expectation of service learning is that it will be "transformational," that the student and his or her classmates and teacher and maybe even the institution will be changed through the experience of service to the wider community (Cone and Harris 1996). Constructivist views of knowledge production, popular since the 1960s, move away from "banking models" of teaching (Freire 1970) and allow teachers to view students and curriculum (i.e., subjects and objects) as ontologically connected and therefore integrative, interactive, and indefinite (Prawat 1992; Dorsey 2001).

In what follows we outline some areas for change in research design, peer evaluation, and research results that have been inspired by our engagements with service research.

Service Research Starts from a Position of Inquiry into Social Problems Experienced by Groups and Individuals Outside the Academy in Which We Have a Mutual Stake

The research process often starts with a literature search and rarely with a community inventory. Although many activist scholars certainly respond to needs expressed by a community, in many cases the questions that are ultimately asked revolve around what is missing from the literature on any given subject. This is largely driven by the institutional rewards associated with making "contributions to the discipline" and a competitive academic climate that rewards the cutting edge with funding, awards, and the like. With service learning, students are expected to undergo a personal transformation while engaging with a community of people in a reciprocal learning process. These transformations are often linked to larger scale social forces and social theories as part of the learning process. We feel that service research can pursue this same strategy while engaging in meaningful ways with communities of practice to pursue goals of transformation, reciprocal learning, and collective action. This requires, however, reworking our social locations vis-à-vis these communities and our institutions.

As academics and researchers, we occupy varying positions of power in relation to our students, the state, our employers, and research participants. Acknowledging these power differentials forces us to confront issues of research ethics (see Badiou 2001; Allen 2008). Rather than taking a shaky moral high ground by making claims to justice on behalf of the marginalized, we suggest taking a cue from Haraway (1988) to ontologically position ourselves as part of the research. As many have pointed out before us, and we observed ourselves, our presence in the lives of research participants changes the dynamic of our research regardless of how we see ourselves in relation to them. We might have a slightly bigger picture, but we are still part of the community of practice, and our research epistemology must explicitly reflect these positions. Building intersubjectivity is certainly part of this process, but we

found that engaging with research participants as an incomplete and partial subject is less problematic and more feasible.

Rather than deny our subjectivity or take a position of advocacy, service research allows us to position ourselves as actors with a mutual stake in the research outcome. In both our cases, our research questions emerged from our engagements with and investments in a community of practice, rather than from published literature, per se. We used our position (at times outsider, at times insider) to organize, educate, and otherwise provide a service (however mundane) to the people with whom we worked, in much the same way as the other actors in the research process. Our investment in the research outcomes was driven by the agreement we had with the research participants to partner with them in their own knowledge production, transformative experiences, and collective action. In taking this position, we both had to rely heavily on the democratic principles and the practices and modes of knowledge and understanding within our respective partner organizations.

Service Research Requires the Inclusion of Democratic Practices in the Research and Peer Evaluation Process

A prerequisite for conducting service research is recognizing the agency of research participants. They are agents of change and exercise power over the production of knowledge; we do not impose knowledge on them. The idea that we exercise more power over the situation than they do can be delusional and dangerous. Denying that our research participants have agency not only deludes us into convincing ourselves (however uneasily) that for the purposes of making claims to truth, somehow we are able to know something they do not (or cannot). It can also let us assume that we have power and control, when we do not or should not. We should not focus on how to preserve our objectivity or even our subjectivity. We have both. We have neither. What we have is agency. Interestingly, the same is true for the people with whom we do research.

Although feminist and participatory methods go a long way toward recognizing, destabilizing, and relocating power in research collectives, we argue that there is more work to do, particularly with regard to research design, outcomes, and narratives. We both found that requiring research participants who were socially, economically, or politically marginalized to participate in a meaningful way with research design and implementation was hazardous for them or too demanding on individuals already dealing with time poverty. Ultimately we feel that participatory research can be unethical when it asks research participants to produce knowledge for those of us who will benefit from it most, or what Haraway (1988) referred to as the "knower." We advocate for a participatory research process, but we feel that providing a service for a community of practice can provide us with insight into their needs and unanswered questions. How we answer those questions should be collaborative but not demanding and ultimately should meet the needs for knowledge within the community of practice.

Key to this change is integrating a democratic peer review process of research practice and publication that recognizes the unique nature and contributions of service research. The peer review of research that we envision would be akin to our institutional review boards but geared toward social science, qualitative methodologies, and participatory methods in particular. We also envision that this might be part of a larger effort within colleges and universities to provide outreach mechanisms to the general public as well as research publics. We would also welcome, following democratic principles, checks and balances on the power that we do have, in the form of collaborative, multidirectional, and nonhierarchical evaluations of our service, activism, or participation in research subjects' lives. We advocate for the use of power that is productive and more akin to leadership and mentoring along the lines of common cause, respect, and mutuality (Sharp et al. 2000). The increasing interest among many academics in working with Campus Compact presents another avenue for exploring this concept and method more broadly (Heffernan 2001).

Research Results Might Include Relationships, Knowledge, and Organizations That Persist Beyond the Research Process

As stated earlier, we strongly advocate for the integration of knowing and doing in the research process. If we epistemologically reframe the research process, then we need to redefine how we present our research results. Undertaking research through service fundamentally changes the nature of the research process, and fitting research "results" into the metanarrative box can be difficult, if not impossible. What to write in and write out of the narrative remains a vexing question in activist, participatory, and feminist methodologies, both ethically and pragmatically. It is also epistemologically impossible to preserve the participatory nature of PAR-inspired research when an author must be named (and that author credited with that publication for tenure or promotion). As Haraway (1988) pointed out, social science borrows heavily from the physical science tradition when it comes to "proving" knowledge production, and we think it is necessary to rethink the categories that posit certain or privileged "results" as necessary for rigorous social science research. In this vein, we advocate for the acceptance of research products in alternative forms as legitimate evidence of research and knowledge production. Clearly this will require interrogating what constitutes knowledge and where and how it is extended to others, as well as changing authorship conventions. The Sangtin Writers and Nagar (2006) illustrated an example of how to extend authorship to the collective that we advocate, but there needs to be much more discussion about authorship in participatory or service research projects.

Haraway (1988) argues that "seeing from below" does not mean that marginalized positions are not without critique. Likewise, our own experience of the research process should not be without critique. We feel that writing out mistakes edits knowledge and replicates the (un)equal position of researcher knowledge and the god trick. We also recognize the difficulties associated with this type of work and the ethical slippery slopes we dread as scholars and activists. As such, we advocate for a stronger place for self-reflexive accounts of knowledge production in our academic narratives, much like students who keep journals as part of their assessments in service learning projects. Gilbert (1994), England (1994), and Sangtin Writers and Nagar (2006), among others, have pioneered a tradition of self-reflexive writing on the research process, but we would like to see this welcomed in any narrative of the research, perhaps as part of a methods section. We also advocate for the development of academic journals, the selection of journal editors and tenure and promotion criteria that find this subjective material relevant, and appropriate forms of knowledge production.

The lack of remuneration attached to service includes a lack of expectation and subsequently fewer limits by our institutions (with some exceptions) over the type and duration of service work, although this is likely to change if rewards (e.g., tenure, promotion) are attached to service research. We see service research as an integrated method for combining service with research and teaching and to expand the existing space and latitude to conduct service-based projects without jeopardizing our respective positions with the academy. In both our individual cases as researchers we became involved with or pioneered organizations that exist beyond the life span of the research process. The relationships forged between researcher and researched persist as we seek to blur the lines that keep binaries in place. As one actor invested in a particular set of research outcomes with others, we feel that these relationships do not compromise our objectivity. Rather, they are vital to the transformative process to which we are committed over the long term, and their existence should be counted toward our accomplishments as scholars within our institutional structures.

Concluding Thoughts

The challenges we encountered while engaging with the epistemological and theoretical frames of feminist theory and participatory practice in activist research opened up a new methodological space for what we have come to call service research. In this frame, we have found that research participants are actors and agents in their own movements for social change and thus often enroll us as researchers in their projects. Our singular voices became one of many voices in our research projects, and we adapted our methods to include democratic practices and principles that reflected our mutual stake in the research outcomes. Thus, our

agendas as researchers were subsumed by the larger agenda of the organization, which was much more inclusive, contradictory, and productive than we imagined. Reconfiguring our epistemological position in relation to how the research evolved and developed was essential for proceeding with our work. We argue that placing ourselves within the research as one actor, dedicating ourselves to learning from the aims and objectives of the community of practice, and retooling research results to meet the needs of that community are critical steps in resolving tensions that perpetuate the god trick in many of the epistemological frames of contemporary public geographies.

We both carry out research that is not explicitly "service" or, for that matter, activist, feminist, or participatory, so we want to underscore that this is not a normative position about all research. It might not be appropriate to do service kinds of research with every community of practice and, as with service learning projects, it is critical to collaboratively identify those communities for whom service research will work best. We believe that service orientations in both teaching and research allow us to work with the public while maintaining our institutional affiliations as academics. This is not to say that there is no place for resistance to the positions we are often forced to adopt as functionaries of our institutions; we also argue for an epistemological position that enables us to do public work within the systems of academia to the greatest degree possible. We seek to create change from within the institution by reworking accepted or established academic traditions.

We see this closely connected to and inspired in many ways by service learning. Service learning takes its inspiration from the idea that engagement and practice enhance education. Learning by doing is an approach that can inform research as well, by creating knowledge through action. We submit that engagements with research participants are not seamless, are not always egalitarian or democratic, and do not always yield the results or service outputs we intend or hope for. Many of these interactions are fraught with debate and disagreement, which we realize can also be productive (although not always easy) methods for critical self-reflection. We also realize that many of the missteps or failures of research also provide rich data and enhance rather than detract from the production and dissemination of knowledge. Service research is both a process and a goal; it is a research paradigm focused on integrating knowing and doing to the greatest degree possible, and it emerged through dialogue, debate, and critical self-reflection. We welcome continued comment, discussion, and debate on this approach and its potential applications. ■

Note

1 Public geography refers to a set of practices and ideas that explicitly or implicitly seeks to contribute to public policy or the public good. Ward (2006) made a distinction between policy and goods and, consequently, the two kinds of

geographical knowledges used in the production of policy versus the generation of public goods. Policy geographies are concrete, are pragmatic, find legitimacy through effectiveness, are generally applicable to society, and contribute to policy. Public geographies are reflexive, are based on consensus, find legitimacy through relevance, are specific to groups, and expand public dialogue. Activist research is research related or dedicated to social change movements, and we use public geography and activist research interchangeably, albeit somewhat problematically here, for the sake of brevity.

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