Modalities of Injustice in the Subaltern Discourse

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MODALITIES OF INJUSTICE IN THE SUBALTERN DISCOURSE

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By
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MODALITIES OF INJUSTICE IN THE SUBALTERN DISCOURSE

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I dedicate this thesis to my sisters, Phulmati Barman and Dewi K. Ningsih, friends of kindred spirit who settle their homes in the heart. We are proof of one global humanity. Also, I also dedicate this work to my tireless friends Pam Isenhower and Merro, for my home in Indonesia.

Finally, Mr. J, you are the best for letting me take these two years to wrestle with justice.
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MODALITIES OF INJUSTICE IN THE SUBALTERN DISCOURSE

Theresa McClary-Jeffryes August 2016 104 Pages

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Subaltern persons continue to be most negatively impacted by the hegemonic practices of institutions. Subaltern populations are the furthest removed from political agency, not only by the insecurities of their lived experiences, but also by academic and agency discourses that recreate the subaltern political citizen-subject in modes representing the “Other” through lenses of elite scholarship and high theory. The subaltern agent is not present in her own political making. The considerations of social justice require both the underpinnings of a global ethics of caring and a commitment to center the subaltern citizen subject’s account of herself as corresponding privileged record. This paper explores the marginalizing outcomes in the historiography of subaltern studies and defends both ethical cosmopolitanism and participatory democracy as modes that better respect diverse worldviews outside of neoliberal constructions. Advocacy on behalf of subaltern groups must include Community-Based Participatory Research and eco-cultural analysis that give priority to positive near stakeholder goals and outcomes for their communities. Subaltern self-representation is the needed checks and balances for 21st century policy making.

Keywords: subalternity, cosmopolitanism, participatory democracy, CBPR
Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

The limp body of a Syrian toddler, dressed in a vibrant red shirt and bright blue shorts finally pierced the collective heart of a world that had ignored the dire emergency of the crisis in Syria. The lifeless toddler with dark hair had washed up on the beach in Bodrum, Turkey. His boat filled with refugees had capsized in the cold waters. The small boy drowned along with his five-year-old brother and ten others during a desperate, if not reckless, journey to escape a homeland mutilated by conflict and war (Smith, 2015). His tiny shoes, the kind that embellishes the rear view mirrors of so many American cars, still adorned his feet. Three-year-old Alan Kurdi serves as a wake up call for the universal need for humanity to care deeply and to work cohesively for conditions of peace and justice for each human life of dignity and worth.

There is great injustice in the fact that it often takes events and tragedies of the worst kind to motivate global systems into tangible action for equity, peace, and compassion. The daily impact of entrenched carelessness or historical animosity wage on against the gift of human life and the planet, taking the forms of racism, economic exploitation, sexual violence, conflict and climate degradation. Global injustice involves interconnected political, social, economic, and cultural factors that misalign dynamically and create varied outcomes of discrimination and oppression. Global peace and security require collaborative solutions of a non-colonial nature. Those involved in transnational activism must contend with imbalances of power and an ongoing colonial legacy that shapes current resentments and distrust for international coalition.

The wonder of human diversity is silenced in the outworkings of prejudices, fear, and competition for global power and resources. Globalization, far from being a recent
understanding of the world, has existed in lesser and greater toxic forms since the 16th century. It is the post WWII version that has produced specific configurations of internationality that have eroded the ability of sovereign nation-states to control and contain the accelerated flows of technology, information, and economic interdependency. Non-government organizations (NGO), transnational or multi-national corporations (T/MNC), and entities like the UN, World Bank, IMF, NATO and European Union greatly influence the development of poor and less affluent countries, pressuring them to open their economies to foreign investment and trade. Structural adjustments forced upon developing communities result in reduced government services to its constituents and have precipitated a dramatic increase in privatization of infrastructure services (Tilly, 2005).

As a cosmopolitan thinker and practitioner, I choose the global sphere as my community and near interest. India was my home base for six years. I worked there as a non-profit educator and NGO co-founder in rural, underserved villages. I have also been connected to an educational outreach organization in Indonesia for the past decade and recently began a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project there related to human development capacities for women in rural villages. Some two decades ago, I observed the work of Christian missionaries whose responsibilities involved care for families of AIDS patients in rural, impoverished villages in Mozambique. The First-World patents on the medications for AIDS at this time kept truly helpful treatment out of the hands of the families I saw there. Missionaries came with Tylenol, food, new mats, and clean water, but they had no power to change the course of the racism and inequality that let the disease ravage the bodies and families of the poor in Africa. It was the second
year of meager cassava yields there and the village community was caught in a vice-grip of agricultural and economic contraction at the same time that HIV/AIDS was proving destructive to unprepared global communities. It was in this setting that I began to understand the lived experience of subalternity, although I did not possess the term to wield as an intellectual sword.

In this paper, I contend that reciprocal partnership in global citizenship requires that those involved in the promotion of social justice and individual rights better understand the locally embedded knowledge, needs, and capacity of women in village settings in order to facilitate both personal and community development. Empowerment of subaltern women requires the cessation of violence, access to choice, economic security, and equally importantly, infrastructure development and political presence within their communities. Culturally situated models must privilege the self-represented voice and political participation of subaltern populations who are not represented in the nation-state dominant narrative or in the lived experiences of the majority populations. I argue that 21st century models and initiatives for social justice and sustainable change involving marginalized populations in insular geographies must do more than explore and expose the experience of injustice. States of displacement, conflict, poverty and the resulting further disenfranchisement of the world’s most fragile communities are dynamic, volatile, and peace dependent, and their solutions should be based upon activism that promotes eco-cultural respect and local participatory governance and policy-making. Existing models offer germinal ideas for alleviating injustice for subaltern women, but are incomplete in the sense that historic and contemporary theory is too static in its treatment of the intersectionalities of oppression, thereby underestimating the
unique implications of current and future trends of globalization and its creation of constantly changing at-risk populations.

Subaltern communities bear the brunt of the inequality, the exploitation, and the invisibility generated by global neo-liberal commerce and culture. Rationalist fascination with sci-tech solutions entangles the world community in economic, military and trade relationships that prove beneficial to the elite and empty to the laborers, farmers and caretakers of the lands, tea stall workers and families of the indigenous and ancestral populations of much of the Global South. Even The World Bank (2015) whose structural adjustment programs and Western-based economic philosophy have earned the distrust of emerging and developing nations has concluded that trickle-down economics is a mechanism that has served the elite and wealthy of the globe at the cost of the world’s most vulnerable and poor populations. Oxfam has warned that 200 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean are at risk of falling back into poverty over the next eight years due to worsening inequality in the region (Oxfam International, 2015). To the east, economist Vamsi Vakulabharanam stated, “(Indian) small producers have been displaced from their lands or other means of production to be thrown into the labor markets without too much security, while urban elites (or foreign capital) have utilized mineral resources, land and other assets” (Mazumdaru & Dominguez, 2016). All the promises of rationalism, science and technological advancement, and open markets under capitalism have yet to stabilize and affirm the subaltern citizen and her community.

Grassroots movements increasingly confront inequality and disregard for the least politically powerful among our global humanity. Greater transnational activism brings the professional non-government organization into relationship with the local stakeholder
community. While these collaborations can bring additional resources, publicity, and accountability to the program initiatives undertaken in grassroots/transnational non-government (T/NGO) alliances too often reconstruct the inequalities inherent in colonialism. Uneven global development presents obstacles to true empowerment and authority for the local, near-community expert subaltern citizen. Activists for social justice can find it impossible to completely avoid replicating global inequalities in transnational research, scholarship, and civic agencies (Smith & Bandy, 2005).

**Overview**

In this paper, I attempt to do three things that are necessary in order for the reader to understand my arguments and supporting case studies in subsequent chapters. First, I track the history of the subalternity work done in India because this is where the term *subaltern* gained traction in the period of late 20th century scholarship. Second, I argue that the advocacy and activism on behalf of subaltern persons must be founded upon an *ethics of caring* (van Hooft, 2014) as described in cosmopolitan philosophy. Ethical cosmopolitanism holds that human beings are bound by civic love and concern for each other as part of one global moral community. Justice demands that obligations are owed to others because we all share equal human dignity that is not dependent upon status, actions, or ability. Third, I critique the systems and institutions that continue to disrupt the capacity of the subaltern person to be a present participant in her own political making. I finish with a consideration of just advocacy on behalf of the world’s most vulnerable populations.

In chapter two, I analyze the Subaltern Studies Group work in India that was largely responsible for resurgence in subaltern interest and theory in recent history.
Although the project members were united in their belief that the subaltern were rendered invisible through the elite record of Indian history, attempts to retrieve the presence of the subaltern political citizen were ultimately inadequate for creating just representation for this disenfranchised minority. I examine the discourse and institutional behaviors that sustain patterns of injustice against the subaltern global citizen.

In chapter three, I defend the tenants of cosmopolitanism as those that best comprehend the rights and obligations of humankind as a single moral community. The practice of conscribing another person to a distinctly unequal identity of “Other” is the root of material, social, and political injustice (Stanley, 2009). It is imperative to address the moral obligations and ethical underpinnings in our relationships to one another as a single global humanity. Positive civic emotion, such as love of humanity and political commitment to the wellbeing of other persons of equal worth are robust motivations for pursuing sustainable peace and personal freedoms for all. Justice is an ongoing process of negotiations between persons and communities who hold diverse and defensible worldviews that characterize social change and policy work. Therefore, I argue that system of governance under participatory democracy is the effective and ethical path forward in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Self-representation of insurgent citizen and non-majority voice should serve to function as the new checks and balances in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century.

In chapter four, I interrogate the alienation caused by academic discourse that portends to represent the minority “Other” but instead perpetuates her distance and silence in its use of high theory and language which is in no way accessible to the very person it claims to defend. The privileging of peer-review scholarship and high theory has been ineffective in bringing social transformation and greater equality to subaltern
populations for two reasons. First, such production is not intended to be consumed by the subaltern grassroots stakeholder who has neither the resources nor skill acquisition to participate in her own representation and account of her political being. Second, centuries of academic scholarship production and government research programs have yet to unseat the most insidious forms of exploitation, discrimination, and injustice in the forms of racism, sexism, classism, genderism, and ethnocentrism. Therefore, I argue that testimonies, community record, micro histories, and artifacts of popular culture must be elevated to a status of privileged account in scholarship creation. Using my CBPR work in Indonesia as a basis of inquiry, I consider equity, humility, and respect for the community stakeholder in the crafting of interview and ethnographic analysis.

In the concluding chapter, I review and summarize the key understandings presented in this work related to the injustice of contemporary subaltern discourse. I offer an analysis of current transnational coalition work in an attempt to provide effective and just alternatives for the social change models.

This paper is written within the disciplines of social policy and human rights. Therefore, there are some baseline understandings we should share as producer and reader. First, social justice is based upon conceptions of equity, equality, and non-violence towards all persons. No proposal for rights of self-determination would allow for violence or oppression against individual persons. Second, while this thesis is intended to honor the expressed thoughts of those friends and stakeholders I shared life with in Indian and Indonesian village and metro centers, the audience for this paper is the academic. A main contention of this thesis is that the representation of subaltern persons through the discursive practices of government agencies and elitist institutions is a potent
form of violence against subaltern persons because these technologies invent and reinforce the domains of power that perpetuate inequality and disenfranchisement.

Within these discussions, a series of terms are used related to advantage and disadvantage, organizations, and relative locations. Each of the terms is used seamlessly in previous scholarship without explanation, as these are established concepts within considerations of social policy and justice. I do not attempt to define terms attributed to the scholarship of others when the original authors did not do so themselves. Having said this, it is important to address the ideas around terms such as First World and Third World and Global North and Global South. For the purposes of this paper the Third World serves to identify countries that experience lower economic development, high levels of poverty, low utilization of natural resources, and heavy dependence on industrialized nations. These are the developing and technologically less advanced nations of Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Latin America. The nations of Africa, Central and Latin America, and most of Asia are collectively known as the Global South. The people of these nations bear the brunt of some of the greatest challenges facing the international community: poverty, environmental degradation, human and civil rights abuses, ethnic and regional conflicts, mass displacements of refugees, hunger, and disease (The Borgen Project, 2015). First World or Global North countries are those nations characterized by economic wealth, early industrialization and development of science and technology sectors, and a history of colonization, resource extraction, and intervention in other sovereign States or communities.

It is important to note that these are contested terms although used frequently in research and scholarship.
Any addition to the body of academic scholarship is constrained by its limitations and serves as one exploration of our understanding of the urgencies of the day. I intend to articulate how this work has added to the existing body of evidence and thought. I also recognize the ways in which it can and will be improved upon by kindred global citizens who seek the companionship of the subaltern friend as a political equal.
Chapter Two: Discourse and Representation in Subalternity

Subalternity lives on local grounds and in disparate settings. Therefore, there is no one intellectual history of subaltern injustice (Ludden, 2002). The particular task of this chapter is to examine the purpose and claims of the Subaltern Studies Group (SSG) project as it relates to the scholarship undertaken in South Asia. I examine the work done in India as it is most readily associated with subaltern historiography and the subsequent adaptations within transnational anti-colonial movements. I review the critiques of the extensive task undertaken by the SSG project. These critiques interrogate the ability of the academic to actually reveal the consciousness of the distant “Other” by reading historical elite accounts of history “across the grain” in an attempt to recover the voice and presence of the subaltern. Lastly, I analyze behaviors within advocacy and non-profit initiatives that continue a legacy of silence by co-opting subaltern discourse and impeding self-representation.

History

Subaltern study was conceived as an analytical lens to facilitate a recovered historiography of the presence, voice, and experience of subaltern groups that had been hidden by the dominance of elite historical narrative (O’Hanlon, 1988). The project was hailed as an “inspirational” part of 21st century postcolonial theory, aggressively critiquing existing thought regarding race and imperialism (Ahmed, 2014).

The term subaltern refers to persons who have been overlooked, neglected, disregarded, and treated with indifference (Sahoo, 2014) within nation-state functioning and the political account. The subaltern designation has a long history including definitions applied to peasants, vassals, lower military rank, and theories of class
struggle. Globally, 20th century social and political scholarship experienced a deliberate move away from state-centered historical research. It was during this period that subaltern studies gained recognition in Southeast Asia. In this setting, The Subaltern Studies Group (SSG, 1982-1999) defined subalternity as the composite culture of resistance and acceptance of domination and hierarchy (Ludden, 2002).

Subaltern Studies reinvented subalternity in India (Ludden, 2002). The project, initiated by scholar Ranjit Guha in 1982, intended to examine the relationships of insurgency and nationality between unrest and power. The SSG contended that Indian and British elite accounts of nationalism failed to recognize the subaltern as the maker of his or her own destiny (Chakrabarty, 2000). The cohort was equally disillusioned by colonialist and Marxist interpretations of Indian history that had stripped the common people of agency (Bahl, 1997). The SSG believed that the politics of the common people formed an autonomous political domain, “a space from below,” enclosing historical actors who operated independently of the state-building project. The subalterns were not in political relationship to the elite classes occupying state power in India. This disenfranchisement from the elite spheres of knowledge production resulted in the material and economic marginalization of subaltern groups (Dutta, 2010).

The SSG became aware that colonial power in India had been characterized by two mechanisms of oppression. Hierarchy was entrenched in both the quasi-liberal institutional framework of the British rule and discursive subordination of the less powerful through ideological-symbolic representations and physical force (Chakrabarty, 2000). The cohort now realized that knowledge production through cultural and social control was complicit in the inability of elitist classes to contain the narrative of the
subaltern subject-agent. This required an expanded quest to construct a proper analysis of the subaltern collective conscious and activity (Ahmed, 2014; Sahoo, 2014). The SSG then introduced a more general category of “peasant communal consciousness.” This was a crucial transition: a shift from subaltern through peasant to community.

Two strands of the SSG project were now clear: the first was spatial, positional and hierarchical; the second was discursive, an ethnicized history of power and domination. The popular, subaltern experience of nationality was had now been placed within a historic cleft, isolated from state institutions and the nation’s elite. The arrangement of subalternity manifested in fragmentation: a rigid theoretical barrier that consigned subaltern persons and communities different political and social space (Ludden, 2002). Subalterns, as occupants of a lower floor of social space from which they could not escape, did not truly threaten dominant political structure.

How does one rescue another from the throes of silence, especially when no record has been left? Peasants do not speak directly into archival documents (Chakrabarty, 2000). Subaltern Studies historians turned to the disciplines of literary analysis, anthropology, human geography, and sociology for assistance. The question of texts and power was reflected within the material-political culture of domination itself. Reflective of this, the SSG contended that the secular language of law and constitutional frameworks were instruments of subordination used by national elitists in their control of subaltern populations. To establish subaltern voice and consciousness in history, government documents, reports (census, police, judicial), folk recollection diaries, and interviews were analyzed in certainty that the subaltern voice could be discovered (Sahoo, 2014). Secondly, discursive deconstruction of cultural power was embraced.
within the SSG project, which recognized the failures modernity, positivism, and the Enlightenment. Cohort member Partha Chatterjee declared the SSG task was to fill up the emptiness of record and give the subaltern its own history and development, facilitating comprehension for the full epoch of capitalism and the modern history of globalization. The Raj and elitist national accounts of history were constructed using official data and consigned peasant mass action as pre-political and criminal (Ahmed, 2014). The SSG set out to establish how subaltern insurgency could be read from the gaps and interstices within elitist historical discourses (Lal, 2001).

Several members of the SSG cohort were convinced the project could excavate a pre-individualist inhabiting the pre-capitalist culture where community, not caste, determined worldview (Ahmed, 2014). Chatterjee (1983) contended that Eastern subalterns possessed entirely different psychologies than those of the Western nations. Eastern agency was motivated by duty or obligation rooted in religious orientations. Not surprising then, the Enlightenment was broadly understood as a Western European mode of thinking, a suspect ideology intent on protracting Western dominance beyond colonization (Chibber, 2013). For the SSG, peasant communitarian identity was central to rural politics if one was to recover the voice of the subaltern as subject-agent. An assumption of pre-existent bonds of community was offered as the natural presupposition for collective action (Ahmed, 2014). This collectivity relied substantially on explanations of caste, religion, and village ties in examinations of subaltern consciousness.

**SSG Conclusions**

Several key conclusions came forth from the work of the SSG. One of the initial aims of the project was to provide a reasoned and coherent explanation for non-Western
economic and political development (Ahmed, 2014). Guha surmised that in the case of India, the nationalist bourgeoisie failed to comprehend the universalizing principle of capitalism that would have allowed the interests of non-elite and subaltern interests to be integrated into the capital project. Because semi-feudal relations continued to co-exist with bourgeois property rights, two separate arenas were created: one of the elite, rich minority and the other, a subaltern space occupied by the overwhelming majority of India’s population who were excluded from the nationalist project. This was a condition Guha characterized as “dominance without hegemony” (Chakrabarty, 2000). The universalizing effect of capitalism narrative in India never occurred because the Indian bourgeoisie (contrasted to the “classic” model of the bourgeois) had compromised with the zamindar (feudal landlord) class, securing the distrust of the Indian peasantry.

The SSG asserted that the power relations dictating the conditions of everyday existence for the working subaltern were strictly hierarchal and inegalitarian. Individuals were subjected to rigid social divisions determined by imaginary social divisions of pre-capitalist forms (Bahl, 1997). For example, Varna was a framework for grouping people into castes, first found in Vedic Indian society and in the ancient Indian texts (Gupta, 2000). The four varnas were the Brahmins (priestly people), the Kshatriyas (rulers, administrators and warriors), the Vaishyas (artisans, merchants, tradesmen and farmers), and Shudras (laboring classes). Tribal people and the untouchables (Dalits) were outside of this social order. Dissenting voices within the SSG cohort position insisted the Indian was consistently portrayed as a citizen-subject never present in her own unmaking, instead content to blame the fetishized demon of colonialism for her condition. Dissenters believed that this position was both unproven as fact and disempowering to subaltern
persons, who in fact, had mounted insurrectionist campaigns against elitist rule. The recognition of an autonomous subaltern history as a counter-argument to nationalist metanarrative better afforded the subaltern power in self-creation and freedom of choice.

The expanded project required exploration of an ethnicized history of power and domination, and the SSG scholars gave considerable attention to the interrogation of how arrangements of power/knowledge were controlled in ways that had silenced the subaltern majority. In answering the question, “how do we come to privilege certain archives,” it was crucial to the SSG that the realm of the subaltern was seen as autonomous. If it was not autonomous, one could not analyze the consciousness of the peasant expressed in both relationships and discourse (kinship, caste, religion, protest, etc.) except as persons who possessed a “backwards” sense of the world helplessly confounded by changes they could not understand (Chakrabarty, 2000). Cohort founder Guha insisted that the peasant in colonial India most certainly understood his or her situation correctly and this was substantiated in his mind by the fact that during uprising, the peasant insurgents sought to destroy the symbols of social prestige used by the ruling classes. The cultural studies and critiques undertaken by the SSG ultimately determined that the modern bureaucratic state, as the sole source of oppression, precluded any effective resistance against the power of colonial state (Lal, 2001).

The original discussions and scholarship of the SSG have been taken seriously around the globe as marginalized communities in Africa, Latin America, and other regions have resisted any connection to the center of politico-economic neoliberalism (Spivak, 2000). In what is often seen as the new 21st century battleground, subaltern communities now find themselves caught up in ever increasing forms of MNC/TNC
exploitation in which corporate entities usurp the knowledge bases of subaltern communities by patenting their historic expertise and indigenous resources (Dutta, 2010). The effects of this practice are twofold: the neoliberal institution becomes the financial beneficiary of the knowledge base of another in an unregulated bypass of the State, and the subaltern expert is once again made voiceless and invisible through appropriation of his and her ingenuity and skill.

The Critics Take on the SSG

Internationally, 30 years of reflective consideration have been given to the work undertaken by the SSG. It is important to take assessment of properly developed and well-articulated critiques and criticisms of the project because it is in this discursive space that the argument of the work of this project – the injustice of subaltern discourse – is best comprehended. The basic premise that nationalist or elitist narratives and aggregating metrics do not represent the voices of the marginalized citizen-resident or his or her community is well-defended by other scholars across many disciplines (Alcoff, 1991; Bhabha, 1994; Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1997; Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999; Spivak, 1998). It raises the question if the consideration of subaltern historiography was anything more than a discursive strategy. In other words, has this historiography increased social justice for the world’s most vulnerable and oppressed populations? Many argue that it has not.

A particularly robust criticism of the work produced by the SSG is the essentializing necessity of its premise: subaltern peoples and subaltern cultures are both identities and entities on to themselves. The original undertaking of the SSG was to discover in the texts a primordial, original culture that would be an authentic
representation of subaltern consciousness in a pre-capitalist setting (O’Hanlon, 1988). Bahl (1997) declares representations of primordial loyalties to religion, community, language, etc. as timeless collective conditions (culture) undermine the very sense of power of the subject whom the scholar has sought to restore. Further, to ascribe the subaltern to a particularized domain where they exist as a distinct social form is also essentialism. Dissenters within the SSG project disagreed with the tendency of the group to assign the subalterns absolute, fixed, decontextualized meanings and qualities (Sahoo, 2014). Others claimed that the SSG conclusions regarding the subalterns in India were Orientalist (ideology constructed as a justification for imperialism) in tone and implication. Critics accused the SSG’s championing of subaltern subjects as an offensive essentializing approach based on notions of fixed cultural traits (Ahmed, 2014; Chibber, 2014). In a more moderate assessment, Bahl (1997) questioned how one could erase the past and go back into a pre-British time to search for indigenous frozen culture or determine a pure indigenous past in pure form (p. 381). This particular critique recognizes the evolutionary nature of social processes and cultures. Primordial conceptions of original culture ignore the reality that any fixed point on the continuum of history and geographic space simply represents that moment within change and progression.

Critics also maintained that peasant rebellion and subaltern insurgency cannot be separated empirically or theoretically isolated from the effects of an elitist presence even if such groups are detached from nationalist institutions (Ludden, 2011). Indian politics have always included the activity of both popular insurgency and elite conservatism resulting in conflict-ridden political parties and state regimes. Chakrabarty made such a
point himself during his presentation in Delhi at the 2013 panel discussion on *30 Years of Ranjit Guha’s Elementary Aspects* (CSDS). He stated that public protest and the deliberate use of disorder are the regular instruments of Indian politics that all parties use in negotiation. This social production of disorder regularly impacts the daily lives of all citizens within regions as various political and organized interests declare bandhs (strikes) that mandate the closing of all labor craft, businesses, schools, and public transportation in protest and demonstration. O’Hanlon (1988) was particularly concerned with humanism’s obsessive invocation of origins and its idea of the “self-constituting” subject, calling it a dangerous assumption that a free and autonomous individual represents the highest value (p. 151). While subaltern groups do have their own histories, not given and not represented by elitist powers, their patterns of behavior and ways of understanding are still influenced by the surrounding cultural structures and social fabric within which they exist. Subaltern communities are not isolated havens cut off from the felt effects of the mechanics of institutions and systems from all sectors of society.

By means of example, after New Delhi was selected as the host city for the international 2010 Commonwealth Games, the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) found that over 200,000 forced evictions occurred due to construction and infrastructure updates. These displaced persons included large populations of homeless, slum dwellers, “beggars,” and day laborers (HLRN, 2011). Further, this fact-finding commission found compensation and rehabilitation were not provided to evicted families, even when persons possessed requisite documentary proof. Because of inadequate rehabilitation, many families in Delhi were rendered homeless (p. iv). The HLRN also found that most of the sites from which families were evicted (often in the presence of a
large police force) were left unused or vacant after the completion of the games. The commission contended that the Commonwealth Games “were used as an excuse to demolish informal settlements across the city, as part of the Delhi government’s broader agenda of creating a ‘world class’ and ‘slum-free’ city” (pg. vi). Event tickets for the two-week spectacle ranged from 50 to 50,000 rupees (equivalent of approximately $1 to $750 U.S.). The multi-national sport competition was not a venue designed with the subaltern sport spectator in mind. Yet, the subaltern experienced homelessness and displacement through institutional policy decisions made to enhance the prestige of the State-building project. Through policy implementation, the government declared which citizen populations were considered culturally appropriate for 21st century India and which were not.

The Subaltern and Cultural Division

Cultural identity does involve adopting the worldview and behavioral practices that unite individuals within a community, and the discipline of social psychology attempts to describe the role of these cultural variables that underlie organizational behavior. It recognizes, as several critics of the SSG project also expressed, that cultural identities are impacted by the social power bases within the environment and the extent to which actors exerting power enforce socially oppressive or culturally privileged aspects of the majority culture (Miller, 2008; Prieto & Schwatken, 2011). Zygmunt Bauman (1996) wrote, “One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs … to place oneself, to make sure people accept this placement proper, so that both sides know how to go on in each other’s presence” (p. 19). Grossberg (2010) questions the tendency to organize every struggle over power around issues of identity. The
institutional realm can affect both the actions and reactions of individuals as well as moderate the effects of more proximal interpersonal relations and intra-psychic experience.

A tendency in our exploration of the individual “other” is to exhibit correspondence bias and explain behavior in terms of internal, dispositional attributes even when the behavior is constrained by external, situational forces (Koenig & Dean, 2011). O’Hanlon (1998) warned that the conclusions of the SSG group turned the silence of the subaltern into speech through a process of rendering their figures in the privileged academic’s self-image (p. 164). In other words, the subaltern was reconstituted as a disenfranchised version of the researchers involved, reflecting the needs and conceptions of freedom and political agency in the culture of the scholar.

I defend the necessity of recognizing the importance of the cultural particularities of communities bound by common customs, production, and systems of belief as the SSG had attempted to do. However, I submit that the group was too eager to generalize their findings and has instead created a universalizing effigy of “The Subaltern” when instead subaltern populations interact with and are interacted upon in widely diverse geographic-historic settings even within the same nation-state. Chibber (2013) has criticized the SSG for its failure to recognize the universalism behind the needs of the subaltern (physical health, the pursuit of well-being, insurrection against domination). The conclusions of the SSG, perhaps unintentionally, created a universalized subaltern monolith, an ice floe as it were, adrift in the same sea as the paternal glacier from which it had broken away having no sense of the reciprocal effects of the mutual waters they share. Barbara Weinstein (2013) has stated that the subaltern community in the process of confronting the state is
also transformed. The SSG underestimated this mutual transformation and portrayed the subaltern as impervious to the subjugating practices of the ruling elite. Subalterns are portrayed as a wholly distinct socio-political formations and space within the nation-state project. In his 2011 retrospective presentation, SSG scholar Dinesh Chakrabarty stated it was the intent of Guha to not delineate faces within the crowd, contending that it was just such facelessness that makes a crowd a political force. However, Chakrabarty also recognized that the SSG’s over-reliance on the structuralist popular theory of the day was too easily mistaken as Orientalism in its insistence on cultural codes. A fixated focus on texts and discursive theory sometimes distracts from the felt needs of people, creating further isolation.

Inevitably, this defense of a coherent and autonomous subaltern cultural consciousness has led to one of the more substantial errors of the project: its failure to recognize the diversity and oppression that exists within subaltern communities themselves. In other words, who are the subalterns within the subaltern community? This requires individuation. The answers that come in response to this question are both contemporary and globally relevant. Bahl (1997) contended if the intention is to remove the elitist bias from history and empower people, one needs to ascertain what one’s politics are when scholars raise certain questions over others. Bahl insisted that assertion of collective community activity discursively organized under the guise of peasant consciousness was imbued with the qualities of consensus. This allowed for the impression that there is an absence of relationships of power within the subaltern communities.
Contestations of power do exist within subaltern communities, and it should be acknowledged that the subaltern quest for social justice must also be characterized by true gender and caste justice that is often missing within such social movements (Desai, 2015). Contemporary translocal nodes (geographic and cultural systems identified with more than one location) of subaltern protest are still beset with internal tensions related to lack of formal structure, support, and exclusion of women stakeholders affected by such political injustices. In her research in India, Desai found lack of formal structures allowed male elders and leaders to make decisions informally and exclude input from women stakeholders. Gendered division of labor within many subaltern communities prohibits understanding of how dispossession and disenfranchisement preclude the ability to develop sustainable strategies and systems of change that represent the needs of all members within translocal communities. In the cases where women are included in the public space of struggle, they often are ultimately excluded from the more authoritative space of where decisions and rulings are made (meetings, spontaneous gathering, people’s court). Desai also found in some rural communities when women were elected to the position of sarpanch (head) in the village panchayat (under the rule of 33% of seats reserved for women) it was a male relative that truly wielded the political power (p. 135). She called upon subaltern and other social movements to explicitly address and root out gender inequality and patriarchal power, as it is a concern for all community stakeholders.

Feminist writer Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) offers an important mediating consideration here: there is no universal patriarchal framework. Patriarchy is not a conspiratorial, ahistorical power structure. Balances of power analyzed within particular
groups and cultural settings are situated within material, economic, and political circuits that are complicit in gender injustice. Social reform that reflects the needs and interests of all who live inside its boundaries and confronts exclusion from opportunity and wellbeing is true justice. While this subject is addressed at length in the upcoming chapter, it is prudent at this juncture to state it is inadequate to address the state of the marginalized community at the expense of overlooking the oppression further perpetrated by the oppressed within the group itself. These are co-existing violent injustices that require deconstruction and reform if we profess to be advocates of true social justice.

Individuals are the ultimate units of concern.

**Individuals and Self-Representation**

In what is conceivably the most familiar critique of the SSG work, Gayatri Spivak (1988) in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” took the project to task for its inability to recover the voice of the presence of the subaltern due to their privileged and distanced positions as those who use different discourse and devises in their representation of such groups. Spivak reminded the academic community that representation is not only a matter of speaking *about* but also speaking *for* another. She asserted the conditions required for the subaltern voice to be restored would necessitate their ability to use the communication mechanisms of the formally educated and elitist sectors of the population from whom they are relegated as estranged by the SGG project. Her conclusion: if the subaltern were to possess such capacity, they would not be subaltern at all.

This issue of representation is the crux of the injustice of subaltern discourse. While problematic depictions are perpetrated in a tremendous number of socio-political circuits and not limited to the scholarly domain, the privileging of peer-reviewed scholars
is not inconsequential. Alcoff (1991) called this the crisis of representation, explaining that in the act of representing another’s voice (needs, goals, situation, and in fact, who they are) one participates in the construction of their subject-positions rather than simply discovering the true selves of others. Referencing Foucault, Alcoff contended that the positionality or location of the speaker/writer and the discursive context is as important in determining the truth and validity as is the message itself. Meaning is connected to politics, and power relations of domination, exploitation, and subordination constitute rituals of speaking. “Who is speaking, who is spoken of, and who listens is a result … an act of political struggle” (p. 12). I believe the SSG cohort members understood this. Their quest was to rectify unbalanced accounts of histories produced in elitist circles that had scripted the experiences of subaltern political action simply as disruptive or unacceptable to the state building project. What the SSG overestimated, however, was its ability to be the effective, near-representation of voice for a community with which it shared no lived experience, both in sequential time and in socio-political space. This error was due to their heavy reliance upon the ideology of structuralism. Both Alcoff and Spivak contended that the practice of speaking with and speaking to others is a more appropriate advocacy, a mediating space in between paternalistic representations and the unacceptable retreat into political silence. Their stated assumptions were oppressed persons who were not able to speak for themselves. Subaltern speech cannot transparently convey self-interest and was void of liberatory effect (Alcoff, p. 17). While Alcoff offered an almost postscript qualification acknowledging that to ignore the subaltern’s own speech was continued “imperialism,” her main trajectory that speaking
with and speaking to subaltern people offers a true possibility for accurate and ethical representation of others is one I understand differently.

As I develop in the upcoming chapters, those of us who advocate on behalf of those within marginalized and oppressed communities must acknowledge the priority of presence and self-representation. Advocates must better attend to the answers of the subaltern when asking, “How can I best understand and support your goals? How do you understand the political processes within your family, within your community, and within your State?” Equally importantly, we must learn more just and respectful means of negotiating our involvement with the central stakeholders who are entitled to define their needs and desired outcomes for equal recognition, self-determination and political participation. Such self-regulation requires invitation and levels of understanding and regard for a litany of widely varied, defensible world-views that we have not taken seriously within community global development and justice discourse and advocacy. It is however, very contested and slippery ground, wrought at times with significant hazards.

**Institutional Behaviors**

While it may seem that an analysis of institutional behaviors is difficult to distinguish from discourse, I intend to interrogate the structural environment, the functioning, and policies of the State and NGOs as they vie, sometimes as allies and in other instances as competitors, for the authority and resources to target subaltern and other marginalized peoples. The effects of the intentions and outcomes of both actors are not neutral. Our writing, visual representations, use of public media and networks, and the reports we produced are edited, encapsulated accounts of subaltern life orchestrated for specific purposes. What is discursively labeled as frame or narrative is, in fact,
political positioning and propaganda where the subaltern subject-agent is fragmented into subject or agent based upon the outcomes that State or NGO entities are hopeful to achieve.

The relationship of the State and NGO/INGO should be examined because the trend in global development finds the Nation-State not leading from the front, but instead promoting new modes of national development through NGOs, civil organizations and the market. Researcher Sarah C. White (1999) found that the advent of NGOs as “agents of development par excellence” (p. 308) has come at the cost of diminishing the validity of the State. NGOs present themselves as a solution between the authoritarian State and savage market capitalism at the vanguard of civil society (Khan, Westwood & Boje, 2010). The State and the NGO often posit themselves as oppositional benefactors in a struggle to establish identities as the legitimate voice of the people in the pursuit of limited, yet significant overseas aid. In her study of Bangladesh, White (1999) found that The World Bank frequently compared NGO activities favorably with those of the State and recommended the expansion of NGO presence and work to supplement government efforts. The World Bank reconfigured the State-NGO relationship as collaborative and mutually beneficial and exerted enormous influence upon the course of development for many emergent nations because of the resources the entity has power to withhold or release. While it is arguably the case that such mutuality legitimizes the NGO while securing material and ideological support for State internal politics, it is most important to determine if such arrangements bring true, sustainable opportunity and afford social justice for the marginalized “poor” themselves.
There are other considerations as well. While NGOs may possess greater flexibility than State governments to create a diverse portfolio of works through their focus on target populations, they also have far less regulated accountability for their projects and outcomes. Most importantly, the NGO is highly beholden to its financial support base, which means that the entities’ ambitions and potential altruism are not unfettered. In this situation, non-profit and non-government organizations are far more attentive to the ideological positions and power of their support base than the felt needs of the people in underserved communities. White (1999) cites the concerns of Pearce that behind the NGO debates about the ideation of civil society, the activities of such institutions might present receiving communities “with a Trojan horse which gains entry for its progressive livery but carries quite a different cargo within” (p. 324). Misrepresentations and hidden agendas are significant concerns, but equally important is the privatization of public services such as education, health care, jobs creation, and utilities such as water, food production and energy. Privatization absolves the State from providing reasonable levels of infrastructure and services to all of its citizen-residents, instead relegating the care of the most vulnerable populations to the care of corporations, whether profit or non-profit. A contractarian understanding of social equity serves to remind us that the State and the resident-citizen are bound together in mutual responsibility and obligation. Handing the baton to unregulated and uneven NGO support and services simply increases the institutional presence involved in marginalizing populations and creating inequity.

I offer the example of our own 2009 grassroots project to establish non-profit educational centers in “underdeveloped” villages in northern India. While a holistic
account of the experience is multi-layered and characterized by complexity this particular illustration is germane to the point at hand. As licensed professional educators with a combined experience of over two decades of public and private sector educations, our small group established English and technology literacy centers in village communities on the remote outskirts of a quickly developing urban gateway corridor to the Himalayas. Urbanization was accelerating, and road signs, business boards, and the urban retail and industries of the area were increasingly produced in the English language. Depending upon the existing area school, basic English language classes were conducted anywhere between 45 minutes and five hours a week. Hands-on technology classes were not part of any regular curriculum or instruction in classes lower than the high school level.

Children in these villages were by overwhelming margin the first in their families to have the opportunity to participate in formal education. They are the first literate generation of their people. Our intentions were twofold. First, we planned to supplement the mainstream education children received in their village schools. Second, we wanted to train and equip local nationals to continue provide the children with skills and tools that would allow them to better integrate into the development that characterized the expanding urban center.

We had been connected to the area tangentially for some years through an associate who had married an Indian national residing in the vicinity. They were now the parents of nine children by birth and adoption. The couple communicated a desire to have such an education available to their children, expressing dismay at the low quality of the education available in the area government schools. We made two survey trips and determined that India was better use of our skills and training because there was an
expressed need for English and technology skills in an area where candidates for the task were extremely limited.

Having no formal training in the establishment and administration of non-profit enterprise, we entered the area solely based on the descriptions given by our friends and the two nominal explorations of the area villages. We began formalizing the work of the educational centers, relying heavily upon the advice and direction of our Indian associates who lived outside the village centers and were of different social and language community. These were ground-up enterprises entailing the necessity of attending Hindi language school, securing locations for the centers, constructing facilities, purchasing equipment, developing curriculum, recruiting students and national instructors, and teaching English and computer classes. Offering quality education to all students regardless of caste, ethnicity, or material means seemed like an important, logical goal for the benefit of the community and the development of the nation-state.

However, we had not consulted with the local panchayat (leadership) or the village parents to ask what they desired for their own community, we only sought their permission to enter the community after we had determined that literacy would our focus. In addition, we had relied exclusively upon the representations of the villagers given by middle-class, college educated adults who lived outside the daily experience of the people. While many village children and young persons aged three to twenty-two were excited to learn these new skills, we had not accounted for the fact that there was absolutely no infrastructure available to them in order to apply the new competence that they had acquired. When we began our initiative, there were minimal taps available for government water. Many dwellings still were not connected to the power grid. The roads
were unpaved and regularly flooded during monsoon. The economy within the communities was based upon manual labor and small family-owned storefronts offering food staples and simple services such as STD phones and two photocopy machines. Our national partners did not have previous experience in the formal economic sector and were unfamiliar with employment that was structured by timeliness and the rigorous scheduling of multi-leveled class. For many families regular, compulsory attendance did not align with their household requisites where older children needed to be available to take care of the younger children so that both parents could work in the quarry, construction, or domestic service. Religious ceremonies, gatherings, pujas and festivals received priority over the demands of education and study for both the children and the parents. My intent is not to portray the nature of all Indian communities whether rural or urban, agricultural or industrial-tech. It is not. This account, however, is accurate for the villages where we were. Most importantly, it was the community’s right and prerogative to define their priorities. We have always insisted that involvement in cross-cultural community development needed to be at the expressed invitation of the national stakeholders who best comprehended their needs. However, we did not distinguish carefully enough that invitation by Indian persons who lived outside of the village communities and who occupied dissimilar socio-political space was not the same as antecedent readiness within the community itself.

Under such circumstances, it would have been more socially just for us to form coalition with the local leadership and the public schools to work toward State-supported initiatives to address the flailing infrastructure of the area and explore the possibilities of integrating such supplemental programs within the formal schooling process. Privatized
educational experiences do not afford all children in the area the same educational access, opportunities or choices and exacerbate overall inequality. Additionally, this account illustrates the inadequacy of sincere proclamations that education alone is the transformative solution for marginalized or disenfranchised populations. Education without sufficient infrastructure, political ingress, economic stability, and environmental health does not remedy the complex conditions of poverty.

We learned what Khan et. al (2010) have described as resistance to Western imbrications in the complexities and power relations configured by postcolonial conditions and their continued effects through NGO endeavors in the Global South. The authors claimed NGOs move away from a political mobilization/advocacy perspective to one of providing technical support through development projects that do not address the underlying political and economic structural inequalities that generate poverty (p. 1421). Importantly, Khan et al. also note separation of indigenous people from their own history and diminishment of their cultural values results in profound psychic trauma. This separation has resulted in the local community’s perception that NGOs are working to support the imposition of Western values and beliefs. As US educators, we did believe that it was of highest priority that children in the village communities were entitled to the same quality educational experiences as their urban and sub-urban counterparts hailing from middle-class homes and neighborhoods. Many activists and researchers across the international grid support this contention (Girl Rising, Global Partnership for Education, Education for All, The Mala Fund, etc.). However, when operating within another’s community, what is most important to any development initiative is how the near stakeholders involved perceive the effort.
This conclusion has been substantiated by other studies conducted in Southeast and Middle Eastern corridor. In their work in Pakistan, Kahn et.al (2010) found that a Western-led Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative in coalition with an international NGO coalition was rife with challenges and unintended consequences although the stated goals were achieved. The Atlanta Project was established in response to the outrage in Western nations regarding Pakistani child labor in the soccer ball industry. The project had two distinct but convergent objectives: to restructure labor practices within the soccer ball industry and disbursement of microcredit for affected families, which included an educational program for the children. The research on this project involved 110 local Pakistanis (stitcher labor force, NGO and manufacturer stakeholders) who participated in semi-structured interviews over the course of three years. The results highlight the hazards and complexities of Western initiatives in developing regions of South Asia.

The national manufacturers characterized the initiative as political-economic interference developed by Western entities to undermine Pakistan’s sovereignty and development. A local firm manager stated that the West sent all the material and the dirty work to Pakistan, and then used international law and fined the national firms during production (p. 1424). The local NGO workers stated international donor influence interfered with their ability to actually to serve the stitchers and their respective families. The quality of services and programs were sacrificed in order to meet donor quantitative outcomes such number of community organizations established and numbers credits dispersed to such entities (p. 1425). Most seriously, however, is the fact that the objective of ending child labor did not align with the expressed needs of the labor force itself that
had been working towards broader labor rights such as fair wages, job security, and safe, sanitary workplace conditions. Distrust and resentment towards the Atlanta project developed within the local communities. Kahn et.al (2010) found that Western supporters could promote the Atlanta Project as highly successful by declaring the industry had become 95% child labor free (p. 1429). The supporters did not publicize, however, that household incomes of former stitcher families had plummeted. Perhaps the quote from one NGO labor monitor best sums it up the effort, “Great success in eliminating child labor but … we have failed to protect children” (p. 1427).

In short summary, resistance signals concern. Response to resistance falls along a broad continuum that could require aborting a project initiative on one end or the need for better communication and inclusion of more local stakeholders as decision makers on the other. Both examples highlight the a priori importance of the local, national stakeholders who lives are directly affected by social justice development efforts.

As shown, institutional behaviors often impede the path to greater social justice through fragmentation of services, resulting in uneven opportunities or access and negative causal impacts. In contrast, the institution of the media is almost ubiquitous and very few are beyond the reach of its messaging and influence. I do not deliberate the effects of mass media commodities like television, social networks, or advertising, etc. here because much work has been done in this area. My focus is upon frames and portrayals of marginalized groups produced and distributed by State and civic institutions in forms such as reports, promotional literature, fund raising appeals, and organizational websites.
In one such study, Dogra (2011) analyzed one year’s worth of public fundraising and advocacy messages disseminated by 11 UK-based INGOs during the period of 2005-2006. Dogra found that Western-situated organizations continue to use imagery in their campaigns in ways that reinforce Orientalist and colonizing representation of those whom she describes as majority women (those regularly associated with the Third World or Global South). The dominant visual frames employed by INGOs consistently depict majority women as mothers and nurturers, typifying such women as good traditional, moral, and religious persons whose backwardness makes them the perfect receptors for radical change under development initiatives.

Specific objections that Dogra raised against such visual frames relate to the corresponding narratives that are implied in imaged discourse. First, as women were graphically represented as needy persons in the roles as mothers and household domestic keepers, it facilitates Western voyeurism into the highly contested debates surrounding the public vs. private sphere and reinforces a patriarchal culture that “puts women in their place” (p. 336). The overwhelming absence of men (appearing in only 9% of images) energized the narrative that men in the majority world are problems for the women because they treat women badly and abandon their families. Second, promotional materials consistently portrayed majority women in contrast to women from the developed world in almost binary opposition. The majority woman was often displayed in her domestic setting, while women from the developed world appeared protesting or clashing with police and politicians within the same visual space of the fund raising appeal. The liberated woman from the developed world was now the discursive savior-parent for the victimized and helpless woman trapped in her Third-World condition.
Dogra’s argument against such representations is not that certain situations are true or untrue. There are women in the Third World who do take care of their homes and nurture their children. This is still labor, however. What is dishonest was the manipulation of a population base that cannot be aggregately represented within one frame. Women in developed nations also take care of their homes and nurture their children. Many women in majority nations regularly take part in public protests and self-identify as political citizens. Within the subaltern communities, women often choose to focus their time and work within the private family realm. Domestic labor contributes to community well being and sustainability and therefore, cannot be dismissed in models of development. It is equally true that women in the majority world express dissatisfaction with restricted access to the public realms of the formal labor market, public education, and mainstream political participation due to gender-constructed codes and restrictions based upon their sex. However, when women within a political space, whether geo-historic, or socio-political, are repeatedly portrayed only as downtrodden, backward, repressed, and needy for the purpose of raising monies for foreign-based NGOs, a great injustice has occurred. Aid agencies visually appropriate their “tragic condition” not only to garner support, but then women from the majority world must also pose with donor gifts such as new clothes, eyeglasses, books, hygiene kits, food, or temporary shelters to validate the credibility and effectiveness of the benefactor agency.

Visual exploitation was one of the earliest breaks with accepted humanitarian practices that our NGO needed to confront. The converse would never be accepted. Imagine, in light of the very real circumstances of nuclear-armed international disagreements and climate change, the US faced a devastating, broad-based catastrophe
that rendered vast portions of the energy and food production grids inoperable – hundreds of thousands of US citizens now in need of aid and assistance from outside sources. It would be intolerable to Americans to be told that they must adorn donated clothes, pose with health and medical devices, and carry lanterns and blankets in order that photos could to be sent to the gifting benefactors overseas. There would be unprecedented outrage under these circumstances.

Feminist writer Uma Narayan (2004) shared, “Politically, we face interesting questions whose answers hinge on the nature and extent of the communication we think possible between different groups” (p. 219). She believed that it is mistaken to move from the thesis that knowledge is constructed and representations socially situated to declarations that those who are located differently can never attain any understanding of another’s experience. Still, her conclusion is much the same as the one offered in this examination: it is those who are oppressed who have the most salient insights into the conditions of their oppression. How such persons express their understanding, needs and emotional responses within the context of their situation are “legacy” that provides lucid insight and intelligence to the conditions at hand (p. 220). The high demands of relationship and mutuality are conditions between persons that develop over the course of extended time and within proximity. It is simply not possible to become the proxy for subaltern presence and self-representation. It is all the more impossible to act justly in the representations of others when the complexities of professional advancement, academic or organizational reputation, neoliberal expansion, benefactor mission, or religious conversion are ultimately the intended outcomes for attention given to subaltern persons.
This leads us to the bedrock consideration of subaltern advocacy: what are the ethics upon which such an undertaking may even exist?
Chapter Three: Ethics for Negotiating Identity

In our relationships with one another, we face a vast array of ideological, political, and ontological proposals upon which we base our understanding of each other and the common planetary space that we inhabit. As individuals, we construct the ethical foundations with which we conduct our lives. As groups and communities, increased complex variables collide as we consider collectively what it means to live in a just and virtuous world. Humankind is a single moral community that entitles individuals to live according to different modes of lives (Appiah, 2012).

Robust ethical underpinnings are needed if one is to respect the equal worthy of the life of another whose worldview and life experience is historically, ecologically, and culturally defined in ways different than one’s own. I argue for a cosmopolitan ethic that recognizes the human dignity of each life in our global community and defends the right of persons to establish diverse, non-violent social-political structures and codes that best define their ability to experience well-being and fulfilled lives within their chosen affiliations. In addition, I defend the need for participatory democracy as a replacement for representative, utilitarian democratic politicking that has marginalized larger and larger numbers of global lives under neo-liberalism. The world’s most vulnerable populations are perpetually unrepresented by the policies and narratives of the elite. These political institutions construct systems that disproportionately punish or criminalize persons seeking to dislodge dominant practices that harm their communities. Ultimately, global citizens need to reinvent the civic health and social fabric of our human relations if we are to achieve true, proactive and comprehensive justice.
Tenets of Ethical Cosmopolitanism

People are the ultimate units of concern. The proper view of individualism incorporates the rights of people to influence the communal forms that society takes and to define the terms of the social contracts that unite them in near and global kinship (van Hooft, 2014). A cosmopolitan vision offers viable concepts for global justice because of its emphasis on the equal moral worth of all people in the world. Cosmopolitanism recognizes that global citizens have real, baseline obligations to each another as a human community living varied existences and embracing distinct worldviews. The cosmopolite is a committed lover of humanity in the face of unfavorable political and social constructions of tribalism, ethnicism, and nationalism. Within the cosmopolitan frame, identification is constructed on the recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group or ideal within the natural closure of solidarity (Hall, 1996).

Importantly, cosmopolitan theorists contend that justification of human rights must be constructed in terms that are acceptable to all peoples of the world “irrespective of cultural traditions or systems of belief” (van Hooft, 2014). There is often confusion surrounding the possibility that individuals living in the jurisdictions of nation-states can be meaningfully connected to and concerned with the whole of global humanity. Questions arise concerning the place of affection and affiliation to those who are not close to us (Himmelfarb, 1996). How can one ignore the givens in life: parents, ancestors, family, race, tradition, and community – none accidental attributes of the individual? But to conflate cosmopolitan ideology with the necessity of forsaking nation, near relational ties and group loyalties mischaracterizes its intention to defend universal sociability and
moral community as obligations that we cannot neglect. Ultimately, to the pragmatist like myself, the necessity of adopting a particular name for one’s personal operating system in order to gain entrance into the critiques of political normative theory pales in comparison to pulling at the seams of intentions and outcomes of our policy and actions that continue to multiply manifestations of Other-Enemy and Other-Adversary instead of Sojourner-Friend.

As we comprehend a global condition marked by conflict, environmental degradation, and human suffering, it would be unethical to deliberately distance ourselves from all those who require our support and political presence. Although very real mistakes of colonial burden have occurred in transnational initiatives and humanitarian projects, the global community is nonetheless morally beholden to address injustice that deprives any individual in any political space the opportunity to know health, fulfillment, peace and security. The differences between us do not preclude meaningful possibilities of friendship, compassion and empathy based upon what is best in the human condition. The principles upon which we establish relationship are a matter of ethics. How one sees oneself as bound in obligation to the concerns and needs of others is the underlying persuasion that motivates involvement in another life.

Our interconnected world is woven together on the tension wires of economic expansion, territorial alliance, and military advantage. There is no isolationist economy in the world today. Globalization is characterized by dynamism, shifting powers, technology, multilateral international agreements, environmental instability, and insecurity for wellbeing (Ki-moon, 2007). In our transnational interactions it would be hard to support the argument that we have understood one another well. Under such a
yoke, development and prosperity, justice and equality have manifested unevenly within state borders and between the global states.

Instead of choosing to accept the diversity of global peoples and communities, differences are, instead, a threat to be controlled or destroyed. Racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and ageism continue to draw dividing lines through populations that define the political spaces of opportunity and oppression. Cultural identities and ecological knowledge continue to be asserted within interpretations of sovereignty. Often, rights-based discourse and advocacy is championed as empowering and transformative to conditions of marginalization. Yet, it is also derided as more Western-imperial enterprise forced upon developing nations and the Global South in the continued paternalistic vein of colonial saviorism. Humanitarian aid and transnational activism are often perceived as an ethical imperative in response to suffering and inequality. Conversely, such aid and advocacy are also condemned as interference in internal State affairs and an instrument that deepens entrenchment of subaltern disenfranchisement through privatization of public services. Each of these seemingly contradictory conditions is true in the interconnected and interdependent 21st century world.

Securing justice remains a government responsibility, and it is squarely incumbent upon the world’s state institutions to act justly on behalf of global humanity. Fundamental rights are only words, unless and until they are made real by government action (Nussbaum 2001). Ethics and moral theory scholar Stan van Hooft (2014) contends that the framework of justice is not the only framework regulating the human life. The ethics of caring in which human beings are bound in love, affection, and concern to each other and the environment also regulates our existence.
Justice demands that we confront what is owed to another person because we all share equal human worth. It is here that van Hooft sees the responsibility of the cosmopolite in thriving alignment with the human capabilities approaches of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. The regard that society has for human dignity is revealed in the equal respect that each individual receives from the laws and institutions that govern her life. The human development approach, founded upon substantial freedoms, serves to evaluate the real opportunities that citizens or subjects possess to do and be what they have reason to value (Nussbaum, 2011). Human rights proponents such as van Hooft understand that obligations and rights within global human community are symmetrical: people have such rights because we have relational obligations to one another. Martha C. Nussbaum (2011) proposed that the human development approach is negotiated through diverse geo-historic political space and across global communities with the goal to justly frame the minimum threshold of capabilities that all governments should support for all people. The capability approach emphasizes that freedom to achieve wellbeing is a matter of real opportunities and whether a person has access to conditions in which she can pursue her ultimate ends (Robeyns, 2011). Nussbaum acknowledges the close ideological link between capabilities and human rights: the premise that all people have some core entitlements just by virtue of their humanity, and it is the basic duty of society to respect these entitlements. She also argues that richer nations have duties of aid to poor nation, as do corporations, transnational agencies and individuals. Nations that have built their wealth through the human and natural resource extraction of global communities owe these disadvantaged societies support and aid. In their articulation of capabilities, theorists like Sen and Nussbaum find enough similarity in global humanity to propose a
broad framework that addresses shared elements of human experience yet allows persons affiliated to communities and States to negotiate the particular outworkings of such in light of pluralistic values encountered in diversity.

In her human development model, Nussbaum proposed ten central capabilities that she considers essential to the life of the individual. These central capabilities address the rights to human life of normal length characterized by bodily health and bodily integrity. Humankind is entitled to agency in reproduction, food and water security, freedom from assault, and means of shelter. All persons possess sense and imagination, and need freedom to imagine, think, reason and express emotions. Humankind requires freedom to choose attachment and affiliation with others. Control over one’s environment related to political participation, employment, play and property are principle needs related to social justice and human flourishing. The premise of Nussbaum’s proposal is that universal needs of all persons in all places necessitate entitlement to these capabilities.

Psychologist John Berry (2011) believes both individual and cultural universals do exist. At the individual level, all persons need to develop and learn, perform speech or communication, and practice norm observance. In the case of shared cultural attributes all peoples have tools, share language, create social structures through rules and norms, and devise social institutions related to justice or formal relationships, for example. Yet, individuals develop and express universals differently in response to ecological and cultural contexts. Culture is carried collectively and individuals are in a position to influence and change their cultural accomplishments and understanding. Opportunities and constraints for cultural norms and formation are environment dependent. Cultural
competencies are developments adaptive to the ecological context and nurtured by activities of daily life. This eco-cultural framework rejects the idea that some cultures or behaviors are more advanced or more developed than others. It recognizes, instead, that universals manifest differently based on the interaction and reciprocal relationships in an ecological system. Populations are adaptive, and the individual and culture are co-constitutive. Berry concludes, “This search for our common humanity can only be pursued by observing our diversity” (p. 96).

These articulations of solidarity transcend the bounds of community and state and emphasize the moral imperative that binds humanity as a location of free and equal individuals (Jabri, 2007). Here, rather than static and normative, the universal becomes the sphere in which political contestation and negotiation take place. Cultural diversity and cultural affiliation and their related articulations are located in the public arena and afforded equal political worth (p. 724). Solidarities arising in the broad global domain secure their legitimacy from local communities and agents (Walker, 1988). Within these conditions the subaltern voice manifests and negotiates her presence: the insurrectionary mode of articulation and collective action through chosen affiliation and solidarity as one’s constituent political right. This crafting of self-determination and emancipation releases one from external definitions and representations of her identity.

**Critics of Cosmopolitanism**

The common charge against cosmopolitan ideology is that it is an elitist philosophy that only persons of privilege could conceive to be serviceable and friendly to all global persons. For such critics, cosmopolitanism is very deeply implicated in the imagination and practices of empire building and capitalism comprised of “a comfortable
culture of middle-class travelers, intellectuals and businessmen” (Brennan 2001, p. 77; Roa, 2012). Missions to modernize, civilize, and liberalize are entangled in modes of ordering hierarchies that are culturally defined in terms of Western liberalism (i.e. fully modern and cosmopolitan) and the rest of the world steeped in constraining traditionalism (Jabri, 2007). There are some liberal cosmopolitans who do conceive of a community of humankind solidified in institutional frameworks of law (Singer, 1979; Bohman, 2001). This liberal invention establishes an autonomous modern self who is operational within a rationally constituted public arena distinct from the affiliations and institutions of the private sphere. The realm of the international, configured by the proposition of sovereign statehood, is challenged and held accountable to the realm of the human (Jabri, 2007). Repudiating particular ethnic and community solidarities, sovereignty (rights of self-determination) in this light is conditional upon how States treat their citizens (Roa, 2012). Therefore, what has been framed as an emancipatory political project that claims solidarity with the whole of humankind subject to violence, poverty and injustice, becomes complicit in such practices because liberal cosmopolitanism fails to acknowledge the similar false promises of colonial expansion (Jabri, 2007). A liberal understanding of solidarity presumes the primacy of human rights as the basis for the constitution of all global persons and the sphere of operations in which others can legitimately intervene “upon behalf of humanity” (p. 722). Yet, such humanitarian intervention discourse served to justify war and invasion (Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, East Timor, Afghanistan) and further entrench the false ideology of the exceptionalism of Western-Eurocentric nations and the inferiority of the Global South.
Postcolonial thinkers are concerned that the benchmarks and qualifiers set in place in the name of rights-based ideations of modernity, development, and good governance invariably create hierarchies and differentiated domains of power. Those with the material resources, technological capacity, and the correct moral pedigree are to be considered in compliance. Yet, privileging First-World conceptions of development ignores the history of colonization and imperialism that is responsible for the resource extraction and asset depletion that define today’s global conditions of inequity and uneven development. Troubling binaries conceived as civilized/uncivilized, advanced/backward, and developed/developing characterize the “Eurocentric notion that civilization and humanity are measured by a society’s distance from nature—by its willingness to control nature through science and technology to serve human ends” (Gonzalez, 2015, p. 168). Equally troubling to critics, a cosmopolitan ideology appears to “privilege systems of knowledge that confer legitimacy to modes of representation that elevate the liberated self in relation to the rescued other” (p. 724).

If one perceives that the purposed solidarity of one global humanity sharing a common biosphere further abuses formally colonized nation-states with the intent to extend imbalances of power and development, then cosmopolitanism is an unwanted superstructure imposed for a world capitalist market. Cosmopolitanism’s universal sociability is needed for trade and commerce (Roa, 2012). Neoliberalism’s promised link between growth and equity has not been straightforward, especially in regions where it is needed most, namely where the environmental costs of economic activity are borne by the poor, by future generations, and by other countries (Seghezzo, 2009). From colonialism to the present, the North’s appropriation of the South’s natural resources for
the purposes of economic expansion has trapped nations in vicious cycles of poverty and environmental degradation, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, that will constrain the development options of generations to come (Gonzalez, 2015). The first industrialized nations were also globally dominant powers able to control external development factors to their advantage (Udombana, 2000). Propositions of an abstract “global community” are highly distrusted when community building is understood as a process that perpetuates the norms of the privileged, marginalizes segments with different values, and promotes assimilation and homogeneity (Minkler, 2006).

If this liberal premise were the best that global citizenship has to offer, it would be invalid for considerations of transnational human relations. However, this is not the case. The conception of global citizenship I defend recognizes humanity’s shared attributes and capacities distributed across vast geo-historic space, articulated in some 6500 world languages, constructed in widely diverse community-based affinities, and expressed in innumerable configurations of contingent lived experience. It is a world symphony purposed for discovery, ingenuity, and harmony, which instead often finds itself recounting the record of pain and injustice. Peace replaced by conflict. Stability usurped by insecurity. Abundance reduced to scarcity. Dignity diminished to utility. Friendship erased by prejudice.

One of the robust arguments for the recognition of humankind as a single moral community is that all people are bound by vulnerability and subject to suffering. Linklater (2007) contended that apprehension of the potential harmful effects of actions on others is essential in order to respect the principles of moral responsibility intrinsic to every social group. Capacities for empathy with others, and the separate but related moral
ability to sympathize with suffering others, are the foundations on which all moral codes rest (p. 141). While the ubiquitous nature of suffering and trial may be woven into the fabric of lived experience, and while it may be a natural response to grab the shrittail of one falling down the stairs in front of you (whether by instinct or social conditioning, it matters not), I find the argument that one is bound in sympathy with the hardship of another entirely inadequate for the preeminent basis of solidarity. Humankind is fashioned with capacity for growing, learning, creating, contributing, and relating. Solidarity should be built upon our mutual potential, not our shared vulnerability. Global citizenship should be based upon our ability to flourish our in life circumstances if we are supported in our freedoms for choice, affiliation, and development (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Put simply, all persons must possess the ability to convert rights into lived experience.

Within these terms of engagement, a variety of diverse worldviews are defensible. Therefore, ideations of just development and democratic governance cannot be declared normative by any one nation, regional confederacy, or even a global confederacy until these institutions acknowledge the validity of the diverse convictions claimed by all persons of goodwill to define equitable justice and peaceful order for their own communities. Each state is plagued by its own inability to live up to its ideals and is entangled in contestations with its own marginalized people who insist that their dignity be recognized and their convictions apprehended within society. For those caught in entrenched imbalances of power, coalition and ethical transnational advocacy become powerful instruments of influence for social change and greater justice. Because such battles have been transnational for some time now, it is all the more imperative to
comprehend the ethical obligation owed to others and the ethical means of justice-making for others. These obligations require interrogation of current forms of democratic governance and social activism.

As we recognize the unjust suffering of another and acknowledge the equal humanity dignity that entitles her to rights and equitable opportunities, we are obligated to engage with the plight of the other, whether she resides in our near community or a distant land. Engagement is the ethical responsibility of interconnected global citizens whose actions and behaviors affect all others in complex economic-military operations that have caused environmental degradation and uneven access to resources for existence. The ethical imperative is engagement. However, decades of postcolonial and feminist thought have made it abundantly clear that social justice activism has often times been done poorly.

The errors leading to further injustice might be founded upon moral self-inflation, moral oversimplification, and one's illicit imposition of values on others (Coady, 2002). The influence of these distortions creates harmful misunderstandings of the genuine moral and political injustices that exist in the world. Certain regions or even persons (like the contemporary discourse regarding terrorism) become targets of demonization resulting in adversarial relationships with entire communities and populations, ignoring the complexities of historic-geographic experiences and the inter-relational workings that form all lives and communities. Additionally, not all communities share the principles enshrined in liberal societies such as separation of church and state, rationalism as superior to religious belief, and liberty defined as freedom from prescriptive authority. If transnational activists ignore belief systems outside of the liberal nation model, they
asperse the expressed non-violent, lived values of those who choose to define their worldviews based on other principles. Western rationalism may not embody intellectual framework for all citizen-residents in all communities across a highly diversified and currently stratified planet. Subalterm groups have called out for recognition of their ontological understanding and technical ecological knowledge for centuries now. These are not concerns of private personal faith or metaphysical musings; these are core considerations of social justice and governance.

Kyle Powys White (2011) in his work on environmental injustice addressed both situational peculiarity and recognition justice for tribal peoples, but the import of his ideas have broader application. He contended that situational peculiarity refers to the differences in cultures, experiences under colonization, political statuses, and governing capacities that are not reducible or related to frustrated economic aspirations but instead reflect historical, cultural, political, and social issues that are experienced locally (p. 200). This environmental heritage is constructed through the meanings and symbols of the past that frame present values, practices, and places that people wish to preserve. Recognition justice demands that policies and initiatives meet the standard of fairly representing the cultures, values, and situations of all affected parties. Recognition requires new structures of participatory processes (p. 202) that both reform internal politics and establish new norms for international negotiations and transnational interactions. I offer two accounts to illustrate this assertion.

In the closing weeks of 2015, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) culminated in a negotiated the Paris Agreement. This commitment by 196 attending representatives outlined an accord to reduce emissions as part of the method for
reducing greenhouse gas (Collins, 2016). Sitting U.S. President Obama stated in his address to the nation, “This historic agreement is a tribute to American leadership. The Paris Agreement establishes the framework the world needs to solve the climate crisis. I believe that this moment can be a turning point for the world” (Sutter, 2015). While recognizing the importance of international agreement to reduce the effects of climate degradation and allowing for President Obama’s additional qualifying statements that the agreement is not perfect, one of the important failures of COP21 was its exclusion of both human rights and indigenous people’s rights of self-determination, meaning recognition justice for indigenous peoples had been removed from the binding part of the text of the Paris Agreement (Chivers & Worth, 2016). Despite having representation at the conference, indigenous people were still excluded through consensus. Their participation was marginalized in a process where majority, widespread agreement relegated their concerns away from articles requiring accountability. Indigenous activist Crystal Lameman stated during COP 21, “We don’t have a role. We walk around with badges that say ‘observer.’ We’re not allowed into the negotiating spaces” (Democracy Now!, 2015). Indigenous legal counselor Alberto Saldamando asserted that it was colonization all over again.

I also submit this first-hand account. While in India, I stayed in a neighboring hill station for several days. There I visited the establishment of an Indian man and his family who had created a breathtaking place of beauty. A retreat surrounded by botanic gardens, it offered respite to people and animals. He was kind and gentle in his conversation with me, quite interested and attentive to the details of our lives in India. He asked us about our relationship to the community in our education work and listened without interruption
or judgment. Expressing encouragement for the evident deep love I held for my companions in our village, he remarked I was not a worker but a friend. He then asked me about the historic and ancestral roots about our community’s people. I did know much about a people whose predecessors experienced the effects of partition and returned under the cloak of undocumented immigrant. He listened and then asked me if our educational work somehow connected the people with their historic, geographic, and spiritual legacy. In that moment, I realized it did not. It connected them to the modernization that was enveloping their way of life and marginalizing their narratives as less important in a globalized world. But our work did not also add value to their historic, geographic and spiritual ancestry and legacy. This is a component of violence within modernization founded in neoliberal thought. My Indian friend in the hills was a key Sojourner-Friend from whom I learned to hear the voices of those who were already speaking about their place and identity as well as their goals and visions for themselves; new structures of participatory processes.

**Legitimate Participation and Governance**

Democracy is best conceived as the access to and participation in the full scope of equal citizenship. Therefore, I submit that current forms of representative governance are unsustainable. I give special attention to the injustice produced and perpetuated by utilitarian policy making. Lastly, I propose more effective models for 21st century political participation.

Representative democracy has failed to meet the needs of its constituent citizenry and has proven to be as one of the most prolific marginalizing institutions in the arena of justice and equality. In 1984, Benjamin Barber wrote that representative democracy
facilitated efficiency and accountability, but it was at the cost of political participation as citizens instead became voters. This, he surmised was democratic impoverishment. A strong democracy is a shared arrangement among all stakeholders where self-determination and self-realization of the individual are immersed in collective life. Instead, we labor under a form of liberal democracy where politics have been reduced to the economics of majority interests (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

In their consideration of electoral reform, Guinier and Torres (2002) noted several peculiarly American ideas about democracy. First, democracy is primarily about the right to choose individual candidates, and not about mobilizing groups to participate in an ongoing democratic conversation. In addition, elections are configured through geographic districts of aggregated individuals who may have nothing more in common than geographic proximity. Lastly, elections give all the power to the candidate who emerges with the most votes, and then declares that winner the representative of the whole district.

As Guinier and Torres (2002) rightly pointed out, this can leave up to 49% of district citizens without a representative voice within the law-making bodies of the legislature. This is, however, compounded. In the early 21st century, the United States had the highest incarceration rates in the world. In 2014, the nation housed the largest number of prisoners in the world; roughly 2,000,000 incarcerated persons (Stastista, 2013). Global Research (2015) reports that 70% of all imprisoned males are Black or Hispanic yet compose less than 38% of the overall U.S. population. An estimated 6,000,000 Americans are disenfranchised: denied the right to vote due to their felony convictions. Felony disenfranchisement is exacerbated by racial disparities, resulting in one of every
13 African Americans ineligible to vote (Democracy Now!, 2015). Research scholar Ruth Wilson (2002) wrote, “Prisons … are a project of state-building … geographical solutions to social and economic crises, politically organized by a racial state that is itself in crisis” (p.16).

However, it is mistaken to solely equate democracy with the practice of “free and fair” (Inter-Parliamentary Council, 1994) elections. The unraveling of democracy is far broader than voter suppression and gerrymandering. Closely related is the practice of utilitarian policy and justice making which calculates maximum utility as the highest moral principle. The conception of utility, rounded out by 19th century scholars Bentham and Mills, is often recognized by shorthand: “The greatest good for the greatest number of people.” It is consequentialist theory; therefore, it is easy to dislodge the foundations of such political thought on these grounds alone. It declares moral and just decisions to be those resolutions that will produce the most beneficial arrangement possible for the broadest amount of people possible. Ultimately, within its utilitarian premise, there are always those who will be unrecognized, aggrieved, and disenfranchised from the defined needs of their minority circumstances. This is particularly crucial because none, even those within the most liberal cosmopolitan strand, envision a day where the world community will be called to individual vote as global citizens. Yet, every global citizen is regularly impacted by the decisions made by corporate, State and international policy makers that may or may not reflect her specific rights, circumstances and needs. Majority-rule decisions are often justified as policies and laws that have met the test of majority consensus. However, unrepresented subaltern and minority interests find
themselves outmaneuvered by elitist stakeholders who control the systems and institutions of power.

Therefore, I suggest a return to debate regarding the necessity of a participatory democratic model of governance with decisional powers distributed across the entire ambit of stakeholder participants in a new arrangement of civic order. Active political participation would be the normative civic expectation in self-constituting bodies of interest held to standards of ethical conduct, moral economy, community care, informed participation, equitable development and governance. World governments have created standards and laws around institutions such as taxes, education, military conscription, criminal justice, and the like. We can certainly debate the merits of citizen community-based participation in self-governance. This participatory self-governance is conceived in binding agreements derived from deliberative processes where individual preferences are forged into negotiated public voices, representing holistic political action for community well being and sustainable growth (Floridia, 2013).

Initiatives and proposals could conceivably still be determined by ballot; however, under the form of participatory governance, the interest and rights of all constituent groups would have to be accommodated and measures codified that ensure equitable distribution of benefits and effects of any such decision across all stakeholder groups. Minority interest and subaltern communities would realize just governance in self-representation as function of democracy. This requires that the most complex and important policy work will occur post-election or post-consensus where all original stakeholders return to negotiate the decision-making process related to implementation. The democratic process would be best understood not in the voting mechanism, or in
legislative law making, but in the stage of implementation where minority interests are guaranteed a seat the table where the felt effects of law making are defined. This participation of insurgent citizen and non-majority voice must serve to function as the new checks and balances of in the 21st century.

Participatory democracy requires some restructuring. Our educational systems would need to embrace the 21st century reality of self-representation and negotiation. Token forms of student government would need to be fortified as stakeholder bodies that deliberate and participate in the decision-making process related to school and district policy. Every student would have both the expectation and opportunity to engage in roles related to institutional (classroom, school-wide, district, etc.) governance. Civic and history education would need to be revised. Texts and online and interactive media resources would have to be reconstituted or rewritten to reflect the global perspectives on events that have impacted humankind worldwide: war, exploration, conflict, invention, innovation, commerce, industry and technology. Such an effort could very well require a transnational consortium of educators and related stakeholders.

Children should be attendants at counsel meetings within their villages and towns, learning the exercise of governance in their near communities. Archives, local folklore, oral histories, populist media should become privileged as educational record to be considered, analyzed and interrogated as all other means of text, media and spoken word. Students and child citizens have every right and need to learn responsible governance as matter of lived experience so that they are equipped to accept their place in civic society with skill, practiced in negotiation, prepared to receive another as global Sojourner-Friend.
In conclusion, cosmopolitanism promotes a civic unity that rights-based discourse alone cannot achieve. The global citizen understands alliance and coalition amongst diverse stakeholders and seeks social global justice for a common humanity bound in civic friendship on the basis of human dignity. Participatory democracy facilitates political cohesion and equity, as all become active stakeholders in decision-making and address the essential needs of all constituent groups. The subaltern in this political community is not only revealed as present, but also recognized as a policy maker for her collective.
Chapter Four: Knowledge Production and Systems of Power

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

*(Heb 11:1 KJV)*

*Who are you going to believe, me or your lying eyes?*

*Groucho Marx*

What we deem to be credible is fundamentally important to our attempts at good policy making and justice. Michael Sandel (2007) stated one cannot argue about justice without arguing about the good. The dialectic process of intersecting the particular with our general principles is not only a consideration about justice, but also debates about morality and the good life. In this chapter, I analyze the continued subaltern disenfranchisement caused by the privileging of peer-reviewed research and academic discourse that fails to frame the lived experience of subaltern people as credible record. I also explore the importance of selected conversations, interviews, and events from my work in India and my Community-Based Research Project in Indonesia in an effort to answer the question, “What are ethical forms of research advocacy with subaltern populations?”

When researchers and workers engage in transnational or transcultural aid, activism, or research, they are making declarations regarding the inadequacy and the injustice of the condition of another’s life. They broadcast judgments against the institutions, the policy, and the moral validity of those who have failed to act justly when they possessed the power to do so (Roa, 2012). There is postcolonial resentment over the question of categories of knowledge: western Euro-centric societies position themselves as sites of theory while the nations of the Global South serve as sites of raw data. Vinay Lal (2001) stated, “India remains, regrettably, the empty field on which the fertile
European mind sets to do its work” (p. 147). Representations of the Third World “Other” are a functioning of our geopolitical and institutional associations (Kapoor, 2005). Therefore, academics, researchers, development workers and the like cannot help but create subjective models, motives, and analysis in its interaction with the Third World.

In consideration of Kapoor’s accusation that First World or western nation-states are incapable of ethically pure and objective research, activism, and community development, two questions arise. Is it accurate to exclusively demarcate authentic and ethical representation of subaltern populations along First World/Global North and Third World/Global South lineation? It is equally true that the intersectionalities of caste, class, race, gender and ethnicity also create difficulties in authentic representations of Others with whom one has no extended, shared life experience even within geo-political boundaries. Elitist reproduction is the intent of hegemonic power. Second, in a 21st century globalized world, does the history and the continued presence of imperial and colonial practice forever impede transnational or transcultural coalition for global social justice? Where have activists made progress, and where do we fall short of peace, respect and equity?

The first question is a matter or privilege. In this era it is common within academic realms of activism to insist that privilege be confronted as part of scholarship production. It is far less common that the privilege of scholarship itself is interrogated, and this is central to subaltern injustice. The potential for trickle-down benefits of dense theory related to entrenched poverty and disenfranchised populations has yet to foster greater equity for the world’s most vulnerable populations. Bourgeois-rational conceptions of knowledge established in post-Enlightenment tradition self-authorizes its
validity and universality with no attention given to culture and community diversity (Krishnan, 2009). It begs the question of who is such scholarship research for. If it is for policy makers or academic peers then the potential for scholarship to be of real benefit for those highly impacted by injustice as a matter of daily lived experience is limited because it ignores the power differentials between the knowledge producer and the produced. Laws may be passed, policy enacted based on such research, but inequity and oppression march forward if the elite power structure of the nation-state remains intact and unaffected by the conditions that daily govern subaltern lives.

This entrenchment is proven in the current state of global communities. Expansion of free market economies has not equalized global power or brought good health, good education, or stable food resources and clean water to the world population. One in ten global persons lacks access to clean water and nearly 800,000,000 are said to suffer from chronic undernourishment (water.org, 2016; WHE, 2015). Nine out of ten countries with the lowest life expectancy rates in the world (hovering around the age of 50) are located in Africa (Cia.gov 2016). Military intervention and nuclear proliferation have not brought greater peace to humanity. Reported fatalities in global conflicts tripled in 2014 (Norton-Taylor, 2015). The current refugee population is estimated to be 60,000,000 worldwide (Graham, 2015). Modernization, industrialization, and technology innovation have compromised ecological stability and environmental sustainability. Poor and isolated communities are threatened by climate change. Small island states such as the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Cook Islands (Pacific Ocean); Antigua and Nevis (Caribbean Sea); and the Maldives (Indian Ocean) face threat of permanent inundation connected to
climate change (IPCC, 2016). Yet, the lived experience of the persons centered in these circumstances should not be reinterpreted as a matter of scholarship analysis unless these persons have participated in equitable knowledge production about the own condition. The lived accounts, informal records, collective norms, shared practices, and community testimonies about themselves must be privileged in ways that do not always require their structural re-explained by the expert Other.

For the sake of clarity, I contend that subaltern informal record and self-representation should be afforded the corresponding privilege of peer reviewed scholarship and institutional study. This is a matter of power and knowledge production, and the lack of credibility given to the self-expression and local intelligence of subaltern communities is rooted in intersectionalities of race, ethnicity, caste, class, and gender injustice. It is historical practice of governments to disallow subaltern voices from shaping the discourse and policy directives of the nation-state. Yet, the traditional academic research model also prohibits subaltern stakeholders from shaping the discourse about themselves through its emphasis on literature review, high theory, inadequate cross-cultural understanding, and elite-centric privileging of knowledge construction (Spivak 1998, 2006). Many theorists maintain that education and opportunity be given to subaltern peoples to appropriate the necessary skills for political speech (Spivak, 2006; Seethi, 2016). Access to basic education for all persons is, in fact, a codified human right in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed in 1948. However, the emphasis on providing the uneducated subaltern with a 21st century education of the First World making anchored in scientific rationalism, technology-driven solutions, and free market capitalism is not justice equity unless and until elite systems of knowledge have
incorporated the subaltern’s worldview and political practice as defensible systems of community arrangement and ecological expertise.

If society is reliant upon academic and government sponsored research for their development of social policy, then methodology, ethics, the intersectionalities of inequality, and privileging of community-based stakeholders are critical to the process. I argue that Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is best reveals the identified needs of the near community through its project-based approach to social change that emphasizes community member engagement through all stages of the research process (Minkler & Garcia, 2012). The principles for CBPR include: collaboration and equitable relationship in all phases of the research; local community strengths and resources; capacity and co-learning among all stakeholders; dissemination of results to the community stakeholders for strategic social change initiatives; emphasis on long-term sustainability; and adherence to cultural humility.

CBPR moves beyond statistical or qualitative analysis that results in a final product to be “kicked upstairs” for someone in power to solve. It off-centers development models reliant upon outsider expertise, but instead operates with the intent to build internal community capacity for organizing members so they identify and achieve their own goals (Stoecker, 2005). The process fosters diversity. Community members are decision-making stakeholders who identify goals, collaboratively design research, collect and analyze data, and ultimately make program or policy recommendations for social change to their own communities. This high level of regard for the grassroots stakeholders allows the researcher to privilege the community members’ participation as much academic expertise. Within the realm of subaltern research and discourse, humility
upon the part of the researcher is demonstrated by holding seriously the understanding of the Other as self-represented. Privileging subaltern knowledge is a matter of equity justice.

CBPR must be a component of social justice inquiry for the following reasons. First, it is actionable unto positive community change on terms that are equitable to the cross-section of diverse interests involved when the project is designed and facilitated with participatory democratic terms in mind. Second, the researcher does not hold a hierarchal position within the research taskforce and her data analysis is subject to input from the community stakeholders involved in the process. Third, the special demographies often represented by indigenous, tribal, or caste populations are not best comprehended by reading across the grain or by the structural imposition of rationalist or modernist understandings that characterize academic thought. In addition, the qualitative nature of CBPR acknowledges that aggregated representations always leave vacant the understanding of lesser representative or outlier data. Instead, CBPR affirms the single or minority element as valid data that contributes significantly to the understanding of the whole. Most importantly, I believe that CBPR research holds an important lateral contribution that mediates the ground between an assembled, qualitative representation of a community and the uncontested nature of the single memoir or biographical account of an individual. The final contribution of CBPR teases out understanding of the overall relationship of a person within her environment displayed by her speech, silence, action, interaction, and practices (Addison, 1992).

This person-environment interaction is crux of social justice policy. This cannot be revealed through philology. There is no means by which one can perceive the
unrecorded intra-community interactions and chosen silences of the subaltern person through examination of historical or contemporary mainstream record. The absent theorist can only infer silence as hierachal exclusion or subaltern behaviors and actions in response to the dominant community, diminishing the subaltern’s presence in her own making. This was significant error in subaltern discourse because the researchers occupied different historical, economic and socio-caste or class political space. One is constantly constructing the subaltern person within the constraints of the researcher’s privileged rationalism. Too often the subaltern becomes the embodied political site upon which the academic works out a particular brand of realized injustice. The resulting ideological vacancy is produced by lack of sustained, shared life experience.

How then are the privileged able to participate in the process of CBPR, ethnography, and activism in ways that demonstrate respect for the near stakeholder community and the voices of its people? I present my experience of transcultural activism in Indonesia to extract with effort the particular dilemmas and decisions that must be made in cross-cultural research.

In February 2015, I received IRB approval under the direction of Western Kentucky University to conduct CBPR in Indonesia with long-term companions of Indonesian and foreign national citizenry related to an initiative for social change entitled “Exploration of Capacity for Human Development of Indonesian Women Through Small Business Enterprise Mentorship and Resource Coalition.” I participated in fieldwork related to this project in March/April and September/October 2015. I produced ethnography and conducted 41 interviews with women representing a cross-section of the labor force: educators/administrators, social workers, university faculty, counselors, small
business owners, office managers, domestic workers, farmers, and religious workers. Participants were asked to respond to questions regarding their childhood family units, their own family structures, education, employment, religious practice, perceived cultural expectations for women and connection to mentoring or career support. Interview questions were generated as a framework and the interviews were conducted in a spirit of discovery-orientation utilizing the practices of the General Interview Guide Approach and Informal Conversation (Turner, 2010). Phase One was conducted in March/April 2015 with participants in the metropolitan area of Malang. Women in this group were predominantly first-generation urban dwellers who had extended education. Phase Two was conducted in September/October 2015 in outlying villages surrounding the Malang urban center. Women in these areas had lesser interaction with formal education and employment in the mainstream economy.

I do not intend to offer a standard analysis of this CBPR work. First, it is ongoing. Unanticipated but needful developments occurred in the lives of two critical stakeholders on the advisory board who have wisely turned their immediate focus to the internal health of the organization and their own personal development and wellness. I seek to illustrate the principle of privileging self-representation by considering several interviews in light of custom, practice, and belief not represented in the extended literature review undertaken for this project. In this section I will analyze seven interviews for the purpose of understanding the subaltern self-representation. I have selected interviews based upon the particular questions they raise related to framing and discourse. All names are coded for IRB privacy protection. I advocate for an eco-cultural analysis of the experiences and
testimonies offered by the women and their families that privileges the near societal and cultural construction of their family, work, and educational settings.

Interviews

Participant One: Melati, age 18

It was unexpected, really. I asked with as much freshness as I could after 36 interviews, “Would you tell me about your own education?” The question had not become tedious or uninteresting for me; it was just that it had become hard to sound spontaneous in the quest for meaningful data. I had asked that question too many times in the same way. I looked up from my notepad to give Melati my full attention. And she started crying. These were big wet tears, not sobs, because she was determined to shake off the emotion that would distract her from speaking. She was 18 years old now and she had been working as a nanny for six years in the larger and more urban geographies of Sumatra and Malang, Indonesia.

She finally answered, “I went though junior high and I really wanted to go to high school, but I did not get a scholarship and my family has no resources. My mother told me to just keep going, it would be okay. But I saw the condition of my family, so I wanted to help.”

I asked how often she gets to see her family. She told me that she has no days off and that it takes three days and two nights to get to her village so it is too far. “I see them every two years or so. I miss my family but what can I do?” Melati continued, “I talk to my mom by phone, but when I do I cry.” She insisted, though, that her work did good things for her family. “I get money for my family’s food, and they have been able to buy
a motorbike.” She told me if she had stayed in the village, she would have needed to get married, so it was better for her to choose to work and come to the city. I asked her to tell me more about her schedule, about having no days off. “My employer does let me go to the mosque because it is close to the house. I love Islam, it is such a beautiful religion. I have a place where I can share what I am feeling. If I have a difficult time, I can seek answers.” As we closed, I asked Melati what kinds of improvements she would like to see for her village. She told me that economy is so very bad it means many girls have to just get married. “I like school. I am happy in school.”

What I what to highlight from this interview is her response to my inquiry about having no days off in her weekly work schedule. Had I been about the business of prediction, I would have never imagined my question about labor conditions would illicit Melati’s real response that she gets to go to Mosque because it is close to the employer’s home. I also would not have diverged from my intended examination of labor exploitation into an exploration of Islam as a beautiful religion that provides Melaiti with a place where she can share her feelings and seek answers. As a Global North research academic with extended Global South lived experience, I am now at a crossroads where I can employ the Western-Eurocentric rationalism discourse of labor laws, international human rights statutes, postcolonial theory and the codification of religious belief within the Indonesian labor regulations that address Melati’s employment terms. Or I can privilege her testimony that Islam is a source of beauty and strength in her life as she reflects upon the choices she has needed to make for the benefit of her family and her own desire regarding different terms for marriage than were offered had she stayed in the village. Melati had drawn attention to two items throughout the interview: her longing
for education and her personal relationship to her Islamic near community. She was not concerned about the hours of her employment.

Participant Two: Aini, age 30 +

Aini lives on the campus of a Christian ministry where she works with the children involved in the ministry program and takes care of the domestic work needed to support the staff workers involved in administration of the project. She is a single mother of three who was abandoned by her husband some nine years earlier. Aini is not paid for her work at the Christian campus and, in fact, pays rent and utility costs to the ministry. She works as a private masseuse, providing home-based services to private clients and provides income for her family through this work.

Aini shared that her husband left the family when she was pregnant with their youngest child and blamed her in-laws for the break up of the marriage. They were adamantly opposed to her because of her Christian religion as they are devout Muslims. She, like many women I spoke with, explained that mixed marriages are complex under Indonesian law. In order for marriages to be registered the spouses must declare a single religious affiliation for the family unit including any children produced within the marriage relationship. Many couples from different religious backgrounds legally codify allegiance to one religion, while following different faith practices in the privacy of their lives. Her former husband, who did not divorce Aini at the time of his departure, has remarried and has children with his second spouse. She claimed this was possible because his parents are very rich. I asked Aini if her husband left their marriage because he was involved with the person who is currently his legal wife. Aini insisted this was not the
case. “It was because of his family. They are against me because of my religion. They had a spell cast on him. It caused him to leave. He says that he didn’t have power over his actions then. It was witchcraft.” She then said that it was good of God to bless her with the special gift of massage.

As a researcher, I find myself at a similar crossroads with Aini’s account. Do I activate the rational Western-Eurocentric discourse that diminishes the validity of her claim and instead attribute her husband’s abandonment to discriminatory marriage laws or gender inequality under a feminist lens? Do I elevate secular empiricism and frame Aini’s testimony as reliance upon a mythological belief system? Or do I privilege her defensible worldview that powers and principalities of a spiritual realm were leveraged to end her marriage?

Participants Ibu Three and Ibu Four

These cousins, ages 52 and 54 respectively, are domestic workers under informal employment in the same facility over ten years. Both of the women are married, have adult children and grandchildren, and attended elementary school as children. After primary school, they both began working to help support their families. Ibu Three was responsible in her childhood for taking care of her 13 siblings while her mother worked as a vendor selling vegetables.

Ibu Four and her husband have lived apart for most of their 25 years of marriage due to his employment. She told me that they see each other about twice a year. When I asked if it has been difficult to be separated from her husband, she replied, “You get used to it. We think about the children, and it has been the best economic arrangement for the
children.” Neither of the women will receive pension benefits of their own because they work within the informal economy.

Because the women were raised in villages during a different generation than many of the women whom I interviewed, I asked them to share the changes that they had seen in government and society over the decades. I also asked them what wisdom they would share with other women about the lessons they have learned in life. I was surprised by their responses. Ibu Three stated changes in the country were not important. “The government doesn’t affect our lives!” she insisted. Ibu Four told me that they had no wisdom to offer me. “We are not the same,” she said. “You have an education. I cannot give you wisdom.” I responded, telling them we were most definitely the same in important respects. We are all mothers. We have all put our children and their well being first in our lives. We are wives and workers. Ibu 4 then replied, “I feel inferior to the women upstairs (teachers) because of having no education. It is hard for me to socialize.”

Again, I am at a crossroads. Do I privilege the discourse of structural inequalities perpetrated by state governments and class inequality, or do I privilege the sincere assertion of the women that the government has no affect on their lives? Am I, really, as a Western woman of privilege entitled to interpret their relationship to the Indonesian government in ways that they do not for themselves? Do I demonstrate justice by interrogating marriage arrangements where the spouses live separately in order to provide economic security for the children or did I simply privilege an understanding of marriage where spouses share common physical space and time?
Participants Five: Wyani, age 41, with interpreter

I want to draw attention to a particular set of interactions during my interview with Wyani who lives on site at a Christian training center with her pastor husband and their two children. Their immediate neighborhood is remote and agricultural, but is in close proximity to a town center with small retail and farming supply businesses. Having grown up in smaller, more rural area as a child, Wyani was very interested with the business side of farming. She attended university and earned a degree in agricultural business. She stated that few girls from her village had gone to college. Interestingly, she reported that most families wanted their daughters to go and had worked and saved so that this was possible. Wyani said, “But the girls didn’t want to go. They wanted to work and get married.”

Although she has university education, Wyani did not pursue business and instead focused on bible training and ministry. It was in this environment that she met her future husband. Since their marriage she has been focused upon their family and religious work, which she described as supporting the people who attend the training center and building relationships with her neighbors. The Christian training center was built over 12 years ago with the support of foreign funds from churches in developed nations. It was a busy facility in its early years, but has been quiet and mostly unused in its the recent history. When I asked about the reason for this, I was told that there was some dispute between the ministry leadership team, and the schism created “some fallout.” Wyani commented, “I like it better unbusy.”
At this point in the interview, there was a knock at front door and her husband came to unlock the entrance. Five men came in and followed Wyani’s husband into one of two large meeting rooms. Wyani turned and whispered, “They are Muslim.” The men had come to borrow some plastic chairs for a family funeral that afternoon. As the group made several trips in and out with chairs, Wyani continued to speak in hushed tones saying that her husband was able to help this neighbor with herbal medicine, “so he has gained favor with local Muslims.” The interpreter, with us at Wyani’s request (although her English is fairly strong,) turned to me and whispered, “That is how it is. They are always working and never have a day off.”

I was confused at all the whispering about the Muslim men. What were Wyani and the interpreter trying to convey? Sharing extra plastic chairs that were not currently in use with one’s neighbor did not seem like an extraordinary act of generosity or support in the Indonesian society I knew. Were they whispering because they saw this as an act of ministry to a different religious community? Were they whispering because they thought this act demonstrated how inroads were being made for the Christian gospel with their Muslim neighbors? It might well be that Wyani and her husband never had a day off, but how did this 15 minute interaction with the neighborhood men who appeared task-oriented cordial with no outward signs of distress or sadness intersect with this work claim?

The front door was relocked as the men departed. I asked Wyani what could be done to improve the conditions of her parent’s village. She scrunched up her face, and first said, “There are so many layers. I don’t know. It’s hard to grow up in the village. You can go to college, but then there is nothing available you apply it.”
I explained that one important purpose that the CBPR team had identified for the research work was to ascertain if there was need and interest for women-to-women mentorship for business and economic development. Wyani answered, “The educated move on. It is the simple villager who stays back.” She added that she and her family liked their current area, and several of their adult siblings with children had also moved to there. “Most do not want to go back to the village way of thinking.”

After the interview, I had a brief initial exchange with the interpreter who is also a key stakeholder on this project as part of the advisory board. I said, “Wyani is not interested in connecting back with the poor in her village.”

The interpreter quoted, “The poor you will always have with you,” which is a reference to a bible verse and a statement attributed to Jesus.

Religious faith had become predominant theme in most all interviews for this project and I realized that it must be privileged as a central important value in the worldview for the women involved. I was concerned, however, by a faith narrative that allowed for such distinct “Othering” behavior when the Muslim men had come for the chairs. I was equally concerned about the use of religious text about the prevailing nature of poverty. Not in the sense that Wyani has the individual right to leave her village roots behind, but in the sense that there seemed to be a separation between ministry work and the conditions of the poor. As a bi-national CBPR team, it will be important for the Indonesian stakeholders to consider how their goals for small-business mentoring align with women who give priority to ministry outreach and self-improvement.

Participant Six: Eva, daughter, age 45
Eva and Purna, her mother, had made time for me in a heartfelt season in their lives. The family had just lost their five year-old son. He died with shocking speed, within two weeks of being diagnosed with stomach cancer that had metastasized extensively throughout his body. The family lives about two hours outside the nearest comprehensive medical facilities. Eva and her husband hadn’t waited long to get their son to the hospital. He had complained of stomach pains and began to experience problems with his bowels. Decreased appetite and disinterest in eating developed within a few days. The family then headed out to the hospital. After the first preliminary examinations and scans, the doctors were careful to make clear to the family that their son faced a very serious situation that was unlikely to improve. Extended family came from their respective surrounding villages and cities providing the round-the-clock care necessary in the Indonesian health system where the family provides the food, garments, and other non-medical essentials in hospital care.

Regional specialists visited their son within hours, and surgery confirmed that the cancer would not be undone, beaten back, or treated in its late stage. As a family with self-identified deep Christian faith, a global network of family and friends had urgently offered the prayers for a miracle on their behalf. In the two weeks that followed, Eva’s son was in significant pain, but had the strength and clarity to interact with many visitors who rotated in vigil at his bedside. The doctors remained gently steadfast in their prognosis. On his last day, the young boy seemed unusually robust, asking for a pizza in the morning. The family headed into the city center to pick up his pizza, and while they were gone, their young boy expired. His devastated family returned to his bedside with a
pizza box in hand, bewildered and distraught that they never had the chance to say good-bye.

Eva went into overdrive in the next days. She and the women of the church organized most of the funeral and remembrance gathering details. In Indonesian custom, this meant meal preparation for friends, family, and the surrounding neighborhood, all of who would come to pay their respects at their home. Eva’s husband was a local pastor, and she joked that throughout their marriage people always expected her know her husband’s every coming and going. Her husband and other children were having a very difficult time. Although she felt like she did not want to put one foot in front of the other, Eva believed that she was in the best condition to try to hold the family together emotionally.

After their son’s death, her husband spent much time at their son’s graveside. This was a place that she would not visit. He also began to pressure her to remove their son’s clothes, school materials, and toys from his room, saying he could not deal with the reminders of his absence. Eva felt close to her son’s presence with his belongings still part of the daily environment. The two of them both shared a lot of guilt, blaming themselves for not detecting their son’s very serious illness earlier.

Eva confided, “There is only one place where I can mourn. Every morning, I get ready for work (she is an accountant,) walk out the door, pull on my helmet, and drive my motor scooter away from this house. It is on the short drive from here to the office, where I can cry, cry, cry behind the dark shield of my helmet.”
At the end of the interview, I asked Eva what changes would improve the conditions for people in her area. She said to me, “It is hard to prepare for surprise guests here. There is not much shopping available.”

Her mother who had been with us during the interview at Eva’s request said, “We need a good hospital.”

I would spend personal time with Eva and her extended family several days later, at their invitation. People were still stopping in unexpectedly while I was there for the afternoon. I thought about Eva’s comment several days before about the difficulty of being prepared for unexpected guests. As evening reached our doorstep, we prepared to say farewell. Eva’s husband asked us to come with him to see his son’s grave. We all headed out with him, except for Eva. As I stood at the graveside with Eva’s family, I also thought about her mother’s words: “We need a good hospital.”

Eva is a college graduate. The family owns a small, well-constructed home and personal transportation. Both she and her husband work to support their family and function as Christian leaders in their local church group. Her area is larger than several we had visited. It has infrastructure such as paved roads and fairly substantial development of utilities and waste/sanitation management.

Globally, it is common that critical care hospitals like the kind needed by her son, are located in more metro centered districts. The Global North/Global South imagined binary, which is often evoked when exploring states of development is especially irrelevant here. In fact, in 2014 Indonesia implemented an extensive universal healthcare program for all persons living in the country. Full implementation, targeted for 2019, will make it the largest, single-payer universal health care system in the world.
(oxfordbusinessgroup.com, 2016). Most importantly, Eva did not indicate that economic resources affected their decisions related to their son’s health care. Indonesia’s Minister of Health has proposed constructing fourteen new national referral hospitals and 184 regional referral hospitals by 2019 to meet the increased demands of the population, and some of this demand is a consequence of the popularity of the universal health care program (Indonesia's universal health care goals, 2015).

It is difficult to say that in Eva’s particular situation her mother’s suggestion that a good hospital was needed in their area would have somehow changed the outcome for Eva’s son. Eva’s own account indicated that the critical nature of their child’s illness was simply undetected by his parents until it was too late. Sometimes the race is not to the swift or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to all (Ecclesiastes 9:11 NIV). Both Eva and her husband told me several times that this was God’s will for their son, and that God was teaching them needed lessons about their own lives.

Participant Seven: Sadwea, age 31

I met Sadewa during my first CBPR fieldwork trip in March/April 2015. I had come to her home in a small, remote village to attend her mother’s funeral. She had died after a protracted battle with cancer. Sadewa demonstrated sustained public grief on this day, which was quite a contrast with most in attendance who were quiet in their tears and sorrow.

I sat with her again six months later for this interview, and her life still seemed heavy. She now ran the house, which consisted of her father, her husband, and her two brothers, the youngest of whom is age five. It is her codified role under The Marriage Act
of Indonesia, Act No. 1 of 1974, in which men were designated heads of house, and women were assigned oversight of household management and family care. Because the family structure is codified in official rhetoric and discourse as a model for the nation, the family unit is regarded as the foundation of morality, justice, and duty concerning public behavior (Frederick & Worden, 2011). Men and women are recognized as equal under the law, given gendered responsibilities for the overall household and family order.

She now began her chores at two o’clock in the morning, as she must prepare food for her father whose work dredging the riverbed for sand begins before dawn. “I feel like I can’t do this anymore. I can’t go out or do anything. I think my father needs a new wife so I have someone to help me,” she tells me. This is a pragmatic concern for Sadewa, who still misses her mother a lot. “When I feel so tired, I think if my mom was here, I wouldn’t feel this way.” She told me she prays God would give her a dream of her mother on the days when life feels overwhelming.

Her village is rural and agriculture based, and when the growing season is over family incomes are greatly reduced. The costs of her mother’s cancer treatments were supported by her village church’s connection to a U.S. based NGO, as the country’s universal health care plan was not in place when she became ill. The family homestead is orderly and simple. There are no appliances for cooking or cleaning, and no modern bathroom facilities. A small group of goats provide milk for the family.

When Sadewa’s husband finds occasional work doing small construction, he takes the family’s motorbike and she completes her duties, including local marketing, on foot. It is a life of physical labor and long hours. Sadewa has not been able to become pregnant, and having a child is a driving desire in her life. “I want to be a mom. I have
been trying for so long. I went to a regular doctor. He told me that all is good with my body and wanted to know if I had stopped smoking.” People in her village advised her to go see a witch doctor so that she can conceive. They told her that it is her fault for becoming a Christian when her husband is a Muslim man.

The Indonesian Constitution states that “the economy shall be organized as a common endeavour [sic] based upon the principle of the family system: For that reason, the economy is organised [sic] as a common effort, based upon ways of working that accord with the family principle” (Chapter XIV, article 33; Republic of Indonesia, 1989). In addition, to national discourse, Sadewa’s own account demonstrated her reliance upon family order constructions for her worldview. She perceived a series of obligations and responsibilities that could be mitigated if her father took another wife. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (1999) wrote that individual freedom is quintessentially a social production. The expansion of human freedoms is both the primary ends and principle means of development. Sadewa made connections for herself between work, health, environmental demands, and family obligations that compound to make her feel that her freedom is restricted and that she “can’t go on anymore.”

At the end of our time, I asked what changes she would want to see in her village. She puzzled quite a long time, and it appeared that she might not respond. After several minutes she stated with a small shrug, “Maybe we could have better roads. One’s that are paved.”

In my review and analysis of the 41 interview-conversations through an eco-cultural lens, I found several shared values and life experiences of the women involved in this project. The first is the centrality of marriage and family. The near family unit,
whether nuclear through marriage or birth family relationship of parent and siblings, the women gave priority to family culture. This did not mean, however, that the family cohabitated as husband and wife, or parent(s) and minor child. Women of the current generation married after the age of 20 within this group. Importantly, there were a notable number of single women within the interview pool. Yet, all spoke about the desire and intention to be married in the future to someone who would support their personal career or employment goals. Parents within the current generation are planning family size with attention to their economic resources, often stating their children would “only have the best” because their family sizes are small. National statistics do reflect that birth rate in Indonesia fell from five children per family in 1970 to two children in 2009 (Frederick & Worden, 2011).

Their parents a generation earlier often married between the ages of 16 and 18 years. Their biological families were most often large, with many having between four and 12 siblings. Education for both sons and daughters was emphasized within the family unit. Most parents in this earlier generation supported the need for university education not only through verbal encouragement but also by constructing family living patterns with the intention to produce the economic means to get their children started in university. However, within this interview group, several opted to not pursue extended education, citing concern for their families economic condition or peer conformance because friends had discontinued schooling at the junior high or senior high level preferring to work or choosing to get married. In the Republic of Indonesia, nine years of public education are mandatory, and the aggregate adult literacy rate is high at over 90%. This rate does not however, provide clear understanding of rural student populations.
Women within both urban and rural populations demonstrated significant agency within their nuclear families and marriage relationships. Women were employed outside the home in both formal and informal economies. They reported joint decision making related to relocation, education for their children, religious practice in their private family lives, and household finances. All women reported either strong extended family or religious community support in their lives. Even in Sadewa’s case, the fact that she chose a mixed marriage relationship outside of her religious community was an act agency in a major life choice.

Religious faith was another dominant subject for participants in this interview group. Although participants agreed that one’s religion was a personal decision, all women in the interview pool processed their lived experiences through faith discourse; in the case, as either adherents to Islam or Christianity religion. A significant number of women had chosen to marry men with a different faith background, and this was a significant break away from their parental customs. Often such marriage choices were problematic to their parents. However, the women believed that the initial barriers had been overcome over the course time in their relationships with their husband’s family. There were exceptions on both ends of the scale. One participant stated that her in-laws had never expressed disapproval of her different faith, while Aini’s account was a description of a marriage broken apart because of mixed faith issues.

The women reported that one’s religious affiliation is required information on all formal government documents: identity cards, school and university enrollment, marriage registration, family certificates, etc. A brief outline of Indonesian governance is germane. The nation of Indonesia declared independence in 1945 after protracted period of colonial
rule. Upon throwing off the last vestiges of Dutch authority, the nation entered a period of uneven and sometimes contested transition to ultimate democratic reforms. During the years of 1966 – 1985, the country adopted New Order governance that included a Pancasila Democracy, explicating the nationalist social creed of the Republic. The five interrelated principles of the Pancasila include belief in One Supreme God; just and civilized humanitarianism; nationalism; democracy; and social justice for all people (Frederick & Worden, 2011). Two generations of children learned the importance of this ideology as part of the national curriculum. While the educational emphasis on study and memorization of the Pancasila tenants has waxed and waned over the past decades, the women involved in this particular project often referred to this doctrine often. There was expectation from all participants that persons in Indonesia were involved with some religious community, although they considered affiliation with a specific faith system a matter of choice. The strong national narrative of belief in One Supreme God was a principle that the women had adopted in their own lives.

In my final preliminary examination of the work done with these women, there was a strong preference within first-generation urban migrants that returning to or supporting women in their birth villages would be a regressive move and out of alignment with their personal and nuclear family goals. Any support currently being given was predominantly related to health or discipleship such as religious education amongst the Christian participants in this project. Women who self-identified with Islamic faith affiliation described their work and initiatives as social projects serving the greater society.
Upon the upcoming re-inclusion of the two leading members on the advisory board for this CBPR project, my initial analysis will face review by these near-community stakeholders. It will be important to learn if they will confirm or modify my initial understanding that the Christian community will not involve itself in economic and business mentorship in the villages unless it is founded upon ministry outreach discourse. In addition, there seems to be a lack of antecedent readiness for these women to engage at the level of political citizen. Individual hardship is often attributed to the working of God as opposed to structural inequalities, although greater diversity in the economic sector was often cited as a reason for urban migration amongst former and current village residents. Most importantly, an eco-cultural understanding of these women’s lives requires that I honor their stated priorities of family, education, and faith as the core values of their government, their lives and the important factors that form their worldview. A system of cosmopolitan ethics compels me to privilege their discursive framing related to the activity of God in their lives and their cultural family construction as those factors most important in their lives.

The priorities expressed by these Indonesian women have implications for social justice. While individual acts of agency are political, overall social transformation requires more than individual, uncoordinated acts of power. Power works differently at the population level creating conditions of control and distribution impacting communities regardless of individual acts (Spade, 2011, p. 121). For the women involved in this study, confronting systems of government/institutional power for goals of overall social transformation seems to be of much lesser priority than spiritual transformation and nuclear family security. My recommendation for this CBPR initiative
and the larger academic community is to build a *robust* body of accessible scholarship connecting social justice with the precepts and codes of specific religious faith systems such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc. For clarity, it is necessary to build social activism *through* the discourse of religious beliefs and practices as a matter of accessible scholarship, not just relegate faith-based considerations of social justice to religious settings.
Chapter Five: Summary Conclusion

Three key factors precipitated this exploration of subalternity, justice, and sustainable governance. First was my extended experience living and working in insular communities in India. Here I learned about the fleeting nature of justice for all people, including myself. Nation-state narratives of democracy, equality, and opportunity had proven to be empty boasts for the poor, the refugees, the uneducated and the conflict-ridden communities in our midst. However, as I began to interrogate the systems and institutions in India that allowed for such inequality and negligence, I quickly discovered the endemic nature of injustice and the power structure of the privileged that permeates the entire global enterprise. All nation-states promote deception about themselves, and the violence of elitism is revealed in the light of the lived experience of its least advantaged populations. The United States, where this thesis has been written, is no exception.

Secondly, while appreciating the robust intellectualism condemning colonial, imperialistic, heteropatriarchal practices responsible for most inequality on the planet, I found current feminist work to be more divisive than healing for the conditions that continue to subject and oppress global women in their demands to be recognized as equal humanity. Contemporary feminism in its rush away from victimization and embrace of agency, power, and strength has failed to support women in communities where sex-based exploitation, violence, and discrimination present as the rule of law. There are few, with a notable exception of feminist theorist and practitioner Gayatri Spivak, who understand that the subaltern woman cannot be represented in elitist constructions of theory. The subaltern woman is a source of specific ontological knowledge and life
experience who must be self-representing in discussion related to equality and social justice for her own person and near community.

Self-representing is not the same as self-constituting. Self-constitution implies autonomy and is a prevalent conceptual frame within liberal democracy. Self-representation may present in surprising ways in global communities defined by diversity, including the non-coerced choice to not leverage power to one’s advantage. Subaltern self-representation often entails resisting engagement with 21st century modes of technology, industry, and capitalism. Many women in our Indian villages believed that their greatest life satisfaction was found in devotion to family, community pujas, melas, and religious ceremonies. They had no designs or desires to engage with the formal economy. This is a defensible choice. Others aspired to political leadership within local forms of governance, cooked school lunches, ran tea stalls, worked as domestic caretakers, or as manual laborers in the quarry. Most of these labors also fall within the informal economy. My friends often spent afternoons sitting in circles on cement stoops, taking shelter from the glaring sun while gently combing insects out of another’s hair. Bonds of community were formed here. They saw their lives filled with purpose without the props of cutting-edge education and technology. They were astute about injustices within their community, such as irregular government provision of potable water and rising propane gas and rice costs. This picture of our shared lives demonstrates how my subaltern friends operated within the political space of their cultural community while comprehending the effects of hegemonic powers on their existence.

After my time in India, Nepal, Indonesia, and Mozambique, I committed to activism for social transformation and institutional reinvention. Individual acts of crime
and violence are very often instigated by institutional practices that reinforce hierachal life opportunities. The institutional practices are reinforced by discourse and scholarship. As I worked with Indian children who represented the first literate generation in their ancestral line – the first who were given opportunity to participate in the formal education process – I realized education alone was unable to overthrow the historic poverty, exclusion, colonialism, and environmental injustice that prevented my students from fully entering into the corridors of elite infrastructure and opportunity. I began to sense that I was in the midst of another generation who would be frustrated in their pursuit of full economic, social, and political participation. Governance, social fabric, and civic health and political dysfunction are current inhibitors to equality and human dignity in all societies. These are produced by the politically present elite, which holds power over the discourse related to community development and state-building.

Lastly, in my inquisition of systematic injustice and social transformation, I discovered that transnational activism and community advocacy is rife with internal challenges and conflicts that greatly hinder sustainability of social justice initiatives and programs. My experience confirmed this. American stakeholders often set conditions upon their economic involvement with international community development. Some Christian donors specified that their monies were to be used to only support Indian families and children who expressed interest in the gospel. Our educational organization maintained our commitment was to all children without regard to religious affiliation. I refused to carry out corporal punishment, yet it was a regular tool used in village school settings and this created confusion for local stakeholders. Transnational relationships are characterized by negotiation, first and foremost.
It is necessary to evaluate the conclusions presented in this work and look to the present state of transnational movements for social justice to ascertain a better path forward. For subaltern populations, the layers of injustice are manifold. As conceived by the original cohort in India, Subaltern Studies are best summed up in a series of brief descriptions. Subaltern Studies was a lens and an intended recovery of the peasant caste, an invisible populace in accounts of Indian history. In the course of the SSG project, the studies became an invention of discursive practice; modes of representation of the absent “Other” assigned the subaltern person to a politically and socially disparate sphere.

Unfortunately, subalternism reinforced difference and “Othering” by requiring a referent, which was the elitist class. These were significant flaws of the project. In addition, Subaltern Studies often ignored the intra-community conflict and oppression within the groups themselves. Taken as a whole, the problematic conjunctions of representation created a further injustice to a group of people who were, first politically and then discursively, reinvented through the lens of those outside of their lived subaltern experience.

Because of the tenacious inequalities existing in global society, I have argued that current democratic governance and social ideologies are unsustainable. Neoliberalism is a failed enterprise and the promise of prosperity and wellbeing for the masses has not been achieved. Internationalization has reduced the regulatory structure of the nation-state and has opened up global subaltern populations to the predatory practices of T/MNCs that have bypassed national governments and further abused these communities through direct acts of power against indigenous knowledge, sovereignty rights, and integrity of cultural localities. Therefore, it is imperative that democratic governance becomes participatory,
allowing citizen-residents self-representation and coequal decision-making power from inception to implementation. There is an array of false equivocations in current democratic practice: money with economic security, modernity with progress, development with improvement, elections with democracy, representative government with citizen power, and utilitarianism with fairness. Subaltern self-representation must be the new checks and balances of 21st century participatory democratic governance and would serve to reconfigure institutional power bases.

Global society must embrace and value several ideals that build respect and political friendship in an interconnected world. I have argued that a cosmopolitan ethic, which conceives humanity as one single moral community with reciprocal rights and obligations, promotes the needed global citizenship necessary in 21st century world. Cosmopolitanism acknowledges diversity as inherent to the global complex and promotes the rights of near communities to determine for themselves the customs, norms and affiliations that best promote flourishing and wellbeing for its people when it causes no violence or disenfranchisement to others. It recognizes the person as the primary unit of concern and contends human beings have a duty to aid fellow humans, regardless of their citizenship. Ethical cosmopolitanism is characterized by a respect for basic rights or capabilities that should be universally normative for humans who all share equality in dignity. The citizens of the world are united by reason, sociability, and common humanity and the cosmopolitan is willing to suspend narrow, national interests in order to achieve the goals of lasting peace and universal human flourishing (van Hooft, 2014).

The human development approach to governance and social policy promotes fundamental political entitlements and freedoms for all global citizens. Capabilities are
codified protections and guarantees of State responsibilities to create and secure conditions that provide real opportunities for its resident citizens to do and be what they have reason to value (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2010). Under the human development framework, the role of government public policy is to improve the holistic quality of life for all persons as proven by their achievement of substantial freedoms. Nations must fortify a basic political structure to distribute an adequate threshold of entitlement for the full account of its citizen residents. Moving away from the misleading and unrepresentative aggregated economic measures that are forwarded as a reflection of the wellbeing of the nation-state unveils the hidden subaltern presence of a society. A portrait of economic resources does not reflect an individual’s ability to convert resources into capabilities and functionings. The human development model asks, “What are the person’s real options?”

A final consideration of the injustices committed against subaltern persons involved an interrogation of academic and peer-reviewed scholarship as the privileged standard in research and scholarship production. The distance between the lived experience of the subaltern stakeholder and the privileged academic is an insurmountable social and political lived experience. The subaltern insurgent activist must be front and center to her own cause. This is exemplified in my consideration of CBPR research. Those of us who contend on behalf of disenfranchised and exploited populations must forgo our ready use of privilege and our reliance upon Western-Eurocentric notions of governance as separate from religion, freedom as independent autonomy, and equality as legal codes. Collaborative efforts for social change and equity justice involve careful discernment and ready awareness of that which intends to help but instead perpetrates
further harm.

**Current Trends in Transnational Social Movement Organizations (TSMO)**

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen increasingly transnational agency and localized grassroots resistance to the ever-expanding influences of T/MNC entities and governments purposed on economic development schemes that further states of inequality and disregard community rights of determination. Transnational alliance challenges top-down globalization and resists internationality as the ultimate metastructure over global lives. Transnational global justice movements recognize that negotiation is required to manage internal conflicts, foster trust, and build identity across borders (Bandy, 2005). Both internal conflicts and external social conditions interact to disrupt the power of TSMOs to facilitate social change.

Cosmopolitans recognize local, national, and regional symbolic markers, identities, and socio-political systems, but also contend that these are increasingly reconfigured and recoded around the global social imaginary (Steger & Wilson, 2012). Several obstacles exist to building social change organizations that cross national borders. Cultural and political diversity often requires ongoing negotiation. Varying political contexts and issues differentiate the political climate and context for members of the local group and their international counterparts. The physical distance between international stakeholders can lead to misunderstanding, conflict, and higher costs. Young contends that electronic communication cannot substitute for face-to-face communication. Perhaps most importantly, inequity in resource bases creates imbalances of material and relational nature. One of the major difficulties in building transnational social movement networks is overcoming the legacies of colonial histories and the enduring inequalities that exist.
between northern and southern activist networks and nations (Pellow, 2007).

Despite the challenges, historical mistrust, and resource imbalances between constituents, transnational activism has forged on and many movements have been powerful in changing the course of social injustice and environmental degradation. Large entities like The Climate Action Network (CAN) is a worldwide network of over 950 Non-Governmental Organizations in over 110 countries to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. Small organizations like Safe Hands for Girls, with support of the international community, effectively pressured The Gambia to adopt legislation as a reform strategy for ending Female Genital Mutilation in December 2015.

Based on my own involvement in non-profit advocacy and activisms, I would like to submit the following lessons as one global citizen dedicated to the betterment of the world as a link in the chain of those who love humanity as equal friends intent on changing systems of injustice. First, nurture invitation. It is not an act of humility or affirmation to burst upon the scene of another’s community to “fix” problems that have not been made your own through invitation. Invitation requires friendship and trust, and it is established at a slower pace and is built more carefully with an eye toward sustainable relationship. Acknowledge and cherish the wisdom of nearest stakeholders who are crucial for social change. Exploitation of the weaknesses and problems of a community for academic advancement, religious evangelism, or funding gains is unethical. This often can be avoided by honestly asking oneself, “Have I portrayed another person or community as unfortunate or marginalized by using a non-contextual proof as referent?” Forgo practices of colonial exploitation: the photos, the negative portrayals of non-violent cultural customs, the re-creation of outsider values and worldviews. These are a
disservice to the eco-culture of the local community.

Make space for the presence of the subaltern voice and her knowledge: do not stand in her stead and represent her within frames that would make her a foreigner to herself. Eco-cultural knowledge is intelligence. This is counsel for all of us who are not subaltern by lived experience. One does not have to be of a different race or nationality to possess colonial privilege. My friend’s husband in our Indian village repeatedly physical assaulted her. This was considered a local community issue, and the police were not called. She had come to me for short-term shelter on one occasion, just several hours during which her husband settled down. I had become silently frustrated and confused about the lack of options for women experiencing domestic abuse in the colony. I also did not understand why this friend did not leave this marriage. I began to put together a project to build a women’s shelter. When I began to share my idea publically, one of the men pulled me aside after a group conversation. He told me that my friend would not leave her marriage because their Hindu faith taught that a wife could not enter the afterlife and meet God without a husband. Intellectual rationalists often underestimate how powerful religious narratives can be in controlling life choices. More importantly, it became clear to me that a non-colonizing response would not pull women out of their marriages, but instead create venues for conversations, safe houses within existing homes and small medical stands, and workshops on non-violent conflict resolution within families.

Lastly, injustice is manifest in institutional systems and individual actions. Our global solutions must be holistic, focusing on rights-based agitation and socially-based civic emotion and citizen production. These are tandem efforts that will present in
unlimited intersectionalities as localized global communities reveal their expressed goals and desires for justice, freedom, and participation within their own context. I would suggest that all who involve themselves in the work of unseating social injustice must be primarily dedicated to The Human Story. Women of color feminists Maria Lugones and Elizabeth Spelman (1986) wrote that friendship is the only basis upon which one can align with those whose life experience is outlier to the narrative of privilege. The Advocate/Friend under cosmopolitanism builds relationship upon the understanding of mutual reciprocity. The subaltern and the privileged are both flawed and limited by their respective humanity. However, there are the wealth of commonalities between us, including love, hunger for knowing, contribution, laughter, music, affinities, and expression, that allow a robust foundation for our friendship. It is doubtful that the subaltern would understand their need for “recovery” as they have been prolific contributors to The Human Story. Humanity will have achieved its pursuit of liberty, equality and justice when the least advantaged among us, the subaltern, possesses her rightful place in an equitable world order as self-represented citizen-subject. It is from this political position that she can choose to exercise her rights of participation in community and governance to provide an equitable distribution of life chances.
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