

The piece below is unlikely to win me any friends; I just hope I don't lose any. It has ballooned beyond the length of a journal article, and I am sure it will only grow as I respond to comments from the PPW. One option would be to publish it only as a PPW working paper, thus starting an outlet that we have thought about over the years. I would value your opinions on that, whether or not this paper is part of it. Another possibility is to expand it, and add some other topics, into a short (I hope) book. Because I am alarmed by the strident tone of some of the calls for engaged scholarship, please help me find places in the paper where my own tone might be annoying or sarcastic. I am also especially interested in expanding my lists of the mutual impacts of activism and scholarship, if you can think of others.

I have added a bonus table at the end, in addition to the one cited in the text. Let me know if I should include it.

Thank you for your kind attentions (George Washington's last words, to his doctors after they bled him and probably killed him),

Jim

Activism and Scholarship

James M. Jasper¹

At a recent conference in Europe an exasperated young Italian, working on his Ph.D. in anthropology, took me aside privately. “I cannot believe it,” the young man said, a corresponding expression of disbelief on his face. “Everybody talks activism. Nobody talks scholarship.” As we spoke I admitted that he would have much the same experience at U.S. conferences. I realized: there is considerable disagreement over the proper relationship between activism and scholarship, but one side is quiet in public settings like this one.

On the one hand, many scholars who write about social movements and related forms of protest believe that activism and scholarship should be done together. They do not always believe that activism is improved by scholarship, but more often that *scholars cannot do good work without also being activists*. If nothing else, scholars and activists must be in close communication, a view played out through frequent academic conferences designed to be dialogues between scholars and activists.

There is a counter-view. One of the world’s best-known scholars of social movements, teaching in a sociology department renowned for this field, told me, “We tell our students to leave their politics at the door.” This is a more traditional view (I shall call it positivist for its claim that scientific knowledge can be distinguished at least partly from political opinions and projects), rarely articulated today, that the activist-scholars are attacking: that *scholarship is more likely to be damaged than improved by political activity and partisanship*.

The balance between the two views seems to have shifted. A number of observers, such as Woodhouse et al. (2002:298; also Taylor, 2014), perceive “a trend toward work that is more openly normative, prescriptive, or activist.” Both positions are interested in the impact of activism on scholarship, but a fuller assessment requires that we also examine the impact of scholarship on our activism.

Both views seem to be based on unexamined or at least untested assumptions about scholarship. Neither fully acknowledges that the world is riddled with tradeoffs and the dilemmas that follow from them (Jasper, 2006). There is rarely one right answer to the question, what shall we do, for scholars as for activists. Each option is accompanied by a long list of costs, potential benefits, and risks. That is my starting assumption for the topic of this article: how does a person’s activism affect her scholarship, and how does her scholarship affect her activism? The question is more acute if scholars are broadly shifting from one opinion to the other, and especially if each side is hostile, intolerant, or suspicious of the other.

Engaged scholarship takes several forms. In one, scholars write for nonscholarly audiences, such as policymakers, full- and part-time activists, or the general public (in which case they are known as public intellectuals). Another form

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of engagement is simply to do political work, without necessarily writing about it: to recruit people, start groups, collect signatures on petitions, promote candidates, attend meetings and rallies, debate tactical choices, get arrested, and all the other things that political players do. A third form is to express political opinions in our writing and teaching, as a central part of that writing and teaching. A fourth is to advise protest groups or do research for them.

Table 1 lists these types of engagement open to scholars in different arenas: in the classroom, in scholarly publications, in non-scholarly publications, and in political arenas themselves. I add another possibility, less relevant to debates over whether academics should engage in politics, namely activists who also write (or teach) part-time.

Table about here

It is not always clear if supporters of engaged scholarship believe that each academic should also do politics, or only that scholars and activists should communicate with each other. In what follows I will try to address both models, although I focus on the dilemmas that academics face in their lives and work.

The dilemmas of engaged scholarship are especially acute for scholars of social movements, since – even in our most scholarly role – we write about political work and opinions, trying to explain them. We cannot write about the issue of activism’s potential relationships to scholarship without writing about ourselves. Feelings are inevitably strong, and not always acknowledged, especially guilt and shame over not doing enough political work or not being productive enough in one’s scholarship. Because it touches our sense of moral worth, the engagement-positivism disagreement is often indirect but heated.

Theoretical Background

Until roughly the 1960s, those who wrote about protest were comfortably divided between academics who had rarely been active in protest and activists who had little interest in what academics had to say. There were some conservative exceptions, especially writers who shared the academic contempt for protest without having academic credentials or positions (such as Gustav le Bon and Eric Hoffer); many of them simply had the widespread prejudices of elites or the middle class such as fear and antipathy for working-class or minority crowds.

Marxists were the primary exception: intellectual activists who were sympathetic to working-class movements. They were never academics, until later in the twentieth century, but rather leaders such as Rosa Luxemburg, V. I. Lenin, or Antonio Gramsci. During the middle decades of the twentieth century, communists were involved in almost every U.S. movement on behalf of rights and benefits for the oppressed, especially labor and civil rights. In many cases forced to be secret about their allegiances, they knew a great deal about how to organize without necessarily writing what we would recognize as theory. They had little incentive to publish their tactics. A non-marxist organizer who did, Saul Alinsky (1969, 1971), published two

popular books, consisting of some wise exhortations, a few mistakes to avoid, and a number of good stories. He was not interested in explaining anything except success and failure. These were all activists who wrote as part of their activism, with their own followers as audiences.

Marxists later played different roles in different European countries. In the Soviet bloc, Marxism became the official ideology of wretched dictatorships, entrenched in the academy and playing a repressive political role. Strong communist parties in Italy and France allowed Marxists to gain some academic positions, although the resulting scholarship was rarely solid and almost never creative. Britain, where the communist party remained miniscule but the labor movement nurtured competing Trotskyisms, saw the most fruitful interaction between activism and scholarship, in the New Left that emerged after 1956 (Lee, 2003). History proved the field most capable of combining sound and creative scholarship with political engagement. (Writing about historical movements at least removes any expectation of being involved in them.)

Today there are probably more Marxists inside the academy than outside it, yet they continue to hold some contempt for the “bourgeois sociology” of their colleagues.² This often means scholarship detached from activism. In a major statement of the engaged position, Laurence Cox and Cristina Flesher Fominaya (2013:26) scold “social movement studies” for its “narrow and self-referential theoretical vision,” which they say “is more successful at gaining institutional legitimacy than at convincing those most closely engaged with its objects of study.” Apparently scholars of social movements all share a single vision, although their “real” motivation has to do with careers and institutional power rather than with understanding protest.

Cox and Flesher Fominaya recognize that there are two audiences for scholarship on movements – scholars and activists – even while they complain of this fact and suggest breaking down the distinction. Scholars who write for other scholars are narrow and self-referential. A positivist would ask, how can we advance or test our understandings without referring to other scholars’ work, and building on it in some way? And why must scholars write for nonscholars?

To elaborate their comparison of engaged and disengaged scholars, Cox and Flesher Fominaya compare “American” and “European” traditions, with the latter more of a model of engagement. I lack the evidence to test such a claim, but many exceptions spring to mind; my own hunch is that most American scholars of protest are or at least were involved in the movements they write about. Despite the

² Engaged scholars today are more likely to be Marxist than Weberian, so they are eager to go beyond Weber’s suggestion that our choice of topic may be conditioned by our political interests, but our methods and theories should not be (cf. Lempert, 2001). Because Marxists tend to view the world as one large conflict eventually, everyone needs to take sides. Weberians might see more cross-cutting cleavages, with multiple institutions as autonomous sources of power: scientific and ideological practices are not always reducible to the conflict over capitalism. Foucault was more Weberian, while reminding us that these other practices can still be horribly repressive (also in line with Weber).

vehement tone that often accompanies calls for more engaged scholarship, Cox and Flesher Fominaya cite almost no American scholars (except Marcuse) in their attack on them for being ignorant of Europe and for being disengaged (the two seem to go together in their view).

Cox and Flesher Fominaya give two examples of engaged Europeans, Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979). On the surface Marcuse is an odd choice to represent a European style, since he lived most of his adult life in the United States, became a citizen in 1940, and taught at several of the nation's most prestigious universities. There are innumerable similar examples of American public intellectuals whose work had broad influence on the reading public.

Beauvoir and Marcuse are surprising examples in another way: neither was much of an activist. They became public intellectuals because they wrote books that were widely read and which encouraged others' political commitments. (An American counterpart, Betty Friedan (1921-2006), was more of an activist than either.) Most public intellectuals pursue a broad "cultural critique" rather than activist research (Hale, 2006), with a "prophesying" style that compensates for their lack of any special expertise or detailed knowledge (Sapiro, 2003).

In fact Marcuse was sometimes contemptuous of the movements of the 1960s that he helped inspire, dismissing the counterculture as "repressive desublimation." After accompanying Sartre on his travels through the communist world in the 1950s, Beauvoir began to get her own invitations to speak in the 1960s from women moved by *The Second Sex* (published in 1949 when she was 41). Susan Griffin spoke for many when she said, "I read de Beauvoir in 1961 and was never the same." But the book hardly encouraged feminist activism, since "Her emphasis on individual choice ignored a movement's need for solidarity" (Rosen, 2000:57). Biographer Dierdre Bair (1990) makes clear that Beauvoir's readers pressured her to live a more engaged feminist life (something she had resisted). She became more active in feminism in the 1970s, but again almost exclusively through her writing. She was never a professor (and in fact had been banned from teaching after a sexual indiscretion in 1939), and so makes a poor model for an academic scholar-activist.

The choice of Beauvoir and Marcuse also conflates two different types of public intellectuals: the writer and the professor, who face different institutional arenas, competitive fields, and sources of legitimacy. Writers such as Beauvoir are almost expected to be engaged, and their political prominence usually advances their careers (Sartre is an even better example). Professors have credibility because of their specialized technical training in a discipline with its own rules, which are not the rules of the public intellectual sphere. And professors work for academic institutions that, apart from disciplines, have their own rules of employment, prestige, and advancement. Engagement poses few dilemmas for writers, so I assume that Cox and Flesher Fominaya and others are primarily concerned with academics.

Two Americans, Doug Bevington and Chris Dixon (2005), have issued the most sweeping call for engaged scholarship in recent years, arguing both that scholarship should improve activism and that activism should improve scholarship. They hope that academics can provide "movement-relevant theory" that activists

will find useful. They find it a “central problem” that social movement theory “is not being read by the very movements that it seeks to illuminate” (186). This is a bit like saying that criminology fails unless criminals take its results to heart in order to be more effective. Bevington and Dixon conflate two related claims: scholars should write for nonscholars, and scholars of movements should write things that are useful to activists. (Would they encourage scholars of rightwing hate movements to do the same?)³

They also argue that movements should influence scholarship, but they again join two claims: scholars should pay close attention to the movements they study, especially to protestors’ points of view; and scholars should adapt protestors’ own theories of protest. A positivist would reply that all this is potential evidence for scholars, but that we need not adopt protestors’ theories as our own. Indeed to make this kind of judgment a priori is to give up on choosing theories based on empirical evidence to compare different theories against each other. Also, protestors’ theories may not address the questions that interest scholars, any more than scholars’ theories interest them. (No one chides activists for not writing theories that appeal to academics.) Bevington and Dixon believe that the global justice movement generated its own theory that would be useful to scholars. Indeed their starting point is that American social movement theory has stalled and needs new inputs to advance. Whether or not theory is in a quagmire, as they suggest, it is always useful to have fresh insights from multiple perspectives. Bevington and Dixon are right about this. But they are wrong in thinking that the ideas of protestors never influenced social-movement scholarship before the global justice movement. The movements of the 1960s inspired much of the field of social movement studies, partly via scholars such as Bill Gamson, Dick Flacks, and Todd Gitlin.

Solid scholarship, unless it rejects any and all interpretation, always considers the points of view of its subjects. Frames, identities, narratives, emotions, but also perceived opportunities and the deployment of resources: all are better understood to the extent we take participants’ subjective points of view into account. Studying their views does not mean we have to adopt their theories as our own.

Movement-relevant theory, insist Bevington and Dixon (190), “avoids succumbing to the sort of overextension and internecine squabbles that have hindered previous [academic] schools. Rather, movement-relevant theory emerges out of a dynamic and reciprocal engagement with the movements themselves.” The second sentence, as a non sequitur, has several problems. It assumes a movement to be one player, rather than a cluster of players who disagree on many issues. The internecine struggles in the labor movement or feminism make academic

³ Theories of protest have tended to view it as either admirable efforts at justice or as criminality. If the test of our theories lies in their practical adoption by practitioners, these can be either movements themselves or their opponents and forces of order trying to undermine them. If they seek to reach non-academic audiences, criminologists are more likely to write for policymakers, just as crowd theorists did a hundred years ago.

disagreements appear placid. It also assumes that a theory *either* comes from engagement with other theories *or* derives from evidence drawn from the object of study – rather than necessarily involving both processes. Positivists would retort that we test, criticize, and extend our understanding by reacting to existing theory on the basis of empirical investigation. Finally, the claim makes accountability to protestors the central test for a theory.

Fans of engaged scholarship are themselves protestors against what they define as mainstream scholarship, and they often adopt the outraged tone appropriate to protest. It would be less effective rhetorically to demand a kind of liberal tolerance for different kinds of scholars engaged in a variety of activities, ranging from isolation to full engagement in politics. Bourdieu (1984) would have cynically analyzed the engaged-scholar movement as insurgents trying to increase their status with the academic field, but I am willing to accept it as a sincere effort to advance their projects in political fields outside the academy.

Occasionally Bevington and Dixon's argument turns to homilies (192): scholars "should not aspire to be detached from movements"; we must "take the movements seriously." Their examples here demonstrate the opposite of what they have previously argued. They approve of Sara Diamond's work on the Christian Right because of her "commitment to accuracy," not because she cooperated with her subjects to produce research that was useful to them. To Bevington and Dixon (192), her "commitment to accuracy [is] reinforced by her political commitments," rather than resulting from scholarly standards of truth and careful research. They also praise research funded by the police and military "because those researchers are taking the movements seriously" (192). Are they really saying that most scholars do not take seriously the movements they study? I think they mean that RAND or corporate consultants are interested in practical strategic considerations that often do not interest scholars. (Although this is changing, as social movement theory looks more and more at strategic choices, dilemmas, and decisionmaking processes: Jasper, 2004; Maney et al., 2012).

Piven and Cloward's (1977) research on poor peoples' movements is often cited as an example of engaged scholarship, and Bevington and Dixon praise it as well. But it is a powerful piece of work primarily for its empirical claim that disruption is the only way for the oppressed to make legal and political gains. It is less obviously an example of theory that emerged from dialogue with the activists studied (three of its four cases were historical, although Piven and Cloward were deeply involved in the fourth). Piven and Cloward are public intellectuals who reach nonscholarly as well as scholarly audiences, even though their publications are informed by their political work.

Piven and Cloward's animus toward unions and other formal organizations, which they believe curtail insurgency, raises questions of what protestors scholars should be writing for. For it is those organizations that are most likely to have the capacity for reading scholarship and drawing on its lessons. The poor workers and welfare mothers who are the potential insurgents are unlikely to buy and read books to guide their actions.

Like most engaged scholars, Bevington and Dixon call for dialogue between scholars and activists. But such dialogues usually fail, given the different interests,

writing styles, and traditions of scholars and activists. Their own example shows this. They cite John Brown Childs (2003) as setting aside more than half his book on transcommunitality “to allow activists as well as other scholars to respond directly to this theory.” A quick glance reveals that, of the twelve writers who accepted his invitation, only one was a full time activist. Ten held academic positions, and one (historian Jeremy Brecher) had a nonacademic but largely scholarly position. There are good reasons for the failure of well-intentioned dialogues like these.

If the same individuals are supposed to be scholars and activists, their dilemmas become more acute. If I am an activist, why should I spend time writing for scholarly audiences, or even talking to academics? What will I learn from them? But this debate is of course always pursued by scholars, not by activists. As a scholar, how do I balance time devoted to politics and to scholarship? There is never enough time to do everything we would like. Hence the debate: is there any way to make my politics enhance my scholarship, or vice versa –allowing me to do two things at once? It is tempting to think so.

The Positive Effects of Scholarship on Activism

At their most influential, scholars can affect how large segments of the public view the world, feel about their lives, and react to pleas for action. They are among the moral entrepreneurs who help distinguish new social problems and stimulate new moral visions. Along with artists and activists, scholars can invent inspirational ideas, frames, slogans, images, and arguments. They suggest new victims and villains, and thereby new patterns of blame and outrage. This is not always their intention, although they are happy to take credit. (Most of their suggested labels and terms are, like most scholarship, utterly ignored.) Because they have access to broad audiences, public intellectuals have the most capacity for this kind of impact.

Because scholars are, in a way, experts in the manipulation of ideas, they can be useful in formulating movement ideologies. They can reconcile apparent inconsistencies, marshal evidence, develop resonant frames and narratives. Philosopher Peter Singer helped to create the modern animal-rights movement after he published *Animal Liberation* in 1975. Recruits to the movement did not necessarily accept or even understand his Benthamite framework or even read his book, but they were reassured that a long and serious philosophical treatise supported their position. It also provided evidence about the abuses of animals, especially in scientific research, an institution unfamiliar to most nonscientists.

Other books have articulated emerging sensibilities alongside movements – partly inside them and partly outside, much as artists produce work that encourages a political perspective, is taken up by movements, but also is valid as art. These products run the gamut from intentional agitprop all the way to independent expressions of emerging structures of feeling that may even precede a social movement based on them. Many big books have come out of movements, intended to have a political impact, to mobilize opinion, and in some cases recruit participants: Carson’s *Silent Spring*, Harrington’s *Other America*, Jacob’s *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique*, as well as Singer’s *Animal*

Liberation. These writers (only Singer was an academic) were already active in emerging movements. (For example the Audubon Society recruited Carson to write her book.)

Occasionally scholars can offer useful strategic advice to activists, but they rarely have the nuanced grasp of the strategic moment that full-time activists do. Activist-scholars no doubt have a better sense of the situation than scholars who do no activism. But this is because they are activists, not because they are scholars. I suspect it is rare for any kind of scholarship to generate decisive suggestions for what to do, but it can generate lists of mistakes to avoid (Jasper, 2006:appendix).

Scholars can also contribute their expertise in gathering specific information about social problems. In some cases scholars select topics that they know interest movements, but in others the questions are of concern to both.

Natural scientists sometimes gather evidence that activists can use, especially movements making claims about the safety and other risks of new technologies. The antinuclear, environmental, even animal-rights movements have all relied on experts, and many scientists have tried to change their institutions from within (Moore, 2008). Scientists may not intend to aid protestors, and they may be pushed to join a movement only once they have blown the whistle on abuses of science or engineering.

Scientists sometimes become public intellectuals because of their renown as scientists, but they frequently make statements far beyond their expertise, commenting on public issues. There is even an adjective for this: *ultracrepidarian*. Engaged scholars often criticize specialist knowledge as too narrow, but general knowledge is not always knowledge at all. Frequently, it is simply speculation and opinion. (Remember William Shockley, co-inventor of the transistor, eugenicist, and devoted contributor to the “Nobel Prize” sperm bank?)

Social scientists’ expertise may allow them to report on a movement’s members and potential members, or on public attitudes. For instance a trio of Berkeley sociologists (Bloemraad, Voss, and Silva, 2014) conducted survey experiments with a sample of California citizens to see which frames about immigrant legalization were more sympathetically received. Conservative respondents were moved by family unification frames more than by immigrants’ benefits to the economy or by human rights frames. Liberals responded positively and conservatives negatively to the rights frame, and overall the rights frame made respondents less likely to support inclusionary measures. These findings might help immigrant-rights groups craft their appeals. Less usefully, Bloemraad, Voss, and Silva found that framing effects were generally weak: interesting to sociologists, unhelpful to activists. (Their finding that political ideology matters more than demographic categories like race, class, gender, and age will surprise sociologists more than activists.)

Sociologist Phil Brown (2013:159) labels this the “advocacy social scientist,” who “is engaged in policy-oriented work while remaining firmly centered in rigorous theoretical and methodological approaches.” Since most social science has *some* potential policy relevance, a policy orientation in fact means a self-conscious effort to influence policies by reaching non-academic audiences. In Brown’s field of

health these are more likely to be policy audiences, who may understand and value academic rigor, than the general public.

Scholars may choose topics that are inherently political, such as inequality or oppression. For instance scholars often insist that they are helping the underprivileged by telling their stories, empowering them, “giving them voice.” Oral histories are thought to “give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place” (Thompson, 1978:2). In these cases, the scholarship itself is a political accomplishment, and it need not help activists any further.

Scholars can also provide insights into the general mechanisms behind the rise, continuation, and fall of protest groups. Activists often tell me this is what they most want from scholars, yet they are almost always disappointed. Even so, the trend in studies of protest over the last several decades has been to move from broad generalizations – about the pervasive influence of capitalism, or the importance of the right political opportunity structure – to more specific mechanisms, such as the emotions that inhibit or encourage participation, the costs and risks of different strategic choices, or the impact of music on confidence and enthusiasm. In some cases the most critical scholarship is the most useful. For instance, identification of a supposed “iron law of oligarchy” encouraged activists in many movements over several decades to develop means of “repealing” the law.

Finally, scholars can contribute to protest as participants rather than through their scholarship. They can march, make speeches, and get arrested. They need not write about this at all. For those without academic posts, this can be a full-time contribution, while they do scholarship on the side. For those with academic positions, the costs and tradeoffs become much sharper.

Negative Effects of Scholarship on Activism

Many of these helpful contributions have harmful potential as well. The idea that scholars are giving voice to marginalized groups has an unavoidable tone of condescension, in that scholars take on a heroic role of strength, protecting and aiding a weak group of victims. It is no doubt better to write sympathetically about a disenfranchised group than to ignore or damn them, but outsiders can never “give” power to a group: they must seize it for themselves. As part of their craft, scholars must make the group’s words fit scholarly media. “The use of decontextualized, first-person data is a strategy which may be used to mask inequalities rather than redress them, as research participants may appear as if they are ‘speaking for themselves’, rather than as people whose words are spoken in response to particular questions, and who have little input into how their thoughts are represented in the write-up of the research” (Andrews, 2007:41).

Scholars may wish to have a political influence on other scholars, but this audience is quite specialized and rarely overlaps much with nonscholarly audiences. Some scholars feel they are doing politics without even aspiring to be public intellectuals reaching broad audiences. Thus Patricia Hill Collins (2013:37; also 2012) speaks of “intellectual activism,” or speaking truth to power, “namely, to

develop alternative analyses of social injustices that scholarly audiences will find credible.” In this case “power” is disembodied, a vision that privileges some demographic groups over others. This practice lies firmly within academic arenas; it has little to do with arenas that include powerful players such as politicians, policymakers, military commanders, university administrators, corporate executives – in other words the players that activists normally try to reach. Influencing scholarly colleagues about political truths may eventually have ripple effects outside the academy, but these are likely to be faint and delayed. Collins was elected president of the American Sociological Association but is not well known outside the academy.

Then there is the issue of scholarly prose and jargon, which make it hard for academics to reach pragmatic political players even when they try, no matter what their intentions. Worse, there is a large international audience for obscure writing: hundreds of thousands of university students many of whom aspire to combine scholarship and politics. The appeal of academics like Slavoj Žižek or Judith Butler lies partly in the heroic tasks of interpretation required to read them, a kind of initiation into an enlightened elite. If anything, the acolytes who devour work like this are substituting intellectual tasks for more direct political engagement. Book radicals can confuse graduate students into thinking that they are doing radical politics by reading and writing, instead of by recruiting, marching, and disrupting economic and political institutions.

Scholarly prose is bad enough; scholarly methods are even more of a barrier to non-specialist readers. Quantitative methods have become more and more refined, impenetrable even to most fellow social scientists. Those without advanced degrees have no chance to understand them, unless the scholars translate and summarize their own work. Even qualitative work has its own jargon and reflexivity of little interest to outsiders.

When we publish research about the strategic dilemmas and choices of a movement, we have no control over who reads it. The forces of order and corporate targets learn just as much from it as those we are trying to help – perhaps more, given the resources that allow consultants to systematically compile and synthesize all the literature on a given topic or movement. Most strategies are more successful if you just carry them out rather than writing about them as you carry them out. Full engagement usually requires public silence about strategic considerations, whereas publication is the essence of the scholar’s role. This dilemma is especially acute when we can publish our thoughts online in real time without the delays of traditional publications.

Not all strategies benefit from publicity, such as cases where reputations are being crafted or where illegal activities are planned. Published analyses of a movement’s friends and foes will not win more friends for the movement and may alienate players who are a little bit of each. Blogs and other immediate public communication can reveal internal disagreements, lines of strategic action, and tradeoffs between goals that opponents can take advantage of. It may be more useful later, after the fact, to look for lessons from which others can learn. The only way to keep things secret from spies and police and opponents is to keep it private.

This is hard for academics to do, especially because they are promoted and judged for their publications.

Just as scholars can help create a movement's ideology, they can help destroy it. This is clear in the case of collective identities, which are a "necessary fiction" for a movement: fictional in that they paper over many internal differences, but necessary for making the movement appear stronger, more unified, more representative of some population than it really is (McGarry and Jasper, 2015). Activists need to promote the fiction, while scholars have the luxury of deconstructing it. When the American women's movement fractured over identity issues in the 1980s, it was not helped by scholars' philosophical deconstructions of the fictional nature of the identity "women" (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990).

With different audiences goes different rhetoric. Scholarship is about subtleties, distinctions, dilemmas, qualifications – and evidence. Activist rhetoric needs to ignore such things, to present groups as united, moral issues as simple, social problems as direct and natural rather than socially constructed. Strategic choices must be urgent, obvious necessities, not the result of infighting, framing, and cultural construction. Political players reach the media with bold, timeless overgeneralizations. Good activists know how to do all the things that scholars describe, but in most cases they have to pretend they are not doing them. It does not help to have sympathetic scholars pointing out the tricks.

Institutional review boards constrain the research that academics are permitted to do. Activists break into labs, infiltrate corporations, join rightwing groups by lying about their sympathies. A university would not allow its faculty and students to do any of these things. Some IRB constraints are healthy and others excessive, but constraints they are.

Scholars have the luxury to examine failed movements, fatal mistakes, internal disagreements that split groups apart and other depressing topics. They can also look at movements from different times and places, in the search for lessons. In many cases, activists want to hear about the failures, even if they do not want all of their potential audiences to hear about them as well. A central role of political leaders is to instill confidence in their audiences, which often requires some distortions of the truths that scholars seek.

Publication reifies observations, findings, and suggestions. It freezes them in place, taking them out of the flow of decisions and actions. This is necessary for analysis and the accumulation of knowledge, but it operates by placing knowledge in the realm of scholarship rather than strategy. Ideas on a printed page also have an authority that suggestions uttered in a conversation, even a speech, rarely have – an authority intensified by the academic credentials and institutional affiliation of scholars. In other words they may influence political decisions more than they should (Krinsky, 2014).

Positive Effects of Activism on Scholarship

The most common benefits to scholarship from engagement are the standard benefits of participant observation and ethnography: they give us something to

write about. The easiest way to get inside the heads of a group is to be a member of that group, even if temporarily, to experience what they experience. Balsiger and Lambelet (2014) list advantages such as understanding symbolic meanings, breaking down the illusion of group homogeneity, access to private practices such as the development of strategy, revealing gaps between ideology and practices, and understanding socialization and role taking. In recent decades much or most scholarship on social movements has been based to some extent on participant observation, usually supplemented by interviews and textual analyses. Participation sharpens our empathy, central to most qualitative research.

Participation may be the only way to gain access to meetings and other research sites that are normally private. The challenge is to gain the trust of those we are studying (Ryen, 2007). The more secretive they are, or the more sensitive their deliberations, the less likely they are to allow a scholar to observe, record, or take notes. Someone who is present as a full participant has fewer restrictions, although the added role of scholar imposes concerns about subsequent publication.

Participation also allows scholars to use a method that is out of favor these days, introspection. Certain facets of protest, especially strategic dilemmas and emotions, are especially accessible through some form of introspection. The complex combinations and series of emotions that humans feel during a day are hard to map under any circumstances, but feeling those things oneself probably helps (although we must give repression its due). Strategic dilemmas impose complicated combinations of costs, benefits, and risks in ways that are difficult to disentangle, and personal experience is a useful key.

Public intellectuals are less likely to gain this kind of useful feedback from their audiences, since the general public is relatively mute. Even those public intellectuals who *do* political work are not always writing *about* political work (unlike scholars of movements), so their direct political experiences need not change their arguments. If we think about book radicals like Marcuse and Beauvoir, there was little discernible impact of activism on their philosophical analyses (Marcuse had participated in the brief Spartacist revolt of 1919; before the 1970s Beauvoir was not politically active except through Sartre). The influence went the other way: their scholarship was their primary form of activism, and opened doors to other forms.

These benefits of participation notwithstanding, it is also possible to portray activists sympathetically, and to reconstruct their worldviews, without participating in their movements. Scholars who study rightwing movements are often forced to do this, as in Luker's (1984) ability to show the reader why anti-abortion activists hold the positions they do, or Blee's (2002) compelling portrait of hate groups. Interviews, reading, and empathy can accomplish a lot. Many scholars study movements whose participants are long dead, yet they manage to reconstruct their thoughts and feelings, their assumptions and aspirations. Participation and introspection are useful research techniques, but hardly necessary ones.

Negative Effects of Activism on Scholarship

Just as participation can grant us access to some research sites and individuals to interview, it can exclude us from others. The most obvious are the opponents and targets of protest. If we accept that we must study protest groups in interaction with various other players rather than studying a social movement in isolation (McAdam and Boudet, 2012), then we need to worry about access to state officials, journalists, corporate targets of protest, and others whom we should interview. A state official is more likely to agree to meet with an academic researcher than with a known critic and activist, perhaps a strident critic, of her policies. (In my own experience studying the politics of nuclear energy, corporate and government officials were surprisingly prone to assume that I sympathized with their pronuclear views; this would not have been the case had I been a known antinuclear activist.)

Less obviously, active participation may exclude the scholar from many places within the movement itself, for instance when there are rival factions who mistrust each other (Maeckelbergh, 26; Balsiger and Lambelet, 2014:155). None other than Erving Goffman (2001:156-7) warns that it is easy to “associate yourself with the wrong person” early in fieldwork. Nor can you start high up in a hierarchy and work your way down, because “the people at the bottom will know that all along you really were a fink – which is what you are.” Protest groups are not usually very hierarchical, but there are always internal cleavages and you must decide which group “you’re going to accept as your own.”

Interestingly, the most common reason for doing deep ethnography does not apply to most protest groups, namely that a group is secretive and considered morally suspect, deviant, by the rest of society. Communist cells in the 1950s would have fit, as do hate groups today. Most protest organizations have nothing to hide and are happy to open many of their activities to public scrutiny. The question for the ethnographer, Jack Katz (1997:362) says, is “Why are realities that are obvious to the subjects not also obvious to the ethnographer’s audience?” Participation is less necessary in a “social movement society” that accepts protest as a normal political activity.

Activism affects not only our methods but the substance of what we write as scholars. Partisan attachments subtly but almost inevitably shift scholarship from an effort to explain what happens to an effort to prove the cause is right and just. Engaged scholars are understandably reluctant to highlight the inconsistencies in a movement’s program, the occasionally unpleasant personalities of leaders, and the exaggerated or even fictional claims sometimes made. Candor can undermine a movement’s myths. Engaged scholars may describe strategic mistakes, but usually when it serves their own purposes within the movement: a kind of “I told you so” revenge. Or the activist side of a person may be committed to a certain strategy, so that the scholar side has trouble evaluating it objectively.

At a more general level, scholars who are active in a social movement tend to have their intuitions, indeed their entire theoretical sensibility, shaped by that movement. It becomes harder to appreciate what is special about this movement, compared to others. The field of social movements studies (especially in the United States) notoriously depends on case studies, with relatively few comparisons across movements; scholars often develop and “test” their theories with the single

movement they know well. Of course, there is a risk of overreliance on a single case even for those who are not politically active, but anyone who studies a single movement. Yet I think these scholars – lacking such strong political commitments – are more able to add other movements to their repertory, especially movements from different countries or time periods.

The positivist tradition insists that our political lens distorts our observations. Paul Lichterman (2001:127) insists that we not give up our analytic lens: “We learn less if we surrender that lens on the notion that we already agree with the group’s cause and therefore understand what they are doing, or we already disagree with the group’s cause and therefore understand – to our chagrin – what they are doing.”

Despite some shift in recent decades toward theories of protest that start from the protestors’ points of view (Jasper, 2010), the questions that scholars are trying to answer and the questions that activists debate are not necessarily the same. The scholar is interested in what makes for the most persuasive villains, the activist in whether it is better to demonize Monsanto or the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The scholar-activist is always tempted to address debates within movements rather than scholarly questions. The central question for the activist is what works? This is only one of many valid questions for the scholar.

Not only the questions but the venues for publication also tend to differ. Activists have little reason to read *Mobilization* or *Social Movement Studies*, much less the *American Sociological Review*, although scholars have some reason to read movement publications – for evidence, at least, if not for theory. Writing styles also tend to differ in scholarly and nonscholarly outlets, but as we saw earlier this falls mostly under the heading of scholarship’s (negative) impact on activism.

Activism affects careers as well as scholarship. There may be disapproval from peers or punishment by administrators; disciplinary standards may not easily accommodate engaged research; governing boards and administrators may dislike one’s opinions as well as one’s activism (Flood et al., 2013). Serious political conflicts play themselves out in academic arenas as well as in more obvious electoral and media arenas.

If there is a tradeoff between career advancement and political engagement, is it useful to movements for there to be sympathetic, engaged scholars with long careers in the academy? A career poses a form of the organization dilemma: building resources, positions of influence, and organizations all takes time. On the one hand, this could be time spent on more direct efforts at social change; on the other, it offers stability that will allow these efforts to continue. The risk is that the goal of stability crowds out social-change goals. Scholarship-activism has a number of tradeoffs at its heart.

Some of the impacts of activism are less sinister, affecting not just the quality of our scholarship but its quantity as well. An hour devoted to politics is an hour not given to writing. Especially in the U.S., every academic I know complains about it (as do people in other occupations), but that does not alter the relentless pressure of academic life: you can never be productive enough or famous enough. As a result we all look for acceptable excuses for falling short (as everyone does). We have been

department chair, we have edited a journal, we had a child, we had a sick parent, and so on.

Political activity is usually a respected excuse. In American sociology, colleagues are more likely to admire you for being active in your union or in a protest movement. In political science, who will complain if you consult in your state capital? But it rarely excuses you from meeting the standards for academic promotion. Those standards may be outrageously rigid, refusing to recognize the variety of contributions that an academic may make, not only to the life of the mind, but to one's polity, community, or the world. But until we change them, academics who ignore them will suffer for it.

Some engaged scholars (usually those who have tenure) stop writing for their colleagues, preferring other audiences. Even though they are paid in part to produce scholarship, they are willing to bear some of the costs of not doing so. Or they try to write for several audiences in the same pieces, violating one of the fundamental rules of good writing.

Political activity may take us away from scholarly production – something most of us could excuse – but it also takes us away from our students. Again, there are only 24 hours in a day, to be divided up between politics, family and friends, students, production for the scholarly community, service to department, university, and profession, and more. Just as the children of many famous protest leaders complain of his or her absence (e.g. Wiwa, 2001), so students may as well. We cannot satisfy all the demands of others at all times.

Engagement can shape a scholar's choice of subject matter in good and bad ways at the same time. Enthusiasm for current causes becomes a kind of sociological ambulance-chasing, as each new cause inspires a wave of scholarship. To the extent that they write for popular audiences, scholars can promote a movement and its agenda, or warn of dangerous movements. But to the extent that they write as scholars, their books and journal articles are likely to appear after the movement has faded or disappeared altogether. Ambulance-chasing also distorts the scholarship, with exaggerated claims for the movement's novelty and importance. Positive and negative effects of activism on scholarship are often inseparable.

Activism and Teaching

Within the academy, it is only a lucky elite who can devote most of their efforts to scholarship; they are the ones who write about the relationship between activism and scholarly production. Most academics spend most of their time teaching, whether as poorly paid adjuncts, as full-time faculty at community colleges and four-year colleges, or even as aging academics who no longer have active research programs. It is a privilege to be able to worry about engaged scholarship, because it is a privilege to worry about scholarship – and to write about one's worries.

Many of the same issues arise with undergraduate teaching, but I think the answers are different: activism almost always makes us better teachers. I do not view undergraduates as sociologists-in-the-making, so I try to teach them to be

better citizens and human beings, with critical capacities and knowledge about how our society works. This necessarily has political content. In an age of increasing inequality, they must understand the sources of that inequality. But this isn't being an activist, it is being a good teacher.

Our own political activities make us sensitive to other points of view, they provide good stories to enliven lectures, and they may inspire students to engage in their own paths of political action. Their successful education does not depend on their understanding the rigorous standards of research that we impose on each other as scholars. Rigorous standards of thinking and evaluating are more central, as is getting across basic information. And the smoother writing style we try to use for nonscholarly venues is more easily adapted to lectures than the turgid prose of scholarly journal articles.

Our obligations to our graduate students, if we are fortunate enough to have them, are different. We owe it to them to show them how to be good scholars, so that all the mutual influences I discussed above are relevant. We also typically hope they will get jobs in colleges and universities or other research settings. Professional challenges and biases pervade job searches for assistant professors, with both good and bad disincentives to be politically engaged.

Attempted Solutions

Scholars try to balance these conflicting demands in several ways. The most common route, I imagine, is that scholars of protest exploit knowledge about a movement in which they have been active but no longer are. This is partly due to the short life spans of most protest groups and partly to decisions to leave fulltime activism for graduate school, but the effect is that they can write about strategic and other issues with some insider's knowledge while not having to worry about spilling strategic secrets or revealing the fragility of a movement's cultural constructions.

Other scholars use personal friendships to maintain dialogue with activists while not actually remaining active themselves. They are brokers, in a way, translating the questions and insights of each world to the other. This only partly resolves the problem of too little time: the attention a scholar gives to activists is attention she does not give to fellow scholars.

One solution to the activist-scholar tradeoff is to write separate things for different audiences, or "to publish for one's peers and then translate the ideas for a more general public or for activist audiences" (Woodhouse et al., 2002:310). That is not so easy since, as the same authors say with considerable understatement, "Regrettably, graduate training does little to prepare students for writing for popular audiences" (310). This is regrettable, of course, only if you think this is something they should be doing. As much as we all complain about it, scholarly jargon does have its uses in concision and in connotations of past debates and findings, so the same writing is rarely useful for specialist and general audiences.

Other scholars concentrate on the politics of their own institutions, such as LGBTQ rights (Messinger, 2011), student movements (Mars, 2009), Black studies (Redmond, 2010), African studies (Isaacman, 2003), Latina/o studies (Valdes and

Montoya, 2008), and of course women's studies. On the one hand, this seems the kind of self-management expected of professionals. On the other, it may crowd out engagement in other political conflicts – even when these programs were founded to bridge the chasm between universities and communities. Efforts to balance scholarship and engagement have often undermined the academic credibility of these programs and their scholars, even for someone as prominent as Cornell West (as we saw in his interactions with Harvard President Larry Summers). In other words, it reproduces the same tradeoffs as other forms of academic engagement.

Discussion: Different Audiences, Different Questions

It seems as if there are multiple systems of action, different worlds, with different audiences, with contrasting tastes, goals and interests, their own jargons, standards of evaluation, distribution channels, and much more. Activist worlds (and their rewards) are focused on identifying and solving social problems; academics on understanding and explaining the world. And they are not the only two distinct audiences. There are also policymakers, who have their own agendas and outlets. There is the general public, which contributes in complicated ways to activist publics but has its own sources, trends, and impacts. Sometimes the worlds overlap, as a lucky scholar finds a popular audience and is anointed a public intellectual. More often there is some dialogue and translation between the two worlds, sometimes enthusiastic and sometimes suspicious. This translation takes work, posing endless dilemmas.

A small example of the difference: what to call a movement matters to activists, as a central part of their efforts to build reputation and solidarity. A scholar, in contrast, need only pick one name, objective but respectful, without worrying about its PR consequences. An activist might want her movement known as the pro-life movement, but “the anti-abortion movement” is a more accurate label for a scholar to use.

Many of the arguments for engaged scholarship conflate two distinctions. They begin with the familiar distinction between a traditional (and largely discredited) empiricist view of science as a reflection of the truth, and a more constructionist view of scientific knowledge as something we produce through our work. This becomes aligned with a second distinction: between academics who write for other academics and engaged academics who produce knowledge “you can fight with” (Russell, 2014). The constructionist insight that there is conflict over the production of knowledge becomes the claim that one must also apply that knowledge to conflicts in other realms as well. For some scholars, as a result, any knowledge production is necessarily a form of activism (Maxey, 1999).

Both sides in the non-debate over engaged scholarship indulge in caricatures of the other side. Scholar-activists often imply that the only alternative to an engaged scholar is a positivist who believes her job is to pursue objective truths like a detective looking for clues to put together. Not many social scientists view themselves this way any more. I view my scholarship as an effort to tell plausible stories about the world, to describe actions and motivations in as much detail as I

can. When I do theory (more and more these days) I am pointing to new pieces that I hope others will add to their own descriptions. The relationship between my descriptions and some objective reality cannot be known, although I hope for accuracy without knowing if I have achieved it.

This social-constructionism is often taken as an opening to normative concerns, which appear to be unavoidable. “For whom should we work,” ask Woodhouse et al. (2002:307). “If knowledge is socially constructed, and if knowledge is a resource used differently by various partisans in various settings, does it still make sense to rely on the traditional notion that ‘new knowledge’ ...is an unproblematic good serving everyone more or less equally?” They are talking about the study of science and technology, which are often seen as part of unambiguous progress. So their answer, no, carries some punch. In most social sciences, no one would think that new knowledge serves everyone. It advances the understanding (and careers) of those in a narrow knowledge community, who talk to each other and with luck prod each other to improve their understandings.

Between the two extremes of activists who feel no need to write about what they do and scholars who write only for other scholars and try to avoid any normative commitments, there are several types who combine the two activities in some way.

Most famous (by definition) are the public intellectuals. Their backgrounds are diverse, such as journalism, fiction writing, activism, or – increasingly – the academy, and their celebrity status is often accidental. For some, such as Beauvoir or C. Wright Mills, the ability to write well helped them attract audiences, whereas others seem to attract audiences because they write obscurely (Marcuse, Lacan, Butler, Zizek). These modern-day mystics seem to appeal especially to graduate students, ever eager to demonstrate their hermeneutic prowess. These gurus often appeal because of personal charisma, their perceived radicalism, or their group identifications. Both types of public intellectuals depend on familiar mechanisms of influence: popularity with the media, the authority of their institutional positions, fashionable political opinions, and a large dose of luck. Many academics would love to have that good fortune.

But book radicals can be part of the problem. Scholars have expertise in their fields, but they often pontificate about matters way beyond their fields. Some are wise, some are merely clever in ways that attract attention. They may persuade graduate students that reading is a form of radicalism.

Coming from the other direction, many activists are prolific writers, especially after a movement has shrunk or collapsed and there is time for reflection. They usually produce practical how-to guides (e.g. Alinsky, ?) or memoirs that also suggest how the reader might come to devote her life to politics and protest (e.g. Stallwood, 2014). Some of these writers become public intellectuals but most (like most writers, including academics) reach only their own movements and groups.

As Cox and Flesher Fominaya observe, there are enormous cross-national differences in the relations between scholarly and activist work, thanks to different histories and institutions. Unions have often provided homes for intellectuals, whose audiences are then clear rather than divided. Britain has had a tradition of leftist scholars, not always holding university positions and often attached to the

labor movement (thus escaping many of the scholar-activist dilemmas). This tradition continues in Ireland, even as it has shrunk in Britain (Cox, 2015). The intellectuals who helped bring down the Soviet bloc were mostly barred from university posts, again freeing them from the tradeoffs we are addressing. The entry of movement scholars into the academy in Britain and Central Europe may increasingly be subjecting them to these tradeoffs, however (Doherty, Hayes, and Rootes, 2015).

A division of labor grows with the number of people in a field, and this helps explain the fragmentation of audiences. At one extreme, the United States has a thousand social movement scholars and a journal aimed directly at them, without any pretense of reaching activists too. At the other, Laurence Cox (2015) claims to be the only full-time scholar and teacher about social movements in all of Ireland. In between those extremes, Germany seems a surprise. Its main publication about social movements, *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen*, mixes contributions from politicians and activists with scientific research reports (Haunss, 2015). The explanation for this combination of audiences is that there are relatively few social movement scholars in Germany, despite extensive funding – and a positivist orientation – for some other areas of social science.

Conclusions

No one argues that you have to be a serial killer to be a successful criminologist, or a gerbil to be a veterinarian. We have learned a great deal about protest from those who have never been to a march or a riot. At the same time, there are things we can learn only through participation, even criminal participation (Venkatesh, 2008; Goffman, 2013). Simple calls for engaged scholarship or positivist separation both ignore the many tradeoffs involved and the resulting dilemmas that scholars face. We need to be honest about the tradeoffs between activism and scholarship, rather than turning to simple formulations that fit our own tastes and ideological agendas.

Any demanding career puts pressure on people to find a balance between their work and their lives. Academics must find ways to be good spouses, parents, and children even while fulfilling their duties to students, colleagues, professional associations, their universities, and more. They must also decide how much time to devote to being good citizens, carrying out political activities for the greater good. In some cases, the most poignant tradeoff is between family and politics. Given all these pressures, it is tempting to believe that you can do your scholarship and your politics at the same time, and that each benefits from the other. I may not have proven that this is an illusion, but I believe I have suggested innumerable tradeoffs to take into account in making these choices.

Strong calls for engaged scholarship, like its positivist opposite, miss the many tradeoffs involved. They make these choices seem too easy, and fail to do justice to the suffering of those who must make them, especially untenured scholars who may have more at stake (Suzuki and Mayorga, 2014). Just as attention to the

tradeoffs and dilemmas that protestors face reflects and respects their lived experience, so the same attentive compassion should be applied to scholars.

Even if you do it irresponsibly, a full-time academic job demands a lot of time. It is impossible to be a full-time activist at the same time. There is time to be a foot soldier occasionally – gathering signatures, attending rallies, and so on – but this does not generate much that is interesting to write about. There is time to consult with friends and acquaintances in a movement, but you usually cannot write about this without undermining the strategies you discuss. You can bring your expert skills to specific studies, such as voter sentiments or member preferences, but here too publication offers carefully gathered information to opponents as well as to allies. Many scholars end up doing politics as part of being a good citizen and human being. There is no reason to boast or write about this.

Nor is there good reason to impose our preferences on others. I may admire academics who are willing to disregard career rewards for the sake of their politics, but I'm not willing to let them deny those costs or insist that all academics must make the same choice. Heroes bear costs for helping others, and we cannot insist that everyone be a hero.

Many activists of my acquaintance want to learn something from scholars *as scholars*; they do not want us to become (second-rate, part-time) activists. They want us to scour the historical record for what strategies have worked, and why. They want us to analyze the components of successful and failed frames, identities, and narratives. They may want us to warn them of hazards of taking one strategic path rather than another. They do not need us to congratulate ourselves for doing politics when what we are really doing is sloppy scholarship.

Fashions in how best to balance politics and scholarship have come and gone, depending on world historical events as well as on institutional arrangements. The Dreyfus affair almost created the modern image of the public intellectual, and Eastern European dissidents were true heroes in the 1980s (only to disappear after 1989 into the grinding machinery of everyday politics). The growing dominance of universities over intellectual life has left many academics feeling uneasy and guilty, others bitter and accusatory (often depending on their relative success within the academy, Bourdieu would have observed). We have to at least try to burrow beneath our own lives and careers in order to be clear about the many costs, risks, and benefits involved in different choices about different ways to do scholarship and to do politics.

We owe the people we study compassion and respect, as we do to all humans. We do not owe it to them to do their jobs for them, nor to let them do our jobs for us. We also owe compassion to the scholars who are trying to balance multiple demands and goals, and we should respect the many solutions they find.

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Table 1: Types of Scholar-Activist by Arenas of Engagement:

	Arena	Main Activities
Engaged Teachers	Classroom	Embrace particular moral and political positions and try to persuade students
Engaged Scholars	Scholarly Publications	Try to persuade other scholars
Public Intellectuals	Non-scholarly Publications	Try to persuade general readers
Engaged Citizens	Political Arenas	Full-time academics do unpaid political activity part time
Intellectual Activists	Political Arenas	Full time paid activists also teach or write part time

TABLE 2: EXAMPLES OF ENGAGED INTELLECTUALS

PRIMARY ACTIVITY	FULL-TIME ACADEMICS	NON-ACADEMICS
PUBLISHING OR TEACHING	Herbert Marcuse William Gamson Judith Butler	Gustav LeBon Eric Hoffer Simone de Beauvoir Jean-Paul Sartre
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES	William Kornhauser	V. I. Lenin Rosa Luxembourg Saul Alinsky