



Tenets for a Radical Care Ethics in Geography

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Abstract

This paper draws from experiences working with youth in Southern California, many of whom are increasingly under mental, emotional and financial duress. We write this paper to reflect on the capacity to be both radical and caring scholars within academia. We suggest that by combining the complimentary and parallel aims of radical geography's concern for social justice and care ethics' concern for relationality and emotions, we can gain important insights into what it might mean to be caring and radical academics. We propose three tenets for what we term a 'Radical Care Ethics' in geography: 1) Research and teaching that is committed to understanding and improving the material conditions of those living on the margins;



2) Scholarship and teaching that extends outside of academic circles to engage meaningfully with the lives of those on the margins; and 3) Attention towards the emotions of others and ourselves in ways that further a commitment to care. We argue that a radical care ethics can serve as an intellectual compass that can begin to address the precarity of those surviving on the margins, particularly young people. A radical care ethics has potential to not only pave the way for more socially responsive scholarship, but to also transform our universities into more caring and socially-just institutions.

Keywords

Emotional geography; radical geography; neoliberal university; youth; health

Introduction

This paper reflects several years of discussion between two Ph.D. students and a tenured faculty member based out of a large public university in Southern California. During our years of working together, we have noticed rising anxiety, stress and emotional turmoil among students, colleagues, peers, and ourselves (see Peake and Mullings 2016). The three of us share research interests in young people and it seems to us that youth are struggling, both on our campuses and within our research projects. Many of our students battle addiction, depression, and crippling anxiety, all the while dealing with massive student debt, food insecurity and economic duress. Food stamps are increasingly common among college students, and many rely on campus food banks to meet their needs. Given the high costs of housing in Southern California, homelessness is a serious concern for some of our students, as some survive through “couch surfing” or sleeping in their cars. In fact, a recent study found that over a third of all university students in the US are housing and food insecure (Goldrick-Rab et al. 2018). Many of our undergraduate and graduate students juggle full-time course loads, along with low-wage, part-time work as drivers, servers, and retail clerks. Student relationships falter under mounting mental, emotional and financial strain, despite the importance of community and friendships for overall well-being. We work with students whose mental health regularly fails them, yet we note that they are rarely given leeway by their professors to make up their work, creating a cyclical pattern of depression, anxiety and failure. Beyond this, the presence of police and, in some cases, US Border Patrol agents on campus can make accessing and navigating contemporary universities a risky and dangerous experience for students of color and undocumented students. We recount these experiences not because they are unique, but because they are increasingly the norm. In fact, between the three of us, we too have suffered from a combination of depression, anxiety, chronic health problems, failing relationships, crippling debt, food insecurity and homelessness. Contemporary universities are a strange brew of

privileges, exploitation and precarity, evident across the lives of professors and staff, as well as graduate and undergraduate students.

In this paper, we draw from experiences working with youth to reflect on the capacity of academic institutions to support radical and caring scholars. This discussion is especially pertinent in this US political moment given rising xenophobia, federal targeting of undocumented people, openly racist rhetoric directed at people of color, and profound inequality evident inside and outside of academic circles. For young people, this is particularly worrying. While youth is often perceived as a time of hope and optimism, the young people we work with through research and teaching have shared fears, worries and concerns for their seemingly hopeless futures. Many of the students we work with are first generation immigrants, as well as first generation university students. Some navigate transborder lives across the US/Mexico border. Others are refugees, DACA recipients, LGBTQ students - all of whom are especially at risk in the current political moment. In our respective research projects, we also work with student activists, unaccompanied migrant youth and Native American youth, all of whom have provided profound and disturbing insight into the struggles young people face today.

We are acutely aware of the disconnect between the immediacy of the precarity experienced by youth and our positions within university contexts that limit our capacity to create meaningful change. We write this paper to propose a radical care ethics in geography as a potential way forward. More than a decade ago, Nik Heynen (2006, 919) called for a “really radical geography”: one “that does not take for granted the fundamental material necessities of human bodies surviving amidst dire material inequality.” He argued for a disciplinary refocusing on the “most serious questions at the heart of survival” (Heynen 2006, 920). Drawing from feminist political economy and care ethics, Vicki Lawson (2009, 210) later asked, “Instead of radical geography, how about caring geography?” She argued that radical geographers have “much to learn from care ethics” and that geographers must ultimately account for the “centrality of care to our human lives.” Recognizing the important role of emotions in geographic scholarship, she highlighted how “caring relations of dependency, frailty, grief and love all shape the ways we reason and act in the world” (Lawson, 210). Yet, ten years on, radical geographies and emotional geographies are still rarely brought together, despite ongoing calls to do so (Askins 2019; Askins and Swanson 2019). In this paper, we bring these parallel and complementary approaches in conversation to argue for a radical care ethics in geography. We agree that engaging with the realities of existence and survival for those on the margins is imperative, and arguably more necessary now than ever. We also believe that maintaining, recognizing and bringing care into systems where care is devalued is itself a radical act.

In the following pages, we begin outlining a way forward for emerging and established scholars pursuing scholar-activism, while also navigating the constraints

and urgency of the neoliberal era. We ask: what might a truly radical and caring geography look like? How can we begin to actualize a radical care ethics in political and institutional contexts where care itself is depreciated? We humbly recognize that we are not the first to call for such a disciplinary commitment and draw inspiration and insights from other scholars to cobble together a path that interjects radical commitments and care into geographic scholarship (Askins 2009, Askins and Blazek 2016, Brown and Pickerill 2009, Heynen 2006, Lawson 2007, Williams, 2016). Our hope is that this paper will precipitate a productive discourse on academic ethics in research and teaching in the context of rising precarity, political division, and overt hate.

Radical and Emotional Geographies

Despite its colonial roots, geography has a long tradition of radical scholarship that has examined how systems and flows of power operate violently across time and space to produce material inequities and vulnerabilities (Springer 2012). Indeed Marxist, anarchist, feminist, anti-racist, queer, and post-colonial traditions have produced a wealth of insight into the material basis at the heart of inequality and oppression (Peake and Sheppard 2014). Building upon different theoretical and political approaches, geographers have contributed to analyses of how capitalist, imperialist, racialized, and gendered systems produce oppression, and have highlighted the quotidian ways that people and communities react and work to counter oppression and build alternatives (Blomley 2006, Gibson 2014). For instance, over the last five decades geographers have produced extensive research into food insecurity and hunger (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996, Heynen 2010, Slocum 2011, Watts and Bohle 1993); the consequences of revanchist urbanism (Brenner and Theodore 2002, Smith 2002, Swanson 2007); the production of racialized, gendered, and class differentiations of wealth, poverty, health, and surveillance (Bunge 1971, Harvey and Braun 1996, Kobayashi and Peake 2000, Mitchell and Heynen 2009, Peet 2002, Valentine 2007); and recognition of the political and everyday geographies that underlie resilience and resistance on the margins (Dowler and Sharp 2001, Katz 2004, Mollett and Faria 2013, Sparke 2008, Staeheli 1994). This radical work stems from a desire to make research more socially relevant and to produce a world in which inequality and oppression are nonexistent. This type of scholarship is key to developing alternative geographies of justice.

Over the last two decades, geographers have also called for increased emotional engagement in academic work (Anderson and Smith 2001, Askins 2016, Bondi 2005, Davidson and Milligan 2004, Thien 2005). Scholars have noted that emotions are a fundamental aspect of human experience and that the world is mediated by feelings (Anderson and Smith 2001, Thien 2005). Geographic scholarship has explored how emotions are relational and tied to place and, in effect, shape how we view and experience the world around us (Bondi 2005, Davidson and Milligan, 2004). The connection between politics and emotions is also garnering increased attention, given that our emotions often shape how we respond to

perceived injustices and can be motivating forces for action and change (Askins 2019, Askins and Swanson 2019, Olson 2016).

Some scholars have explored these emotional geographies using an ethics of care approach, examining the spatiality of care and how it is a fundamental aspect of people's embodied, intersubjective, and relational existence (Barnes 2012, Conradson 2003, Raghuram 2016). Geographic scholarship on care has elucidated the complex and ever-shifting relations underlying how care is enacted in a globalized and changing world. For instance, geographers have produced extensive scholarship on the varied ways care is conceptualized and enacted across spaces that range from the local and intimate (Atkinson et al. 2011, England 2010), to the institutional (Milligan and Wiles 2010, Parr 2003, Power and Hall 2018, Smith 2005), and the global (Carmalt 2011, Raghuram 2016). Others have brought attention to how relationships of care and emotions are also geopolitical, reflecting for instance how we come to care about distant others (Milligan and Wiles 2010), reproduce and challenge colonial relations (De Leeuw et al. 2010), and enact the reproduction of society (Katz 2004, Raghuram 2016).

Held (2006) defines care as both a practice that involves the work of care-giving, and a value tied to notions of morality and behavior. Care is essential to the creation and maintenance of nurturing relations that support well-being and are fundamental to a socially just society. Care ethics scholarship has helped elucidate the impact that state disinvestment and neoliberal values of individualism, market expansion, and universalism have had on inequality and the spatial provisioning of care (Held 2006, Lawson 2007). State neglect for care work that is fundamental to social reproduction shifts the provisioning of care onto individuals and communities and is often cast in gendered terms (England 2010, Lawson 2007, Power and Hall 2018).

Diverging from radical geography, care ethics emphasize the centrality of emotions to human relations. Emotions are perceived as the basis through which care-givers come to understand and nurture the well-being of others and thus are fundamental for challenging inequality and oppression (Milligan and Wiles 2010). Although perhaps not immediately obvious, this approach aligns with radical geography. Radical geography is often rooted in universalist moral imperatives, emphasizing the end of oppression and hierarchy in the pursuit of social justice. Williams (2017, 832) highlights the potential of combining the universalist tendencies of radical theory with context-based care ethics when she argues for a "care-full justice" by "mobilizing a general understanding of injustice and carelessness and responding to the actual manifestation of these in contextually appropriate ways, as encouraged by an ethics of care". In other words, the relational and context-dependent approach of care ethics can work in tandem with radical theory in very transformative ways. Care ethics can help to ground abstract theories and the moral convictions of justice and anti-oppression in the here-and-now by offering context-dependent approaches to seeking out justice and transformation

through day to day relations. We argue that combining the complimentary and parallel aims of radical geography's concern for social justice with care ethics concern for the relationality of emotions can offer important insights into what it might mean to be ethical and radical teachers and scholars in contemporary academic institutions.

Radically Caring Teaching and Research in the Neoliberal University

Over the past few decades, universities have become increasingly restructured around a neoliberal doctrine that emulates a corporatized model of organization. We define neoliberal education as the expansion of market dynamics into the structure, operation, and economics of higher education to the extent that universities increasingly operate through a corporate structure (Giroux 2014). Neoliberal universities emphasize individualism and competition over exchange, and are maintained through entrenched labor hierarchies, an audit culture and surveillance regimes meant to quantify scholar's productivity and value. In the US higher education system, over fifty percent of faculty appointments are part-time, and non-tenure track jobs now account for seventy percent of all instructional appointments in higher education (AAUP 2017). Contingent faculty are also disproportionately female and people of color. Debt-ridden graduate students, sometimes fueled by unrealistic expectations, compete for a dwindling supply of coveted tenure-track positions, and often become part of the contingent faculty treadmill - characterized by insecure employment, overburdened workloads, low-pay, and no benefits (Hulbert and McGarth 2016).

While recognizing that institutes of higher education have fostered subtle and overt forms of exclusion and marginalization long before the neoliberal era, the impacts of this more recent restructuring have reverberated throughout higher education, reshaping everything from the knowledge and scholarship deemed valuable, to the embodied experiences and futures of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students (Hawkins et al. 2014). Indeed, for many scholars, academic life has itself become precarious, characterized by structurally-violent spaces, financial and employment insecurity, increasing isolation and mental illness, and everyday gendered and racialized microaggressions (Domosh 2015, Joshi-McCutcheon-Sweet 2015). Moreover, many academics are encouraged to produce fast scholarship and tailor their research to corporatized and state interests in order to bring in monetary gains for universities competing for student consumers.

In university settings, the care work that is foundational for teaching, learning, and transformative scholarship is often devalued and disproportionately cast as women's work (Mountz 2016). Peake (2015) explains the impacts of the erosion of care in academia, stating:

Universities may be sites of privilege but they are increasingly high-risk ones. As the neoliberalization of the university has resulted in bringing precarity into the heart of our working lives so is it dividing us into those worthy of protection and those considered as not worthy,

breaking down social bonds and inculcating insecurity into everyday life in the academy (264).

Female and gender non-binary academics and scholars of color experience this erosion of care as an extension and intensification of already uncaring institutions and spaces, as they also navigate the everyday gendered violence of the masculinist culture venerated by academic institutions and the racialized violence of the normalization of whiteness in the academy (Joshi-McCutcheon-Sweet 2015, Parizeau et al. 2015). It should be no surprise that the erosion of care, secure employment, and the increasing pressure to be efficient and prolific scholars have resulted in a profound mental health crisis in universities. Numerous studies have found that higher education has seen a substantial increase in mental health issues in academia, as faculty and students contend with rising levels of depression, alienation, and loneliness (Mountz 2016, Peake and Mullings 2016, Pain 2017, Shaw 2014). Under conditions of increasing workload, limited care networks, and mental distress, the capacity to take on radical and caring scholarship, and to do so well, is limited. We contend that when care is eroded from academic spaces, the dynamics underlying caring and radical scholarship are difficult to materialize as work becomes characterized by increasing pressure and isolation.

Over the last several years, the three of us have had intense discussions on how to manage these issues in our own teaching and research with young people. The lead author, Lydia Wood, has several years of university and community college-level teaching experience and she worked closely with Native American youth in San Diego County over a period of five years. Her research sought to examine the geographies of health and well-being for Native youth, and focused on millennial aged youth and young adults ranging in age from 14 to 27 (Wood et al. 2018). The second author, Kate Swanson, has been university teaching and working with young migrants for two decades. Over the last decade, she has worked extensively with unaccompanied migrant youth in Mexican and American immigration detention centers (Swanson et al. 2015, Swanson and Torres 2016). The third author, Don Colley, has over a decade of experience teaching university students and working with millennial activists involved in Occupy, Black Lives Matter, No Justice No Pride, as well as Democratic Socialists of America and the Party for Socialism and Liberation. Through our discussions, we have shared how our research and teaching often spark complex emotional reactions for the youth we work with, and for ourselves. In our classrooms, offices and research sites, we help young people grapple with impending deportation; we write reference letters for students who survive on food banks; we counsel youth at risk of suicide; we reach out to silent students who miss deadline after deadline; we advocate for students who must cross the militarized US/Mexico border to attend classes; and we support homeless youth fleeing domestic abuse, among many other stressful situations.

While working with young people is often characterized as a hopeful experience, we have also encountered a lot of hopelessness. Youth is predominantly

viewed as a time of hopeful possibility and becoming in which young people spend their formative years learning, experimenting and testing boundaries in their transition from a state of dependency to greater independence on their path to adulthood (Holloway and Valentine 2004). However, youth are also positioned at the intersection of conflicting political discourses and institutions invested in maintaining, challenging, and deconstructing the status quo (Aitken and Plows 2010). Perhaps for this reason, youth are very vulnerable to economic, social and political uncertainty (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008, Katz 2004, Katz 2017).

The life paths of many of the young people we work with in our respective research projects are positioned far outside idyllic constructions of childhood as a protected and hopeful period. Their everyday lives are intimately impacted by modalities of everyday violence and are highly vulnerable to geopolitical events and policies. For instance, Native youth in Southern California navigate a settler colonial landscape where their racialized identities, the force of stereotypes, and limited access to resources pose daily challenges. For some of these youth, precarity, violence, and dispossession are everyday facts of their childhood that stand in contrast to western norms of childhood as a carefree and hopeful time (Wood et al. 2018). Likewise, undocumented migrant children experience heightened vulnerability to intersecting modes of violence that render their lives and futures highly uncertain (Swanson and Torres 2016). This is especially pertinent in the current political moment given the Trump administration's efforts to dehumanize migrants. Issues like this exacerbate the financial and political vulnerability of youth activists in Southern California and demonstrate the precariousness of being both a student and an activist. For students already living in precarity, their limited time and resources may mean choosing between: keeping a low profile in order to succeed in school and maintaining part-time labor to help meet the rising costs of living and pay down debt; or becoming more active in social movements, but risking academic success, employment and possibly personal safety and well-being to fight for what they believe in.

In the United States, many young people experience a mixture of hopefulness and hopelessness. Their everyday geographies intersect with the material realities of state power, militarism, settler colonialism, as well as geopolitical and economic restructuring. The state and institutional structures intersecting with young people's lives are increasingly *care-less*, leaving them vulnerable and often responsible for the provisioning of care to their families and communities. Moreover, their interactions and reactions to these powerful structures have very real and deep political implications. As youth have shared their experiences with us - both within our research projects and in our classrooms - we have experienced a range of emotions that have driven our commitment to activism and introduced new challenges and ethical reflections into our research, teaching, relationships, affiliations, and careers. We have found ourselves struggling with both guilt and responsibility and questioning our ability as researchers, teachers and writers to have meaningful impacts on their lives.

We contend that we need a renewed commitment in geography for radical caring in both teaching and scholarship. We are inspired by Nagar's calls for radical vulnerability (Nagar 2014). Radical vulnerability is "about grappling with the simultaneous co-existence of inhumanity and humanity within each one of us. It is about reminding ourselves and one another of the violent histories and geographies that we inherit and embody despite our desires to disown them" (Nagar and Shirazi 2019, pg. 239). This means opening ourselves up and sharing our vulnerabilities in our classrooms and research sites to build situated solidarities, and reexamining the neoliberal institutions we inhabit. It also means drawing upon our emotional and visceral responses to young people's stories to take action against injustices. As youth have shared their experiences of acute distress, hopelessness, and everyday violence, emotional responses have helped motivate us to act. For instance, Lydia became heavily involved in student activism and union organizing. She was integrally involved in the movement to boycott and change the university's Indigenous mascot, sat on the executive committee for the state-wide California State University student union, and volunteered with and tutored Native American youth, among many other engaged activities. Don has become deeply involved in mental health outreach and activism, and regularly counsels and mentors students undergoing mental health crises. As a certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor, he now provides campus workshops for faculty and students across university colleges. Distressed by the mass incarceration of migrants and refugees, Kate has helped build a 250-member grassroots organization to support asylum seekers in immigration detention across the United States.

In our classrooms, we have also adopted pedagogical shifts to allow space and time to debate, discuss and work through student concerns and anxieties, offering up our own vulnerabilities in doing so. In the current moment, climate change, racism, debt, and US politics are especially anxiety-provoking. For instance, in her graduate seminar Kate strives to create a safe and open space to talk about mental health struggles in graduate school, given that graduate students are six times more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression (Flaherty 2018). To help students recognize that it is okay to ask for help, she invites an outreach team member from the campus Counseling and Psychological Services to speak to her students about campus resources and self-care. By building in safe spaces to work through student vulnerabilities and concerns, we hope to support our students' overall health and well-being.

Emotions have helped sustain our ethical commitment to youth; they have motivated reciprocity, and have been foundations for emergent friendships that have extended beyond projects. Emotions have compelled us to put more into our teaching, more time into our service work, and more into volunteer and political work outside of research. Indeed, we contend that emotions are as key to activism as activism is central to radical geography. Many have highlighted the personal role that emotions play in fueling scholar-activist motivations, service, and commitment to ethical research (Askins 2009, Askins and Blazek 2016). As Simon Springer

(2012, 1617) argues, “empathy is the death of apathy, and it begins not when the state is streamlined, withered away, or dismembered, but here and now.” For us, the emotions sparked by research and teaching reinforced and deepened a commitment to meaningful and caring scholarship and sparked renewed energy into our activist, academic, and political engagement.

Yet, we have found these energies thwarted by a range of structural obstacles that interfered with our ability to maintain a radical care ethics in a neoliberal context. Time, lack of funding, limited institutional care, and academic pressures are at times in stark opposition to the process of trying to maintain radical care ethics. For instance, we often feel ill-equipped to handle the emotional distress, precarity, and uncertainty of youth and the personal reactions these encounters spark. While we are well trained in the process and theories of qualitative research, navigating complex emotional encounters has not been part of our training. These emotional encounters have also triggered our own vulnerabilities. After working intensively with unaccompanied migrant youth locked up in Mexican immigration detention facilities, Kate fell into a chronic pain struggle and was forced to take an academic leave. Lydia struggled through depression, anxiety, financial strain, debt, and episodic periods of food insecurity. She also worked multiple jobs as an adjunct professor, waitress, and Lyft driver to help fund her research and augment her meager PhD funding. Many of her relationships faltered under this strain and frequent feelings of anxiety took a toll on her body. Don experienced his own mental health and financial issues as a PhD student: prior to his funding running out, he began self-medicating with alcohol due to a lack of mental health care. Over two years, he moved across the country multiple times trying to find a stable living situation, destroying personal relationships in the process. Ultimately, he ended up back in San Diego couch-surfing on a friend’s floor or sleeping in his car. Finishing his PhD became the least of his worries; as his mental health degraded, survival took up all his time. Unfortunately, our experiences are not uncommon in academia; scholars are increasingly revealing the physical and mental toll that contemporary universities exact on their bodies (Mountz 2016, Parizeau 2016, Peake and Mullings 2016, Todd 2020).

Navigating intersubjective and personal distress in research and teaching requires time. We need time: to reflect, to read, to learn, to write, to volunteer, to hang out, to do service work, to heal, and to channel experiences into avenues and relationships that are transformative and that expand the capacity of our work to create meaningful change. Indeed, undertaking research with communities under duress can affect the well-being and emotional health of researchers, sometimes leading to secondary trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (Gilliam and Swanson 2019, Warden 2013). Yet, our need for time is hindered by the neoliberal university setting where financial support for service scholarship is virtually non-existent, a context that also discourages the development of care networks; fuels hit-and-run research; and emphasizes speed of completion and a prolific publication record over service and community engagement

In this context, we have found that maintaining a radical care ethics in teaching and research is often at odds with equally important investments in self-care, family relationships, personal financial sustainability, and career developments. These same structures which incentivize researchers to limit care and engagement with underserved communities overlap with the factors underlying the mental health crisis in geography and academia more broadly (Peake and Mullings 2016, Mullings et al. 2016). Indeed, we concur with scholar Henry Giroux (2014) when he argues that “education under neoliberalism is a form of radical depoliticization” that ultimately threatens the ability of researchers to connect their work “to larger civic issues and social problems, but also to [develop] any meaningful relationships to a larger democratic polity.”

It is with this inconsistency in mind that we lay out tenets for a radical care ethics in geography that outline a vision for teaching and research that recognizes and nurtures the centrality of emotions to radical scholarship and wellness in academia. For the remainder of the paper we outline three tenets for a radical and caring ethics in geography and discuss strategies for actualizing and maintaining these tenets in the context of neoliberal higher education.

Tenets for a Radical Care Ethics in Geography

Research and Teaching that is Committed to Understanding and Improving the Material Conditions of Those Living on the Margins

As a generation of radical scholars have achieved tenured positions, established journals, and built extensive publication records (Bauder 2006, Blomley 2006), concern for the dynamics of power and inequality has become more institutionalized in the discipline of geography (Peake and Sheppard 2014). We argue that heightened geopolitical threats and injustice demand a renewed disciplinary commitment to radical research that elucidates oppression and inequality. We do not wish to impose any theoretical or conceptual limits to the sort of scholarship that this disciplinary commitment may produce, and like Gibson (2014), believe a radical geography should embrace a heterogeneity of theoretical and methodological approaches. Rather, we wish to assert a broader moral imperative for a renewed radical, public and caring scholarship and teaching that is responsive to contemporary social issues and the precarity of marginalized groups.

Where possible, scholarship should be shaped by radical ideals at all stages – from the framing of potential projects, to researchers’ actual engagements with participants, the dissemination and construction of knowledge, to the aftercare we provide to ourselves and others. For instance, in Lydia’s research project with Native American youth, she adopted community-based and participatory methodologies that challenge settler colonial research relationships by positioning Indigenous communities as partners, rather than subjects in the research process (Castleden et al. 2012, de Leeuw et al. 2012, LaVeaux and Christopher 2009.). To oversee her research, she worked with Kumeyaay, Luiseño and Indigenous community members

to establish a six-member advisory board comprised of Native youth, parents, educators, and health practitioners. This advisory board guided her on research questions, recruitment, data analysis, and best practices for sharing and disseminating data with the wider community. Over the course of three years, she volunteered with two organizations serving local Native youth, with a Native youth group in a local school, and she worked directly with Native counsellors to support youth in need. As a non-Native scholar, she is hesitant to claim that she decolonized her research; however, she prioritized building meaningful, long-term research partnerships with local Native communities, while keeping the concerns and knowledge of Native participants at the center of her work.

Radical and caring commitments should not be limited to scholarship and research, but incorporated into teaching and pedagogical approaches that help elucidate the material operation and persistence of oppression for students, and that help steer critique to the institutions we inhabit (Mott et al. 2015). In Kate's teaching, she works with many first generation, Latinx and transborder students through a campus internship program, many of whom are especially vulnerable in the US/Mexico border region given heightened dehumanization and criminalization of migrant lives. In this program, Kate guides and mentors students through in-depth work with a grassroots organization that communicates directly with asylum seekers in ICE detention facilities. Many of the letters we receive through this organization describe harrowing conditions in US immigration detention. As interns, students bear witness and offer solidarity to detained migrants by reading and responding to their letters. Students also educate and advocate by sharing migrant stories to alter public discourse around migration, and encourage public engagement and policy change. They further contribute to community-based movement building by engaging with other organizations and community groups working to end immigration detention. As a group, we also turned our attention on our own institution to highlight the California State University system's complicity in immigration detention. In 2018 and 2019, students and faculty worked together to successfully pressure our university's pension program, CalPERS, to divest from CoreCivic and GEO Group, private prison funds that are seeing record profits due to the US immigration detention boom. To help students cope with the emotional intensity of this project, Kate worked with a campus psychologist who specializes in trauma, torture and immigration stressors. Given her personal support for the goals of project, this psychologist volunteered to speak to student interns about possible secondary trauma, and provide them with ongoing emotional and psychological support. As a pedagogical approach, this internship gives students an emotionally supportive, hands-on and applied experience advocating for social change in their own backyards.

Scholarship and Teaching that Extends Outside of Academic Circles to Engage Meaningfully and Deeply with the Lives of Those on the Margins

We argue that research and teaching exploring the dynamics of oppression is not enough if it does not engage meaningfully with the lives of those on the margins. Scholarship that remains insulated within academic circles and rarely extends into the lived geographies of marginalized groups is not sufficiently radical or caring. A commitment to doing so meaningfully means interjecting the tough questions of how we contribute to not only academic scholarship and theory, but also to the lived experiences of the individuals and communities among whom we live. This begs the question of what scholars should consider meaningful engagement. Meaningful engagement may require action-oriented scholarship that merges research and activism (Chatterton et al. 2010, Chouinard 1994, Pain 2003), incorporates participatory methodologies (Cahill 2007, Kesby 2000), or engages with public policy (Fuller and Kitchin 2004). It may emphasize the transformative potential of research encounters rooted in care to challenge dynamics of exploitation and marginality (Askins and Blazek 2016), or that centers other ways of knowing in white settler academic spaces (De Leeuw and Hunt 2017). Indeed, many scholars merge these varied approaches to create meaningful scholarship, flowing between these different approaches within the life of a project.

For us, radical scholarship is informed by the radical theory underlying our convictions, and in day to day efforts of approaching our relations and encounters with a commitment and sensitivity to care. When contextualized within an ethics of care, meaningful and transformative engagement is less daunting. Meaningful encounters develop from time spent with students and research participants in personal moments where we bring care and emotional support into interactions with others, and when care ethics inspire wider commitments to challenge the material and structural basis reproducing inequities that extend outside of research. Indeed, communities on the margins have engaged and continue to engage in actively resisting and reworking the contexts of their marginality, and academics can help amplify efforts to envision alternatives in our teaching and scholarship. This could involve using our positions as academics and “experts” to raise awareness of these efforts through teaching and scholarship, and using our time to contribute to activist causes that challenge oppression. For us, this has led to efforts to address inequities in the classroom, often through difficult discussions on equity and identity-based struggles. We have also tried to expand our reach beyond university settings. For instance, for three years Kate volunteered as a geography teacher for unaccompanied migrant children in San Diego. She worked with mostly Central American youth between the ages of seven and seventeen who were awaiting reunification with family members in the United States. Using techniques from Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1985), she provided rights education and helped youth map their journeys and envision their hopeful futures in the United States. Our commitments have also pushed us to become involved in a wide array of social justice campaigns

outside of the classroom, and to deepen the critiques of inequities rife throughout our own institutions and larger academic community.

In our work, we do our best to inspire a sense of community and hopefulness, although we recognize this is not always possible. We agree with Heynen (2006, 925) when he argues that radical scholarship involves an effort to “strive to both internalize and understand the pain of others... Of course this means we actually have to know who they are, and we have to walk where they live and meet them, talk to them and work harder to understand them.” This requires extending academic scholarship, work, and ideas to spaces outside of insular university and conference settings (Chatterton 2008, Heynen 2006). When viewed through an ethics of care, this commitment requires time spent investing in getting to know students and research participants beyond the narrow scope of learning objectives and research questions. It also recognizes the transformative impact of bringing hope into our interactions and carrying this hope into how we share participants’ stories, represent their lives, and make sense of and challenge the material basis of their marginality, struggles, and inequities.

In the research projects we undertook, a commitment to meaningful engagement required flexibility, reflexivity, and care that also made this work more personally rewarding. For us this journey involved ethnographic and participatory research approaches, extensive service and volunteer work, and a deepened commitment to grassroots activism both inside and outside of university settings. This commitment does not end with data collection, but carries over into the writing, the framing of research, and the capacity of representations to challenge inequities and depict research participants’ lives in ways that do not reduce people to mere victims. We make this argument with a call for reflexivity and a recognition that research which engages deeply and meaningfully with those living on the margins is not always possible or desirable. Indeed, research that seeks to document the experiences of inequality and marginalization can often become “pain narratives” that pathologize and reduce communities to their pain, while doing little to challenge and transform the material geographies of exploitation and oppression (Tuck 2009). As Tuck and Yang (2014, 232) argue, “there are some forms of knowledge that the academy doesn’t deserve.”

Calling for a renewed commitment to radical and caring scholarship does not mean an open invitation to repeatedly document the violence, pain, and exploitation of others under abstracted commitments to social justice. Indeed, the caring subject intent on “doing good” for the oppressed and colonized has played a significant role in consolidating colonial power and giving “empire a human face” (Koopman 2008, 282). We argue that a radical and caring scholarship also involves a politics of refusal (Simpson 2007, Tuck and Yang 2014), which recognizes the limits of research to bring about material change and considers when it is and is not an appropriate and desirable intervention. A politics of refusal could also consider the emotional toll of particular projects. For instance, graduate students and academics from

underrepresented groups are often encouraged to undertake projects with marginalized communities to secure their identities as critical geographers. Yet, there has been little discourse on how painful and traumatic this kind of vulnerability can be for students. We must consider not only the emotional risks for research participants, but also the emotional risks for students themselves (Gilliam and Swanson 2019).

The ethics of radical caring scholarship also requires honest reflexivity on how and when research can be meaningful. This may involve a commitment to protect emotive and painful stories from wider audiences. The sorts of voyeuristic knowledge and personal pain academia thrives on may need to be discarded in favor of deeper engagement with the complexity and dynamics of resistance and change. A politics of refusal may become most pronounced during the process of research dissemination, as scholars negotiate the ethics of sharing painful and emotional material and the framing of research narratives. This requires a deeper consideration of the lifecourse of our research and the potential of research narratives to pathologize and reinforce harm (Tuck 2009).

Attention Towards the Emotions of Others and Ourselves in Ways that Further a Commitment to Care

Research and teaching that engage with issues of survival are inherently emotional tasks. Undertaking this work requires developing relationships of care that nurture the well-being of researchers and making space for the emergence of a more socially just university. Indeed, when Heynen (2006, 925) calls for radical scholars to “understand and internalize the pain of others” he is arguing for a profoundly emotional commitment that challenges traditional academic values of maintaining distance. Internalizing the emotions of research participants, as well as those within wider social networks, could be construed as just another form of emotional labor required from already overworked researchers and faculty; yet, valuing this emotional work has radical potential to remake academia into a livable, caring, and transformative space (Hochschild 2003). By asserting and carving out spaces of care for ourselves and others, we challenge individualism, isolation, and competition in academic work and in encounters with others.

Attention to emotions need not require extra work, but may emerge organically through an open-minded approach to interactions with others and letting down the walls of professional distance. Indeed, research encounters with others already are and always were emotional and making these “emotions visible in process and relations” is a key component of a radical care ethics (Askins and Blazek 2016, 19). Askins (2016) illustrates the radical potential of engaging with emotions with the concept of “emotional citizenry.” Emotional citizenry recognizes that meaningful encounters with emotional geographies can build cross-cultural communities, relationships, and commitments that contribute to people’s ability to live together across difference. This process is instrumental to building more livable communities and is foundational for radical and transformative change.

Self-care is a key part of this process. Since care is inherently relational, our ability to care for others is limited if we don't also care for ourselves. As Mountz and her colleagues point out (2015), we need to bring more attention to how we work and interact with one another. Many of us operate within silos of isolation, lacking time or energy to develop meaningful support networks with peers and colleagues. These precarious social relations do little to encourage spaces of care. In fact, they may directly contribute to the ongoing mental health crisis within academia (Mountz et al. 2015, Mullings et al. 2016, Peake and Mullings 2016). And while intellectually, many of us may realize that self-care is critical, practicing self-care is easier said than done. Like most people, we also struggle to take time for ourselves and we do not always practice what we preach. This is why the path toward a radical care ethics in geography must include an institutional structure that allows and, in fact, encourages scholars to take time and space to care for ourselves. In doing so, we will be better situated to embrace the combined potential of emotional citizenship and radical scholarship.

Path Forward

If we want to pave the way for a radical care ethics, we echo the call of other geographers who argue that we must assert an ethics of care into the university (Cheng 2016, Lawson 2007, Mountz et al. 2015, Peake 2015). To start, we recommend an expansion of departmental and university efforts to establish networks of care and formal or informal collectives for faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, and researchers to reflect on emotions in teaching, mentoring, and research. These networks have the potential to serve as therapeutic spaces that can destigmatize emotions and begin to confront the ubiquity of mental distress head on, while paving the way for institutional change. Possible changes include: incorporating dialogues on emotions and mental distress in academia into graduate and undergraduate courses; steering critiques towards neoliberal and corporatized university structures; developing disciplinary or interdisciplinary training and networks that better support collaborative and community-building dynamics; and working with faculty and student groups, or organized labor, to push for tangible administrative changes that expand student and faculty access to mental health services. Given the extremely high rates of precarity among undergraduate students (see Goldrick-Rab et al. 2018), it is vital that efforts to address mental distress and carelessness in higher education incorporate undergraduate students. Academics and administrators should, at a minimum, educate themselves on the broader patterns and lifeworlds of the students they teach. We hope that these efforts ultimately extend beyond seeking to adapt work and research to neoliberal contexts and to instead organize for administrative and policy changes that challenge individualism, isolation, and the stigma of emotions and care.

Beyond establishing support networks, we want to highlight the importance of mentorship, and the relative responsibility of senior and tenured faculty to lead these efforts. Indeed, the precarity experienced by contingent faculty and graduate

students saddled with debt may mean that they do not have the privilege to slow down, assert work-life balance, and take on the leadership and service positions required to assert care and radical commitments into the academy. As advisors to graduate students and mentors to new faculty, senior faculty can help encourage young scholars to contextually negotiate where and in what capacity care and radical scholarship can be incorporated into their work, while being sensitive to the demands placed upon them by the university. As mentors, faculty can encourage students to think about ways to insert radical commitments and care into their research projects and advise them on strategies and considerations throughout the process. We suggest this also means that mentors and students should think through what Simpson (2007) refers to as “refusal” in scholarship. Mentors should consider whether the conditions for radical and caring scholarship are adequate or attainable, before steering students to take on research with marginalized communities. How do we help students accomplish their academic goals in a way that does not subject them or community members to conditions and situations that could prove harmful or damaging to their physical, emotional, and mental well-being (Gilliam and Swanson 2019)? Faculty should also consider refusing new students when their own capacity to mentor with care is limited.

Mentorship can also support radical care ethics by encouraging slow scholarship and investment in the intellectual, emotional, and reflexive rigor of work (Mountz et al. 2015). We also suggest that responsible mentorship should incorporate honest discussion on the realities of career prospects and changing work demands in contemporary neoliberal universities, not to discourage students, but to better ensure that they understand the character of academic career paths – most of which now require full-time labor without the promise of tenure or contract renewal. Co-publishing with students and new faculty is a tactic that could help ensure that a commitment to slow scholarship does not sacrifice the career competitiveness of students and faculty pursuing a radical care ethics. Mentorship can be a vital avenue of emotional support and care for young scholars that inspires radical commitment while helping them navigate the priorities of neoliberal universities. Likewise, tenured faculty with job security and institutional capital should not leave it to their graduate students and new faculty to take on the neoliberal restructuring that is destabilizing careers and the radical potential of higher education, but should use their relative privilege to help lead these campaigns (Bauder 2006). This privilege especially applies to white faculty and male faculty, given that AAG data suggests that these groups continue to dominate instructional positions in US geography departments (AAG 2018).

It is clear that the status quo should not continue. As the state of precarity intensifies both outside and inside of higher education, we need a radical care ethics in geography more than ever. As academics, we must adjust approaches to account for the immediacy of that precarity. We need to bring this into research, teaching and activism to build relationships that nurture and support the well-being and empowerment of others, particularly young people. We concur with Springer (2012)

who argues that we need to embrace the immediacy of the *here* and *now*. We should ask ourselves and our peers: does our work support the ongoing efforts and resistance movements of those surviving on the margins? If so, how and in what ways? Do we approach research and teaching with a commitment to care and justice? If so, how do these commitments manifest and carry over into interactions with the people and communities we work in, the students we teach, and within our wider social and material networks? If geographers wish to remain relevant given the urgent demands and threats of this era, it is time for all of us to incorporate a radical care ethics in teaching, scholarship and activism. If the point is to change it (Castree et al. 2009), we need to draw from our pain, passion, anger, and empathy to build a more radical and caring geography.

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