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'Who Had to Die so I Could Go Camping?': Shifting non-Native Conceptions of Land and Environment through Engagement with Indigenous Thought and Action

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ABSTRACT

Scholarship in the area of social movements points to the importance of inter-group collaboration and alliance building. In the case of Indigenous-led movements and the issue of solidarity with non-Indigenous movement participants, scholarship at the intersection of Native studies and social movements suggests that such alliances can be built and sustained but that unlearning colonial attitudes and behaviors is central to this process. Through in-depth interviews with non-Native solidarity participants, this article considers how engagement with Indigenous thought and action re-shapes particpants' conceptions of environment and place. Findings suggest that such involvement calls attention to histories of violence as well as ongoing practices of dispossession causing activists to grapple not only with their personal and family histories but also with their evolving relationship with environmentalism.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous-Settler relations; settler colonialism; environmentalism

The United States of America, as a nation, exists through the ongoing occupation of Indigenous territories, suppression of Indigenous self-determination, and overlaying of settler-colonial narratives which erase Indigenous histories and on-going relations with place. As scholars of settler colonialism have demonstrated, this system 'destroys to replace', and that destruction has taken numerous forms ranging from overt genocide to cultural assimilation and erasure. Still, while the dominant mode of relations between the non-Native[1] citizens of settler-states and Indigenous peoples has been typified by violence, hostility, and theft, this should scarcely be understood as the only story (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388; Lipsitz, 2008; Grossman, 2017; Land, 2018; Norgaard, Reed and Bacon, 2018; Torpy, 2000). Studies of solidarity demonstrate a history of productive alliances between Indigenous peoples and non-Natives living in settler states (e.g. Barker, 2012; Land, 2018; Margaret, 2010; Grossman, 2017). In the wake of the heavily publicized Indigenous resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) there has been renewed public attention to questions of solidarity with Indigenous peoples.[2]

Understanding efforts at solidarity is a vital part of creating a more just future. For many Indigenous scholars, the process of creating a more just relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is called decolonization.[3] While there has been much said about the importance of decolonization, there is not one universally agreed

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upon vision of what decolonization will entail. Some of the shared features across definitions however are Indigenous self-determination and cultural resurgence, the elimination of settler-colonial dominance, and the return of considerable – if not all – lands acquired through colonization (e.g. Alfred, 2009; Kyle P. Whyte, 2016; Tuck & Wayne Yang, 2012). Decolonization will require a clear acknowledgment of and active contention with the legacies of genocide, assimilation, and erasure which shape contemporary conditions (Bradford, 2005; Regan, 2010; Steinmann, 2016).

It is essential that activists and scholars develop deeper analyses of inter-group solidarity within the context of decolonization. Such attention should be granted to both 'failed' and 'successful' cases so that the unique and salient features of solidarity efforts can act as lessons for future action. A clearer and more nuanced understanding of inter-group relations aimed at cooperation can guide future collaborative efforts and hopefully enable more successful liberatory engagements.

In this article, I draw on interviews with 21 non-Native-identified solidarity participants. I focus on those who have participated in Indigenous-led movements explicitly aimed at promoting the ecological and cultural integrity of places. In particular, I consider the way these non-Native actors describe their solidarity experiences and their relationships to place. The decision to limit my analysis to movements that might be called 'environmental' is informed by the central role of land and territory in settler colonialism (Alfred 2009; Coulthard, 2014; Wolfe, 2006). The decision is also informed by the work of numerous Indigenous thinkers who point to the land as vital for decolonization and Indigenous well-being (Baldy, 2013; LaDuke, 1999, 2005; Simpson, 2004; Wilson, 2005).

In attending to relationships to place in this research, I also question how discourses of environmentalism may inform participation. There is significant history of collaboration between Indigenous peoples and 'green' movements (Land, 2018; Grossman, 2017), yet the relationship between environmentalism and Native nations is also fraught. Some cherished institutions, such as 'wilderness' and National Parks, are directly tied to land theft and erasure (Spence, 1996; Taylor, 2016; Williams, 2002).

Despite colonial attitudes being at the historic core of mainstream environmentalism, as resource conflicts in the United States become more widely evident through high-visibility movement tactics, increases in militarized protest policing, and social media coverage of these conflicts (e.g. Keystone, DAPL, Line 3) it is likely that more non-Native people will be drawn to participating with or alongside Indigenous peoples in their movements to stop ecologically damaging projects. While some of the initial attraction to Indigenous resistance might be linked with inaccurate or romantic notions of Native peoples as universally 'ecological' there is also an increasing non-Native recognition of the power of treaty law, and the importance of traditional ecological knowledge.[4] As understanding increases, so too does the desire to build collaborative connections with Indigenous peoples. Evidence of this increase can be seen in the sheer numbers of non-Native peoples who began talking about and sharing information on the DAPL resistance, not to mention the numbers who traveled to North Dakota in hopes of joining the opposition to Energy Transfer Partners and their state-sponsored supporters.

This is not to say that these collaborations have always been successful or even unproblematic. Research suggests that there are numerous challenges and it is for this very reason that more research is warranted.

Inter-group Movement Collaboration/solidarity

Inter-group movement collaboration has long been a topic of interest in sociology. Work in the area of social movements demonstrates that collaboration takes numerous forms ranging from official organization alliances – or in extreme cases mergers – to more interpersonal alliance building between individual movement participants (e.g. Bandy & Smith, 2005; S. Staggenborg, 2010). Although very little sociological analysis in the U.S. has focused on questions of Indigenous-settler relations, there is a rich body of U.S. work looking at various collaborative and solidarity efforts across lines of race, class and gender (e.g. Van Dyke, 2003; Wood, 2005). As well as studies of cross-movement collaboration (e.g. Zald and McCarthy, 1979; Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). This work suggests the important roles that both ideological positions as well as and resource access play in the development of inter-group and cross-movement collaborations.

In most cases of inter-group collaboration, scholars contend that differences in access to resources and power inform alliance building and maintenance efforts (Beamish & Luebbers, 2009; Suzanne Staggenborg, 1986). Differences between groups may range widely, and embedded perceptions of appropriate interaction are informed by power differences. Davis (2010) contends that 'individuals and organizations may interact from very different concepts of relationship which embody varying power configurations' (p. 5). And these dissimilarities in both power, resources, and the resultant cultures of contention are important features of Indigenous-settler relations broadly, and figure more intensely in a collective action context (Grossman, 2017).

Indigenous-settler Relations and Solidarity

Although capacities for inter-group collaboration are generally informed by variances in power and resources, additional significant factors exist in the context of non-Native solidarity with Indigenous peoples. The creation and maintenance of unequal and oppressive relations are at the core of settler colonialism, and this informs social relations broadly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. While the material outcomes of power differences may mirror some of those commonly found in other oppressive structures – poorer health outcomes, limited access to decision-making, less wealth – there are specific features of Indigenous-settler relations which are especially salient for thinking about solidarity potential and outcomes.

Rifkin's concept of 'settler states of feeling' describes how the material and social conditions of settler colonialism generate particular emotional patterns for settlers which are then utilized to justify the continued occupation of Indigenous lands, and allegiance with the settler state (Rifkin, 2011). This concept can be applied across a range of Indigenous-settler relations. Mackey's (2014) analysis of anti-sovereignty movements and settler states of feeling illustrates the way settler-colonial law and cultural norms emerge from and reinforce settler states of feeling which are tied to a sense of 'entitlement to know everything (and therefore be certain)' of ones' right to the land and a future on the land (p. 250).

For my project, this particular set of emotions, which are unique to the settler-colonial context, are especially meaningful. If settlers, and to some extent all non-Native peoples, are conditioned to believe in the rightfulness of their claims to land and place through an

interplay of material conditions, discourse, and emotions we must suspect that these states of feeling present a barrier to solidarity which must be overcome in order to create better relations in the long term and to achieve short-term movement goals.

The term 'settler' itself has also been an object of analysis, especially with regard to its potential mobilizing capacity (MacDonald, 2016). In his consideration of the terms Pakeha[5] and settler, MacDonald (2016) suggests that both terms, as well as other descriptive constructions such as 'treaty person', have significance only to the extent that they are used to 'enable action, and to connect with a wider project of achieving reconciliation on Indigenous terms' (p. 659). In absence of this, the terms are likely to become 'rhetorical screens for continued inaction' (p. 646).

Scholars of Indigenous-settler relations also address the durability/immutability of settler identity, as well as the heterogeneity of settler identity. These concerns are salient in considerations of alliance/solidarity. There is an interest in the way non-Native identities are both variable, and simultaneously unaltered by this variability – especially with regard to engagement in solidarity. In their work, Barker and Pickerill (2012), who focus on the politics and practices of 'anarchists in the northern bloc' which they define as Canada and the United States, note that anti-colonial anarchists, even when participating in solidarity with decolonial movements 'cannot escape the identification and corresponding social privileges of being a Settler person'; at the same time both solidarity practitioners and Indigenous people must contend with a situation where 'while some Settler people may radically confront colonial power, the majority legitimate and benefit from it' (p. 1708). Another aspect of variability emerges from hierarchical systems which exist within settler-colonial society (e.g. Land, 2018; Margaret, 2010). Beyond the divisions generated by class, gender, sexuality, race, etc … there are also widely varied political affiliations.[6] Few scholars have contended with these differences, but some analyses of radical settlers suggest the importance of realigning radical settler activism toward a more relational approach that takes seriously the social practices and political aims of Indigenous peoples (Barker, 2012; Barker & Pickerill, 2012).

These diverse political orientations exist not only in the society at large, but also pervade environmentalism. Despite historic conflicts, there is the potential for a new environmentalism, which attends not only to ecological threat, but also threats to Indigenous cultures and sovereignty (e.g.Grossman, 2001; Grossman & McNutt, 2001). This possibility is posited not only for radical activists but also for rural whites in relatively conservative communities who are interested in defending their homes and livelihoods. The work of Anna J. Willow (2012) suggests 'when environmentalists refigure the categories that guide their relationships to the places they seek to protect, they also reconfigure the power structures underpinning their alliances with the indigenous groups who call those places home' (Willow, 2012, p. 371). These studies suggest positive potential for Indigenous-settler coalitions. Although tribes bring extensive knowledge of their traditional territories and peoples' histories along with moral and symbolic resources (e.g. Espeland, 2002; Willow, 2012), given the impacts of ongoing colonial occupation, tribes often lack material resources and are outnumbered by settlers even within their territories, making solidarity with settlers a potentially powerful tactic for effecting social change (Grossman & McNutt, 2001; Lipsitz, 2008). In his analysis of the walleye fishing conflict that rocked Wisconsin during the late 80s and early 90s, George Lipsitz (2008) contends that settler identities are altered in the process of solidarity. He writes, 'Native

Americans and their allies anticipated and attempted to preclude benevolent condescension, sympathy, or pity for native peoples from whites by asking them instead to inhabit identities in which struggling for social justice is a worthy goal for whites as a matter of self-interest and self-respect rather than an act of charity' (p.110 referencing Whaley & Bresette, 1994, p. 98).[7]

Place and Identity

'[T]he struggle for our lives, our lands, and our knowledge is a common struggle' – Waziyatawin (2004)

My interest in solidarity participants' perceptions of and relationships to place is informed by the profound relationship between identity and place which has been voiced by Indigenous peoples around the world, both inside and outside of the academy. These statements, as well as the literature produced by scholars of Indigenous Studies, express the continued significant connection between place and identity in Indigenous peoples' lives. Aileen Morton-Robinson (2003) calls this the 'ontological relationship to land' which is 'a condition of [Indigenous peoples'] embodied subjectivity'. She further contends that Indigenous subjectivity 'represents a dialectical unity between humans and the earth' which continues to 'unsettle white Australians' (36–37). Place also figures powerfully in the cultures of Indigenous peoples. This is true in both the U.S. and international contexts (e.g. Baldy, 2013; Coté, 2010; Whyte, 2013). Despite the fact that this connection is widespread and articulated in cultural products as well as scholarly analyses, there continues to be a lack of understanding of this connection on the part of the Western mainstream. Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) notes that Indigenous worldviews which reflect deep connections to specific places and species are not well understood or respected by dominant groups. She writes:

> The arguments of different indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept. These arguments give a partial indication of the different worldviews and alternative ways of coming to know, and of being, which still endure within the indigenous world. (p. 78)

One significant barrier to effective solidarity is the dominant perception that place is not especially salient to identity. While dominant-group refusals to engage meaningfully with Indigenous values and worldviews could very well be a result of racism mixed with colonial arrogance, the refusal may also be connected to increasingly common Western perceptions that place has become less salient in modern/cosmopolitan life (Giddens, 1991).

This perception, that place no longer has deep meaning in social life, has been fueled by increasingly powerful and efficient technologies of communication and transportation, through which societies become 'placeless' and social interaction 'now moves through nodes in one or another network' and is not necessarily rooted in a particular place (Gieryn, 2000 p. 463).[8] In the study of social life, place has continued to maintain a persistent presence in the literature, though it has not been actively analyzed (Gieryn, 2000). This lack of active analysis reflects the normative decline in attention to place within Western thought, despite the fact that place continues to operate in the background.[9]

Sociological work elucidating the relationship between identity and place suggests that physical/material conditions such as geographic proximity and economic interdependence play a strong role in shaping local identities and relationships between groups (Williams, 2002). Additionally, emotions, memory, and affect also figure prominently in the development of place and place-based identity (e.g. Olick, 1999; Wulfhorst, 2000; Rifkin, 2011; Buffam, 2011: Norgaard, Reed; Bacon, 2017).

Studies of place and identity demonstrate the material ways in which intangible forces (e.g. affect, imagination, emotion, memory) transform places through social interactions in space, and that 'the continual engagement of people with things and in environments creates places and affects' (Shields, Park and Davidson, 2011, p. 7). In his work on race and inner-city youth Bonar Buffam (2011) demonstrates the way that inner-city racial politics reflect legacies of Canada's effort to exclude Indigenous peoples through an 'imaginative geography' which rendered the land as 'uninhabited earth' (p. 201). The maintenance of this fiction inspired economic, political and legal structures that deprive Indigenous peoples of their land and wealth while simultaneously managing Indigenous bodies in ways that 'configure Aboriginal difference as a metonym for all the disreputable, criminal activities that are thought to pervade the inner city' (p. 202).

While this example demonstrates how the desires of the settler-culture and government in Canada produce and maintain injustice for Indigenous people in urban spaces, it is connected to larger themes of the contested meaning, uses, and occupations of places that are central to settler colonialism and thus central to all forms of resistance to settler-colonial projects. In particular, there are connections to the theory of colonial ecological violence which asserts that the disruption of Indigenous eco-social relations is a form of colonial aggression which occurs across a range of levels – physical/material, cultural, political, and discursive. Examples include the loss of traditional foods, the pollution and re-routing of waters, the disruption of ecological knowledge, the elimination of land tenure and usufruct rights, and the renaming or repurposing of culturally significant places (LaDuke, 1999; Simpson, 2004; Baldy, 2013; Norgaard, Reed; Bacon, 2017, 2018; Whyte, 2013). Whereas non-Native peoples tend to approach spaces as generic 'wilderness' or 'landscape', these places – from an Indigenous perspective – are enmeshed dense layers of cultural, political, and spiritual significance. These important cultural and ideological differences in approaches to place undoubtedly play a role in the challenges of inter-group solidarity between Native and non-Native peoples.

Methods

Because land is central to questions of colonialism, I have opted to focus on solidarity experiences within the context of land and water protection, or other projects which have a significant 'environmental' component. In order to understand the way solidarity with Indigenous peoples impacts non-Native perceptions of place and environment, I conducted interviews with N = 21 solidarity participants.

In addition to the N = 21 individual semi-structured interviews lasting forty minutes to two hours each, I also conducted one focus group lasting 90 minutes, and short follow-up interviews as needed. The first round of interviews (N = 12) occurred in 2012 & 2013 with student activists who had engaged in solidarity with the Winnemem Wintu. I then conducted a second round of interviews (N = 9) in what some of my participants called 'the

post-DAPL period', a label which reflects the importance of the Dakota Access Pipeline resistance in generating a cultural shift in solidarity discourse, even among those who did not go to North Dakota, and/or had already been long-term participants in solidarity practices.

I asked all participants to tell me about themselves, to describe their solidarity participation, and to reflect on the challenges, benefits, and requirements of solidarity participation. I also asked about participant thoughts about and relationship with environmentalism. Interviews were transcribed and coded.

My respondents' participation in Indigenous solidarity ranges from only one engagement at the time of their interview, to over forty years of participation. Despite this range, over 80% had participated in at least one high-risk event, that is an event where there was a reasonable likelihood of physical confrontation or arrest. All respondents identified as non-Indigenous.[10] All names have been changed.

This research is also informed by my own extended participation in solidarity actions, meetings, conversations and events both in person and online. Because of my long-term involvement, this research project is to a certain extent an example of insider research. While I had not personally worked with all of my participants, several of the original respondents were people I came to know during my own engagement. Additional respondents were gathered through snowball sampling, and through online recruitment via my personal social media pages, and through the pages of groups with known participation in solidarity work.

I believe that my status as an insider shaped not only my ability to generate interview participation, but that it also shaped the openness with which my questions were answered. I found my participation in Indigenous solidarity was most relevant in my face-to-face interviews, and especially salient with activists whom I had been in contact with during high-risk solidarity events. These interviews on the whole tended to last slightly longer, and elicited especially rich personal reflections. Although never directly voiced, I tend to think that our shared experiences in solidarity were the basis of collegial feeling between us, and that respondent's willingness to share deeply personal and emotional stories with me was informed by their understanding of me as not only a researcher, but as a person who shares their commitments to social change.

Findings

The people I spoke with while developing this project had a great deal to say about place and the environment. Their comments related to place/environment and solidarity tend to fall into one of three themes: *Genealogical and auto-biographical, Sites of resistance and sites of solidarity* and *Engagement with environmentalism as practice and movement*.

Genealogy and Autobiographies of Place

One of the most persistent themes was the reflection on personal experiences of place, and/or family connections to particular locations. Sixteen out of my N = 21 respondents reflected on how personal experiences of place were shaped by settler-colonial erasures. For example, many indicated that they had never met an Indigenous person before being

recruited to participate in solidarity. They connected this lack of knowledge to the places where they lived.

Eva, a long-term solidarity participant, spoke about a major turning point in her life, her decision to 'go back to the land'. Motivated by a desire to live 'lighter on the land' in a way that was fundamentally different from the dominant capitalist culture, Eva relocated to rural California in the 1990s. In our conversation, she acknowledged that prior to this move she had not really thought about Indigenous peoples as living on their traditional lands in thriving communities. She says, 'I grew up in Detroit . . . I had no idea whose land I was "going back" to'.

While moving to California brought Eva face-to-face with Indigenous peoples and their movements, other participants noted that despite living in the same region as a number of active Indigenous groups, they too had no prior knowledge of what was going on around them as far as Indigenous movements were concerned. Iris, who participated in solidarity with the Winnemem Wintu during her last few years as an undergraduate, commented on her own experience of growing up just a short distance away from Winnemem lands and the experience of sharing information about the Winnemem with her parents. 'I showed the videos to them [videos of conflicts between the Winnemem and recreationists who disrupt ceremonies] and you know it's powerful stuff watching . . . they're from California and you know, I feel like in everyday life and conversation, tribal rights isn't brought up very often . . . It's so unfair.'[11]

Other interviewees shared insights into their own families' complicity in settler-colonial projects. Samuel, a white student activist who grew up in California and participated in a variety of solidarity events, acknowledged direct family connections to the Gold Rush, and some of the initiating acts of genocide in California. For him, this knowledge fueled his desire to participate in solidarity. This desire was framed not only from a social justice perspective, but also an eco-social perspective. Samuel says, 'I definitely have benefited from stealing land so I feel a need to have a better relationship with the land and with the people'.

Similarly, Kaya, and mixed-race white/Asian-American woman in her early 20s who participated in a range of solidarity events, began her self-description with the phrase 'I'm from San Francisco, I'm fifth a generation Californian.' This prioritizing of both place and family history shaped our conversation. Kaya conveyed a deep understanding of her family's economic history including their property acquisition practices during a time when Chinese people were prohibited from owning land. Kaya reflected on this history as 'interesting', but also as 'colonial'. When discussing her own upbringing she said 'I definitely didn't grow up in a household . . . that was hostile toward Indigenous people. I think it was sort of just the standard . . . sympathetic settler thing of like, [we] probably haven't thought a whole lot about what repatriation would mean to us'. Kaya, like many of the participants who did not identify as white, expressed a nuanced understanding of the distinctions between race and non-Native identity. She told me, 'for me there's something weird about qualifying the identity of being a settler with oh but they're also queer, they're also Asian-American . . . it is like people use that qualifier as if it almost excuses or blurs the settler'. She expressed a deep discomfort with that practice, while still acknowledging the complexity of intersecting forms of systemic power. For Kaya, her participation in solidarity was informed by an aspiration to, as an Asian-American, 'not be as caught up

in what it means to be “American” but be caught up in what it means to be responsible to the people who first lived here’.

Interviewees’ reflections on their experiences of place and their connection to settler-colonial projects suggest one of the significant personal dynamics of what Lynne Davis (2010) calls ‘unsettling’. Acknowledgment of erasure as an influential force shaping their understandings of places and their relationships to those places suggests one of the mechanisms through which settler states of feeling generate a settler approach to environment and place-based identity. Participation in solidarity disrupts these feeling states.

Sites of Resistance and Sites of Solidarity

Interviewees’ also reflected on the way that particular places where they participated in solidarity became especially meaningful for them. In some cases, sites of resistance themselves enhanced non-Native commitments to solidarity. The people I spoke with were especially attentive to the way that pre-colonial histories as well as the histories of colonial ecological violence were alive in particular places (both natural and built). Overall, my findings suggest that being with/in places of contestation transforms settler thinking.

The transformative power of being in a contested place was especially pronounced in the reflections of high-risk activism participants. In the narratives of those who participated in solidarity with the Winnemem Wintu during the H’up Chonas (also called War Dance in English) river blockade, there were repeated references to how being at the dance grounds during ceremony profoundly impacted their thinking not only about the specific location (now known as the McCloud River Campground) but about occupied lands and Indigenous resistance more broadly.

Daniel, a participant who grew up in Southern Oregon, expressed that he had virtually no preexisting knowledge of Indigenous land conflicts prior to his participation in the blockade. He was recruited through his connections with an environmental organization on the campus where he was completing his undergraduate degree. Reflecting on the event, Daniel said, ‘[b]eing there [at War Dance] … was powerful. I realized yeah, you’re fighting for your life. If that dam goes up … [sacred places] will be gone … I was very moved.’

Similarly, Iris commented on the experience of walking around the ceremony grounds and listening to tribal members’ recollections of the place. She says:

> listening to people tell me like ‘oh this tree was planted by so-and-so’s great great grandfather’ and ‘this is where we did this’ … you know, to hear a history of this place and then to know most of the year it’s just a campground for people who have no idea of the history, was just really, it really put a lot of things into perspective I think. Now [when traveling] I wonder, whose land is this? Who had to die so I could go camping? Or whose family was forced to move so that we could be here?

This acknowledgment of how settler-colonialism has disrupted eco-social relations, and erased Indigenous place names, meanings, and uses was widespread in interview responses.

The histories of places also impacted the solidarity practices of my respondents. Greg described working in a building that had once been a boarding school. He says, ‘The place

where we were had a long history of violence . . . how do you work in that place and have a positive relationship with the people around you?' Although that site had long since been transformed, the legacy of what had happened in the building, and on the land remained a potent reminder of a specific form of colonial violence. This reminder generated substantial self-reflection throughout the course of Greg's solidarity work.

Similarly, James, a long-time participant who moved from the east coast to Oregon as young man, recounted his voyage across the United States saying, 'I stopped at Wounded Knee to pay my respects . . . it wasn't direct solidarity work . . . but after living here [Oregon] for two years the occupation of Wounded Knee came about and I was involved with an organization . . . and we supported.' In this case, James' knowledge of a specific place-based history of colonial violence, and the reactivation of that place as a public site of contention played a role in his mobilization.

For most of my respondents, some academic knowledge of environmental inequality and/or Indigenous struggles pre-dated their engagement with solidarity. Ninety percent talked about having read books on these topics, and sixty-five percent had taken formal classes. Still, although academic knowledge may inspire participation, it seems that experiences with/in place transform both understandings and practices.

Engaging with Environmentalism: Distancing from & Changing Movements

Some of the most profound shifts in thinking voiced by respondents were about environmental practices and environmentalism as a social movement. Most telling, is the self-identification of interviewees. Although 70% had at some point prior to the interview identified with and participated in environmental movements, only 35% still identified as an 'environmentalist' when being interviewed. Despite this precipitous drop off in identification with the environmental movement and the environmentalist label, a full 100% of subjects interviewed indicated that they had taken some form of political action in the past year designed to protect land or water.[12]

For some participants, there was a desire to reframe their participation in ecologically driven practices and politics as something other than environmentalism. For example, Eva, who discussed her long-time connection with tree-sitters and ongoing solidarity with folks working toward dam removal, did not identify as an environmentalist. She said, 'I want to live in a healthy good world but I wouldn't call myself an environmentalist, no.'

For some people, their experiences working with Indigenous people were cited as the reason for their reframing. James said of environmentalism, 'it's kind of a box. Even the idea of environment . . . the more you think about it, especially learning from Native people . . . you see it's still that disconnection . . . where the environment is this other thing . . . I don't know what the right word would be but, yeah.' Similarly, Samuel found himself again working toward ecologically driven politics as a result of participation in solidarity, but hesitated to identify as an environmentalist. He said, 'it wasn't until the salmon ceremony this summer where again I felt inspired in a big way to really talk to people about water and the dam and salmon . . . I guess I *could* call myself an environmentalist but it comes from a different place now'. The inflection Samuel used for the word 'could' accentuated his reluctance to take up such a label for defining his engagement with ecological concerns.

Respondents who did not strongly identify with the environmental movement either before or after participation in solidarity did raise concerns about the tensions between broad social justice interests, sovereignty, and environment especially with regard to the way these issues are engaged by solidarity participants. Erin, a person whose solidarity work has been largely focused on social justice for Indigenous peoples in an urban setting, but who had participated in environmental actions as well, noted that: 'On one hand . . . strategically, tribal sovereignty as a means of re-appropriating land is amazing [yet] I also think Native people and their connection to land gets romanticized sometimes . . . I think it's a work in progress. I think it's hard, and confusing.'

For other participants, the challenges of balancing multiple concerns was a topic of reflection. Ben, a white man who described himself as relatively new to both environmental activism and Indigenous settler solidarity raised this issue a number of times during our conversation. While reflecting on his experiences in the No DAPL resistance camps, Ben said, 'you can't agree with everybody . . . in every community people disagree with each other . . . and there's a certain point where you do have to choose . . . you have to be clear about what you're doing, and why you're interested . . . I struggle with it'. Ultimately, a number of respondents echoed these concerns about the challenges of balancing priorities.

However, for some participants, there was no distinction between the environmental protection and sovereignty supporting aspects of their solidarity. Rowan said simply, 'I'm . . . there to try and help the McCloud River and the salmon . . . I'm there as a voice for that just as much as I am for anything else'. In this participant's perspective advancing sovereignty was advancing ecology. While this articulation was unique, it seemed closely aligned with the actions of participants like James and Eva who have largely adopted perspectives about environment and sovereignty as tightly entwined, echoing the assertions of many Indigenous activist and indigenist scholars (e.g. LaDuke, 1999; Simpson, 2004; Wilson, 2005).

Analysis and Conclusion

Dakota scholar Waziyatawin (2012) writes, '[o]ne of the most pernicious aspects of every colonial power is its capacity to shape perceptions of reality' (p. 76). In this study, there is clear evidence of the way this perception work – at least to the extent that it shapes the thinking of non-Indigenous peoples – can be altered through collaboration with Indigenous-led place-based movements. These shifts in perception require confrontation with how prior thinking had been deeply informed by settler states of feeling (Rifkin, 2011).

Participants in this study demonstrate what Regan (2010) calls a need to 'understand history both intellectually and emotionally as an embodied place of connectivity' (p. 19). More than just more fully understanding history, participants in solidarity seem primed to make a deeper commitment to Indigenous self-determination over land and 'resources'. This is compatible with what Waziyatawin (2009) contends is essential to true reconciliation, that is 'a commitment to support Indigenous life, lands, and ways of being . . . a reworking of the existing social order' (p. 194).

The responses I gathered from solidarity participants suggest that engagement with Indigenous-led movements can alter non-Native perceptions of land, place, and

environmentalism. These altered perceptions seem to derive from increased understandings of both the historical processes of place-making and the cultural norms which promote ongoing occupation. This study also suggests that solidarity participation may focus participant attention on ongoing conflicts over place meaning and use well beyond the specifics of their solidarity experiences. While participants were committed to promoting ecological integrity, solidarity participation appears to radically transform participant relationships with the environmental movement.

It is worth noting that very few of my respondents were living close to sites of active contestation at the time of their interviews, although many had been during their initial solidarity mobilization. This raises questions about the long-term engagement and efficacy of these solidarity practices given studies which suggest the critical importance of strong bonds to local landscape and commitment to place as central in successful alliances (Zoltán. Grossman, 2017). For nearly all of my respondents, political affinity – or the perception of political affinity – was the starting point of solidarity rather than a shared concern for a contested place, something Barker and Pickerill (2012) actually suggest can be a detriment to solidarity organizing. While some of my respondents have developed strong connections to place, many remain outside of that place-based affinity in most of their solidarity practices, traveling sometimes long distances to provide physical or material support for movements they wish to support.

Future research might explore these questions about how solidarity participation changes perceptions of land and place: Do these shifts last? What types of engagement generate the most profound shifts? Are these shifts dependent upon other biographical factors? Longitudinal studies with solidarity practitioners could perhaps provide a clearer picture of how engagement in anti-colonial and decolonial work influences non-Indigenous peoples over the life course.

Perhaps more critically, how do the Indigenous people who work alongside solidarity participants understand the actions of non-Native participants? What is useful from an Indigenous perspective? What needs to change? Studies attending to the particular challenges and outcomes of solidarity with Indigenous peoples and movements could generate useful information which might inform lasting alliances and transformed eco-social relations within the United States.

Notes

1. In this work, I use the term 'non-Native' to refer to anyone who does not identify as Indigenous. In some bodies of research, 'settler' is taken to mean all non-Indigenous peoples living on Indigenous lands. At times I use that terminology especially when referring to bodies of scholarship that tend toward this phrasing. Academic and activist contention over the most accurate and useful terms is ongoing.
2. The resistance to No DAPL should not be understood as significantly different from numerous other place-based resistance movements led by Indigenous peoples except in terms of its size and public coverage. Zoltán. Grossman (2017) suggests this is the most well-known Indigenous mobilization in the United States since the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee (p. 190).
3. Participation in solidarity does not obliterate the privileges bestowed upon non-Native peoples in settler-colonial states, but a desire to engage in more just relations is central to any project for social change. Understanding why settler descendants and other non-Natives participate, how they participate, and what encourages them to keep attempting to act in solidarity is an important part of transforming relations.

4. Consider, for example, the big name environmentalists who began acknowledging the power of Indigenous thinking and political action during the No DAPL protests (e.g. Bill McKibben's comment published in *The New Yorker* September 2016). The environmental movement's interest in the utility of treaty rights to defend ecology is actually not new. Zoltán. Grossman's (2017) work for example, demonstrates that this is a long-term trend with known roots at least as far back as the 1970's and 1980's case of The Western Federation of Outdoor Club's support of the Boldt Decision as one which provides 'a new source of environmental control of value to the entire community' (p. 46). What I am suggesting here is that the No DAPL resistance has encouraged a new generation of environmentalists to come to these same realizations in a very public way.
5. A Māori term which indicates a non-Māori identity.
6. Anarchists, communists, democratic socialists, liberals, neo-liberals, conservatives, libertarians to name but a few.
7. In the Wisconsin case being discussed by Lipsitz solidarity is between white settlers and the Ojibwe. This is not to suggest that settler is analogous with white.
8. Indeed, Indigenous thinkers have similarly pointed to the placeless or rootless characteristics of colonial society. Though ironically, it is the suggestion of Indigenous peoples as nomadic or rootless which has so often been mobilized as a rationalization for the theft and settlement of land (Wolfe, 2006).
9. Geiryn (2000) notes, 'place matters for politics and identity, history and futures, inequality and community. Is there anything sociological not touched by place? Probably not' (p. 482).
10. My participant selection has been to some extent informed by conversations about solidarity which have proliferated outside of the academy. These conversations around how and why people should participate in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in what is called 'North America' have been diverse. In activist communities, media, and public discourse settlers, Indigenous peoples, and those who do not neatly fit in either of these categories (e.g. multi-ethnic people, the descendants of enslaved peoples, new arrivals) have raised concerns about how identity and relationships to place inform social movement participation, particularly in movements led by Indigenous peoples. While I acknowledge that the binary of Indigenous/non-Indigenous is in some ways too simplistic and that both of these terms are contested, I focus on people who do not identify as Indigenous in order to allow for the widest selection possible while simultaneously ensuring that I would be speaking with and hearing the thoughts of individuals who had – at least in their own understanding – participated in inter-group solidarity while working with Indigenous peoples (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Land, 2018).
11. Feelings of unfairness were expressed in various ways, but it was clear that respondents felt that not only were Indigenous people being unjustly deprived of their lands and rights, but that non-Natives were also being deprived of a factual accounts of conditions which might influence them to act differently or at least promote more effective engagement in struggles for change.
12. This shift raises important questions for future research: Can solidarity participants become bridges between environmental movements and Indigenous movements? What are the challenges to such bridging? Can solidarity participants change the focus of the environmental movements and organization they had preexisting relationships with? How?

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