

MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE: EXAMINING
ENVIRONMENTAL REPRODUCTIVE INJUSTICES WITHIN
NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

by

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The intersection of environmental and reproductive justice illustrates the inherent connection of physical and ecological health. Approaching reproductive justice primarily as an issue of environmental justice allows for deeper analysis of how targeted pollution affects physical processes including reproduction. Examining cases of environmental reproductive injustice within Native American communities demonstrates how environmental racism and its various effects are weaponized as tools of settler colonial power structures, meant to disempower and replace Indigenous communities. The continued efforts to control and regulate Indigenous women's bodies by targeted environmental pollution reflect ongoing colonialist processes of sterilization and eradication. Previous scientific studies inspiring this research demonstrate the relation between environmental pollution of Native American Reservations and traditional lands and the increased risk of unsuccessful pregnancies, lower sperm count, delayed menstruation or contaminated breast milk (See Langston; Hoover; Fitzgerald). With developments in humanities academia and activist language, such as environmental justice (EJ) and reproductive justice (RJ) allow for the following analysis

of movements addressing this intersection (See Bullard; Doverspike, Nicole; LaDuke; Japenga). In order to expand on this scientific and sociological finding, this paper investigates existing approaches to environmental reproductive justice for Native American women and the kinds of legal or bureaucratic barriers they face by interviewing representatives of existing organizations. While some studies have begun examination of the intersection of environmental justice and reproductive justice, this paper specifically analyzes what existing organizations are doing to solve these problems and what sort of barriers they face.

This research aims to answer the following questions: How is environmental racism affecting reproductive justice for Native American women? How is infertility via environmental racism used as a continuation of settler colonialism? How can things change and why haven't appropriate changes been made thus far? What are the legal conditions barring this process? I argue that if organizations are aware of the environmental reproductive injustices happening to Native American peoples, then the barriers to legal solutions are evidence of continued settler colonialism in the legal system.

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Chapter 1: What Happened at Shoalwater Bay?

During the late 1980s and early 1990s in Washington State's Shoalwater Bay Tribe in Washington, "half of all pregnant women either lost their babies before birth or did not see them reach their first birthday."¹ This meant that of the 27 confirmed pregnancies on the reservation from 1987 to 1992, 12 were miscarried, two were stillborn, and three died as infants, leaving only ten surviving children.² This literal dead zone was specific to the land, as "several tribal women left the reservation during their pregnancies, had successful pregnancies, and when non-tribal women came onto the reservation, they experienced miscarriage."³ The NBC Nightly News covered the tragic phenomenon in 1993 and painted the situation as a mystery to not only the community, but to federal and state health officials. The hired state nurse filmed interviewing the tribes' women blamed "the lack of prenatal care" and said "They admit to too much smoking, drinking, and drug use."⁴ According to NBC, Shoalwater Bay's series of failed pregnancies was just another tragic case of poverty and drug addiction in the Native American community.

However, this nationally broadcasted narrative of alcoholism and neglect does not hold up to reality or the Shoalwater people's experiences. Dr. Mary Hodgson Rose, who ran free clinics on the reservation, told the Baltimore Sun in 1994 that over a

¹ Tina Kelley, "Ailing Shoalwater Tribe of Wash. Charges Indian Health Service with Negligence," *Baltimoresun.com*, May 8, 1994, accessed May 21, 2019, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1994-05-08-1994128026-story.html>.

² Tim Brokaw and Jim Maceda, "Why Are Children of Shoalwater Tribe Dying?" *NBC Nightly News*. New York, NY : NBCUniversal Media, LLC., 03/02/1993. Accessed Fri May. 17 2019 from NBC Learn: <https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse?cuecard=2326>.

³ Nancy Langston, "Toxic inequities: Chemical exposures and indigenous communities in Canada and the United States," *Nat. Resources J.* 50 (2010): 393.

⁴ Brokaw and Maceda, 1993.

concentrated five-year sobriety effort “the tribe has gone from 99 percent drinkers to 85 percent nondrinkers.”⁵ The lack of proper reproductive health care in this rural part of Washington State was not, as NBC framed it, inexplicable or unbeknownst to federal and state governments. The Shoalwater Bay tribe reported the lack of available prenatal care to the Indian Health Service (IHS) – the government organization responsible for the tribe’s health care – six years prior to the tribe’s declaration of a health emergency in 1992.⁶ In the same Nightly News segment that indirectly excused the inaction of IHS by blaming alcohol and drug abuse, tribal members directly spoke to the government neglect they experienced due to their small size. As head of the tribal council Kirb Wydish said, “The tribe, and me in particular, are getting real damn tired of hearing that because we’ve only got 150 people we don’t count.”⁷ In fact, the governmental neglect contributing to the loss of multiple children was so blatant that tribal chairman Herbert Whitish called the tribe’s trend of failed pregnancies “bureaucratic genocide.”⁸ Contrary to NBC reporter Jim Maceda, the series of failed pregnancies did not, in fact, change the government’s response. After it was used as a media spectacle, the mystery of the Washington coast dead zone faded from popular attention and was filed in the public mind under the strange and unusual.

Reflecting on this event in modern times and the sparse news coverage it received begs the question, what happened? If the impoverished, government-neglected people were not to blame, who was? The answer lay in what the IHS had explicitly

⁵ Kelley, 1994.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Brokaw and Maceda, 1993.

⁸ Kelley, 1994.

ignored in their preliminary reports, instead emphasizing and scapegoating poor health habits; the poisoning of this dead zone was caused by environmental pollution. In the initial report to IHS, the tribe proposed multiple environmental causes to the failed pregnancy patterns, including a “dump a mile from the reservation and chemicals used on nearby forests and oyster beds.”⁹ However, it was not until the 1997 EPA report – five years after the declared health emergency, three years after media coverage, and 11 years after being first reported to the IHS-- that both federal and state governments concluded the largest contributor to contamination was the “drainage from nearby cranberry bogs receiving intensive pesticide application.”¹⁰ The five-year period of tragic failed pregnancies at Shoalwater Bay caused by concentrated pollution ignored by federal and state governments demands a more thorough examination of the multiple levels of institutional and systemic oppression targeting Indigenous peoples in the United States.

The events at Shoalwater Bay illustrate how environmental pollution directly obstructs reproductive justice of Native American people. What happened at Shoalwater Bay demonstrated how targeted environmental pollution is weaponized as a tool of continued settler colonialism to oppress Native Americans in the United States. What happened at Shoalwater Bay, while extreme, it is not unique. More often than not, environmental racism does not occur as explicitly, visibly, and emotionally as the injustices presented at Shoalwater Bay. Instead, the violence of environmental pollution

⁹ Kelley, 1994.

¹⁰ United States of America. Environmental Protection Agency. *The Shoalwater Bay Reservation: a limited environmental assessment: 1994-1995*. Seattle, WA: U.S. EPA, Office of Environmental Assessment, Region 10, (1997) vi.

occurs slowly, over time, and out of sight.¹¹ Around the same time that Shoalwater Bay faced rocketing fetal and infant mortality rates, the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne also experienced environmental contamination due to expanding industry and long-term government oversight. Akwesasne lands straddles what is now the Northern US and Canada border, encompassing both banks of the St Lawrence River. The introduction of hydroelectric dams beginning in the 1950s powering three major factories – General Motors, Reynolds Metals Company, and Aluminum Company of America.¹² GM’s toxic activities were so bad that “the General Motors – Central Foundry Division Superfund hazardous waste site”¹³ less than 100 feet west of the Akwesasne caused the gradual poisoning of the river and its residents over several decades. Industrial chemicals including polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), fluoride, dichlorodiphenyl dichloroethylene (DDE), mercury, mirex, hexachlorobenzene (HCB), and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs),¹⁴ all of which are shown to have “adverse health effects on the immune system, reproductive system and nervous system,”¹⁵ contaminated the St. Lawrence River over three decades.

Consumption of polluted water is ubiquitous in modern America, especially in the Great Lakes region. However, it poses a greater health risk for Native American

¹¹ Rob Nixon, “Introduction,” *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹² “Environmental Contamination.” Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment. Accessed June 03, 2017.

¹³ Edward F. Fitzgerald et al., “The Association between Local Fish Consumption and DDE, Mirex, and HCB Concentrations in the Breast Milk of Mohawk Women at Akwesasne,” *Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology* 11, no. 5 (June 28, 2001): , doi:10.1038/sj.jea.7500180.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Terri Hansen, “Akwesasne Mohawk Youth Are Still at Risk of Industrial Pollutants,” *IndianCountryToday.com*, June 21, 2011, , accessed May 21, 2019, <https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/akwesasne-mohawk-youth-are-still-at-risk-of-industrial-pollutants-1bzRAjG4pkybae8ApVuDcQ/?sort=NewestFirst>.

communities whose “tradition and culture emphasize[d]...and depended on local fish, waterfowl, and mammals for food.”¹⁶ In this way, the contamination of a specific geographic area directly affected the health of Native peoples more than their non-Native neighbors. The decades of unmonitored pollution poisoned both fish and Akwesasne in unprecedented levels resulting in a two fold increase of PCB concentration in women's breast milk compared to non-Native women in the same area. Young girls at Akwesasne reached menarche years behind their non-Native peers, suggesting interference both developmentally and specifically within the reproductive health system.¹⁷ While the Akwesasne Mohawk were able to address the problem by drastically limiting fish consumption, their “traditional lifestyle has been completely disrupted, and [they] have been forced to make choices to protect future generations.”¹⁸ Elimination of a traditional first food for the protection of unborn generations fosters anger within the community at environmental injustice and lack of both corporate and government responsibility. This direct method of targeted contamination of environmentally specific cultural traditions exemplifies the ways in which social reproduction is made unattainable for those oppressed by social institutions. The “bureaucratic genocide” affecting Indigenous communities today operates on an intersection of multiple oppressive institutional forces including settler colonialism, environmental racism, misogyny, and racial population control ideology. These forces manifested with tangible immediacy at Shoalwater Bay through a

¹⁶ Fitzgerald et al., 382.

¹⁷ Edward Fitzgerald et al., “Fish Consumption and Breast Milk PCB Concentrations Among Mohawk Women at Akwesasne.” *Am J Epidemiol* (1998); 148 (2): 164-172.

¹⁸ Doverspike, Jill Nicole . "Mother's Milk Project." Mother's Milk Project - English 487W: West of Everything. April 30, 2012. Accessed June 03, 2017.

multiple-year period of majority unsuccessful pregnancies. This same intersectional oppression of environmental reproductive injustice manifested at Akwesasne in a much slower, consistent, and less visible way through proven environmental contamination. Both however, are an attack on the reproduction of Indigenous communities, and are especially damaging because of the contained area and small community affected over multiple generations.

As a marginalized group displaced from their own land and consistently deprived of autonomy via targeted government actions, the long-term oppression and injustices faced by Native Americans is especially clear in analysis of environmental justice (EJ) and reproductive rights. The historic reproductive injustice of forced sterilization of Native American women is an explicit representation of the systematic attack on reproduction of Native communities. Applying a framework of environmental justice to reproductive injustice illuminates the intersection of both movements in supporting the power of a healthy population: “The concept of environmental reproductive justice involves ensuring that a community’s reproductive capabilities are not inhibited by environmental contamination.”¹⁹ The lack of appropriate government response or action to environmental contamination is especially clear through the multiple failures and oversight of quantitative risk assessments, and represents a larger history of colonialist oppression.²⁰ Geographically specific contamination of environments demonstrates a targeted oppression against Indigenous cultures with

¹⁹ Elizabeth Hoover and others, "Indigenous Peoples of North America: Environmental Exposures and Reproductive Justice," *Environmental Health Perspectives*, (2012)

²⁰ Nancy Langston, "Toxic inequities: Chemical exposures and indigenous communities in Canada and the United States," *Nat. Resources J.* 50 (2010): 393.

specific cultural diets and traditional ceremonies regularly dependent on location and local foods/resources.²¹ The contamination of one of these cultural food staples that has been integrated in Indigenous communities for over 900 years, such as fish to the Akwesasne Mohawk, is an intentional colonialist attack on social reproduction and the maintenance of cultural traditions that have resisted erasure under 200 years of colonialism in the United States. In the communities of Shoalwater Bay and Akwesasne Reservations, issues of environmental contamination and reproductive justice converged in a struggle to maintain future generation's existence and resist erasure through colonialism. The intersection between Native American environmental issues and reproductive justice acknowledges the common oppressive system of colonialism subjugating both women and the environment. Targeted environmental degradation and pollution of Native communities is the most current iteration of colonial oppression of Native Americans.

²¹ Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2007):191.

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methods

In response to the environmental reproductive injustices facing Native Americans, many grassroots and non-profit organizations formed to challenge these issues. Organizations serving Indigenous peoples in the United States include National Indian Child Welfare Association, Women Empowering Women for Indian Nations, and SisterSong. These organizations address issues of environmental reproductive injustice for Native Americans, either specifically or institutionally. However, the issue of environmental reproductive justice is unspecified in mainstream social movements and legal advancements in terms of recognition, and reparations have yet to occur. Therefore, it is important to analyze the existing organizations and factors that may limit productivity in reaching their goal. To address this, I conducted interviews with existing organizations that focus on addressing issues of environmental injustice, and/or reproductive injustice for Native American people. By interviewing these organizations about their work, obstacles, legal limitations, and goals, I gathered information about whether or not the obstacles these organizations face are a continuation of systemic oppression.

Research Questions:

My research aims to answer the following questions: How is environmental contamination affecting reproductive justice for Native American women? How is infertility via environmental pollution used as a continuation of settler colonialism? How can things change and why haven't appropriate changes been made thus far? What are the legal conditions barring this process? I hypothesize that if organizations are

aware of the environmental reproductive injustices happening to Native American peoples, then the blockades to solution are the result of continued settler colonialism in the legal system, conscious or not.

Significance:

The purpose of my research is to analyze the accessibility, assets and limitations of organizations designed to protect reproductive and environmental health of Native American people. This contributes to legal research regarding the capacity of non-profit and government organizations in navigating between different forms of government to solve a health issue. Previous scientific studies proved the negative effects of targeted environmental pollution to Indigenous populations on reproductive health, affecting processes such as menstruation, pregnancy success rates, and sperm counts. While some studies have examined the intersection of environmental justice and reproductive justice, my research looks more specifically at what existing organizations are doing to solve these problems and what sort of barriers they face.

Approach:

Analyzing environmental injustice within Indigenous communities requires a decolonized framework that centers the narratives of systematically oppressed people. In researching the weaponization of infertility through environmental pollution to continue settler colonialism, it is of primary importance to center the narratives of those directly affected by the issue. The power of personal narratives and the shift in power from the social structure to the social actor cannot be understated. Narrative can be defined in two levels: an individual cognitive process of meaning-making and the

social level of story-making.²² The cognitive process of meaning-making describes “the mental act of sense-making from the material of the empirical world” while story-making leads to “a multilevel definition of narrative” that is anchored in “beliefs about social categories, collective memory, and social representations of history and collective identity.”²³ With the understanding of narratives as tools for shaping social categories, also known as narrative engagement, it is important to include a wide variety of perspectives in order to successfully challenge individual’s position in a hegemonic “master narrative.”²⁴ When used appropriately and in placement of historical contexts, “Narratives can thus serve as anchors of resistance and provide a sense of collective agency.”²⁵ Therefore, in my approach to this subject, I focus on recording personal narratives from those who have organized against the issues of reproductive injustice, environmental injustice, and Native American injustice. In practice, this took the form of researching organizations mentioned in relevant literature and conducting interviews with representatives of the organizations. In these interviews I seek to emphasize the power of personal experience and the ability of narratives to connect people and explain their approach to these injustices in a personal and unifying way.

Methodology:

For this research, I contacted Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, Indian Health Services, National Indian Child Welfare Association, Women

²² Hammack, Phillip L., and Andrew Pilecki. "Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Political Psychology." *Political Psychology* 33, no. 1 (2011): 75-103. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00859.78.

²³ Hammack and Pilecki, 78.

²⁴ Hammack and Pilecki, 77.

²⁵ Hammack and Pilecki, 92.

Empowering Women for Indian Nations, SisterSong, Reproductive Health Access Project, Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center, and Georgia Women's Action for New Directions (WAND). All contact with organizations and the few subsequent interviews was done with with IRB Human Subjects approval and recorded with consent of the interviewees.²⁶ These organizations represent a broad geographic and political range of programs that advertise as addressing environmental justice, reproductive justice or both for Native American people in the United States. As optimistic as I approached this research project, I did not adequately account for the necessary time associated with persistent pestering of government organizations to talk about social justice issues for free with an undergraduate student. Due to this, I did not obtain my initial goal of five recorded interviews and instead obtained three by the time of this draft. I successfully held interviews with representatives from Women Empowering Women for Indian Nations, Reproductive Health Access Project, and Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center. I recorded these phone interviews, transcribed the resulting audio file, and emailed each participant the final transcription for their own records. While the participatory organizations were incredibly useful, the limited number does not suffice for an accurate assessment of all federal/nonprofit organizational efforts to address environmental reproductive injustice for Native American women. Thus, I integrate the words of experience and knowledge from the three women I interviewed throughout a larger analysis of existing sociological approaches to these intersecting injustices. After transcribing these interviews, I coded for similar themes and analyzed the similarities and differences between organizations

²⁶ See Attached Materials; IRB Protocol #02112019.020.

and their responses. Excerpts of the interviews I held with representatives from Women Empowering Women for Indian Nations, Reproductive Health Access Project, and Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center appear throughout the following thesis supporting my larger argument that targeted environmental pollution causing infertility is a tool of continued settler colonialism.

The first interview I conducted was with Hailey Elizabeth Broughton-Jones, the Program and Communications Associate at the Reproductive Health Access Project (RHAP). She described her position as focusing “primarily on [their] network program, which is mobilizing, training, and supporting over 25,000 primary clinicians [for] mainstream abortion care specifically but also generally mak[ing] reproductive health care accessible to everyone in the US.”²⁷ RHAP is a non-profit based in New York City, New York that receives funding from anonymous grants and their “base of donors.”²⁸

Next, I interviewed Charon Asetoyer, “the founding director of the Native American Community Board,” (NACB).²⁹ On the RHAP website, Charon is described as an “award-winning, nationally-recognized Comanche activist and longtime women’s health advocate.”³⁰ NACB is the governing body or “parent organization” of the Native American Women’s Health Education Resource Center” (NAWHERC) and the “CEO of the organization.”³¹ The primary goal of this “community based organization” is to

²⁷ Hailey Elizabeth Broughton-Jones, "Interviews for Environmental Reproductive Justice Thesis," telephone interview by author, April 23, 2019.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Charon Asetoyer, "Interviews for Environmental Reproductive Justice Thesis," telephone interview by author, April 23, 2019.

³⁰ "Native American Heritage Month: Charon Asetoyer," Reproductive Health Access Project, February 04, 2019, , accessed May 21, 2019,

³¹ Asetoyer, 2019.

“improve the lifeways of Indigenous women and families.”³² The NACB is a “non-profit, community-based organization...based on Yankton-Sioux reservation in Lake Andes, South Dakota.”³³

Finally, I talked with Susan Masten, Yurok founder and co-president of Women Empowering Women for Indigenous Nations (WEWIN). WEWIN is a “nonprofit under a tribal government” based in San Francisco, California. She described her organization’s goal as offering “an environment that is supportive, uplifting, encouraging for [Native women] and offers network opportunities...professional and personal development trainings for Native women.”³⁴

³² Asetoyer, 2019.

³³ Asetoyer, 2019.

³⁴ Susan Masten, "Interviews for Environmental Reproductive Justice Thesis," telephone interview by author, May 5, 2019.

Chapter 3: Environmental Justice, Biopower and Reproductive Justice

Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is largely viewed as a social movement, and the effects of EJ on environmental theory are essential to understanding the context of mainstream, elitist environmentalism that EJ theory challenges. Working within the sphere of environmental justice recognizes the ways that environmental risks and benefits are differentially distributed “based on race, class, ethnicity, gender, or age.”³⁵

Understanding the intersection of these various marginalized identities –also known as intersectionality – is therefore crucial to EJ theory as it applies intersectional oppression to environmentalism. The recognition of environmental pollution as a form of oppression inspired the 1991 National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, organized in part by Robert Bullard. At this summit, delegates drafted and adopted 17 principles of Environmental Justice.³⁶ These principles, shown in the figure below, are the founding ideas of EJ theory and this project’s pursuit. Most specifically, the final principle requiring that “we, as individuals...make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations”³⁷ inspires further evaluation of environmental racism effects on reproductive health for marginalized populations. The principles of Environmental Justice also explicitly recognize the “special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements,

³⁵ W. C. Clark et al., "Relationships of Environmental Justice to Ecological Theory," *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America* 88, no. 2 (April 2007): , accessed May 6, 2019, Wiley.

³⁶ See Figure 1.

³⁷ See Figure 1: Principles of Environmental Justice #17

compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.”³⁸ Recognizing the unique and significant intersection of Native American peoples to environmental justice requires examination of their cultural and traditional connection to their land that has been forcibly taken, colonized, and polluted.

Instead of focusing on the mainstream (read: “white”) environmentalist approach of protection and conservation of so-called “wilderness,” environmental justice analyzes the effects of environmental pollution on individual and community health and recognizes the environment as both the natural and constructed places people exist in. Environmental justice is the social movement that developed from national awareness of environmental racism, which became more known to the mainstream in 1982 when “civil rights activists organized to stop the state of North Carolina from dumping 120 million pounds of soil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the county with the highest proportion of African Americans.”³⁹ The same year, Dr Benjamin Chavis coined and defined the term environmental racism as:

...racial discrimination in environmental policy making, the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the ecology movements.⁴⁰

Since the first introduction and definition of environmental racism, academia, both social and scientific in nature, have found that “ethnic minorities, indigenous persons, people of color, and low-income communities confront a high burden of environmental

³⁸ See Figure 1: Principles of Environmental Justice #11

³⁹ Paul Mohai, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts, "Environmental Justice," Annual Review of Environment and Resources 34, no. 1 (July 28, 2009): 406.

⁴⁰ Mohai, Pellow, and Roberts, 407.

exposure from air, water, and soil pollution from industrialization, militarization, and consumer practices.”⁴¹ Understanding the larger and relatively recent history of the environmental justice movement allows greater perspective to the intersection of multiple systems of oppression at work with environmental racism. By focusing on the environmental racism targeted on Indigenous populations, the association between environmental racism and larger structures of colonialism, capitalism, and industrialization become evident.

Biopower:

Understanding the multi-faceted process of subjugation of bodies is essential in the conversation of reproductive justice. The reproductive justice movement is best expressed as an effort to regain individual biopolitical agency, which currently resides in the control of the state/government. French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault defined biopower as the practice of modern nation states regulating their subjects through “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations.”⁴² The control of populations directly relates to political power as the main concern of biopower is “the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.”⁴³ Encompassing both the power and control over life and death, biopower claims to ensure a population’s welfare while also rationalizing the “bureaucratic

⁴¹ Mobai, Pellow, and Roberts 406.

⁴² Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2007).

⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Governmentality*, 100, as quoted in: Jonathan Xavier Inda, (2002). *Biopower, Reproduction, and the Migrant Woman's Body*. In A. J. Aldama, & N. H. Quiñonez (Eds.), *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21st Century* (pp. 98-112), 99.

genocide” of entire populations. Therefore, “the counterpart of the power to secure an individual’s continued existence is the power to expose an entire population to death.”⁴⁴ As Foucault explains, it is often the case that “entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity...It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed.”⁴⁵ Understanding biopower within a colonialist context, Native American people are “mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter” in order to achieve complete eradication and replacement as well as a longer-term goal of accessing Native territory for the benefit of the colonizer population. Reproduction directly enters the conversation of biopower and biopolitics on a personal and physical level as it links “the anatomopolitics of the human body with a biopolitics of the population.”⁴⁶ Therefore, reproductive justice exists in opposition to larger systems of biopower that center white supremacy, colonization, and capitalism arguing these systems are most beneficial for the majority population.

Reproductive Justice:

The politically oppressive effects of biopower are clearly demonstrated in both the initial ambition of the birth control movement as well as the racist ideology indirectly supporting the movement. On the surface, the birth control movement seeks to increase the agency of all women, as the time investment of pregnancy, birthing, and

⁴⁴ Jonathan Xavier Inda, (2002). *Biopower, Reproduction, and the Migrant Woman's Body*. In A. J. Aldama, & N. H. Quiñonez (Eds.), *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21st Century* (pp. 98-112), 99.

⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2007), 137.

⁴⁶ Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, "Biopower Today," *BioSocieties* 1, no. 2 (2006): , doi:10.1017/s1745855206040014; 208.

raising children was well acknowledged as a barrier to political agency: “if women remained forever burdened by incessant childbirths and frequent miscarriages, they would hardly be able to exercise the political rights they might win.”⁴⁷ However, the potentially progressive movement soon revealed its roots in eugenic ideology and strayed from “the individual right to birth control” and instead became the “racist strategy of population control.”⁴⁸ Before birth control or sterilization was accepted as an optional tool of political agency for white women, it was forcibly used as “a strategy of negative eugenics to contain people of color and immigrants.”⁴⁹ Instead of guaranteeing its original aim to provide women sexual agency and choice in their pregnancies, birth control was used as “a weapon to ‘prevent the American people from being replaced by alien or Negro stock.’”⁵⁰ The push for “scientifically” selective breeding, coined as “eugenics” in 1833, provided a pseudo-scientific excuse for sterilizing “undesirable” groups. These preferences were used to justify “white supremacy as a politicized and publicly supported platform.”⁵¹ As a result, many marginalized communities were forcibly made infertile by the United States government.⁵² Understandably, women of color were hesitant to support the “voluntary motherhood” movement of the 1970s that largely ignored birth control’s racist history.

⁴⁷ Angela Y. Davis, "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights," in *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Random House, 1981): 357.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁴⁹ Loretta J. Ross et al., *Radical Reproductive Justice: Foundation, Theory, Practice, Critique* (New York City: Feminist Press, 2017): 64.

⁵⁰ Davis, 360-361.

⁵¹ Ross et al., 65.

⁵² For more information, see: Andrea Tone, *Devices and Desires: A History of Contraceptives in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).

The reproductive justice movement confronts social and structural attempts to regulate and subjugate women's bodies by fighting for individual autonomy and agency regarding reproduction. Therefore, establishing reproductive justice within intersectional feminism requires a change of language and protection of social reproduction, or the production and reproduction process upon which all communities (human and non-human) depend.⁵³ Connecting back to Foucault's idea of biopower, this means reproduction must be understood in a structural and institutional scale because reproductive decisions "are made within a social context, including inequalities of wealth and power."⁵⁴ Changing the language from "choice" is necessary because it "implies a marketplace of options...ignoring the fact that for women of color, economic and institutional constraints often restrict their 'choices.'"⁵⁵ Broadening the definition of reproductive injustice expands the ideology of individual choice to the social inequalities that often influence reproductive choices reframes the issue as a matter of social justice. Analyzing both modern and historic social injustices that governmental systems rooted in settler colonialism use to oppress Native Americans reproduction demonstrates explicit and obscure subjugation of Indigenous bodies that directly aligns with colonialist biopolitics. The practice of forced sterilization against Native American women is perhaps the most tangible example of reproductive injustice in the history of the United States. Less explicitly, reproductive injustice against Indigenous populations

⁵³ DiChiro, 285.

⁵⁴ Dorothy Roberts, *Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty: building a social justice vision of reproductive freedom*. Presentation to the Othmer Institute (April, 2000): 4.

⁵⁵ Jim Silliman, 2004. *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*, Boston: South End Press (2004): 5.

subtly occurs through geographically specific environmental racism directly affecting personal and community health.

The birth control movement, reproductive rights, and feminism have historically ignored the voices and issues affecting marginalized women. The history of forced sterilization of Native American women as a “racist form of mass ‘birth control’”⁵⁶ meant that many Native women viewed the birth control movement of the 1970s as thinly veiled racialized genocide. As Charon Asetoyer recalled in our interview:

They coerced women, coerced them into having their tubes tied. There’s various methods. And there’s also the use of and promoting the use of things like Depo-Provera, which is really intermittent sterilization. I mean, why would you give a perfectly healthy women something that could make her extremely unhealthy? To look at all the side effects that Depo has, most women in their right minds wouldn’t take it. But they’re not informed of all of these side effects.⁵⁷

Therefore, a reproductive justice movement that included all women implied that “legal and easily accessible birth control measures and abortions would have to be complemented by an end to sterilization abuse.”⁵⁸ Thus, the more inclusive definition of Reproductive Justice, developed by SisterSong is used for this discussion of RJ. SisterSong is an Atlanta-based organization that whose stated purpose is to “build an effective network of individuals and organizations to improve institutional policies and systems that impact the reproductive lives of marginalized communities.”⁵⁹ As defined by SisterSong, reproductive justice is

The right to have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments – [and] is based on the human right to make personal decisions about one’s life, and the obligation of government and

⁵⁶ Davis, 354.

⁵⁷ Asetoyer, 2019.

⁵⁸ Davis, 354.

⁵⁹ “About Us.” Sister Song, Inc. Accessed May 20, 2019.

society to ensure that the conditions are suitable for implementing one's decisions.⁶⁰

In recognizing the history of “people of color subjected to continuous population control strategies,” SisterSong’s RJ definition incorporates pro-choice goals of securing a woman’s right to choose safe and effective contraceptives while “fighting equally as hard for the right to have children and to parent the children we have.”⁶¹ Incorporating this definition of RJ considers how environmental health and personal/community health are involved in establishing reproductive justice for marginalized communities. The intersection with environmental health becomes even clearer in Indigenous communities, whose cultural and traditional practices are explicitly related to geographic location.

Intersections:

All of the organizations that I interviewed for this thesis spoke to the intersection of environmental justice, reproductive justice, and holistic health of Native American communities. As Asetoyer posited, even in mainstream activist circles, there is a lack of connection between overlapping oppressive issues in EJ and RJ:

A lot of people say, “Well, how does environment intersect with reproductive justice?” If your environment is contaminated, you may end up having high rates of breast cancer or birth defects within the children and so on. Different kinds of cancers.⁶²

The direct link between environmental and community health affects personal health and reproduction as well as larger social reproduction. Without acknowledgement of the

⁶⁰ "Home." Sister Song, Inc. Accessed June 4, 2017.

⁶¹ Ross et al., 62.

⁶² Asetoyer, 2019.

interconnectedness of human and environmental systems, entire ecosystems are destroyed as environmental health is ignored in favor of a Western, human-centered approach to ecological health. Building on the intersections suggested by Asetoyer, Susan Masten explained how ideological approaches to issues of environment and health contribute to social injustices in practice:

It's the same as if you're a land, river, or air. Everything is connected, so if your environment is unhealthy, as a people we are unhealthy.... So, everything that we do in our actions provides for the balance in our world so that everything will be healthy, and the people will be healthy for future generations. And that is not how everyone else thinks, and that's why the laws are not created justly and why we have to ensure that we have a strong voice when we go to change that law or to create laws that protect...our environment.⁶³

Consistent with holistic Indigenous cultural and traditional approaches, Masten speaks to the direct connection between environmental and human health. The effects of keeping EJ and RJ ideologically separate are seen most clearly in RHAP's approach to the health industry. In our interview, Hailey Jones spoke directly to the importance of complete inclusivity and a holistic approach that incorporates current environmental issues:

Whether it's through one-on-one contact with their patients or reproductive education materials...we're talking about climate change and we're talking about how if we're a national organization, we have certain clusters that are in areas that are prone to flooding. And if we're thinking about access to care, access to abortion care, if patients aren't able to get to their primary health providers because of certain [floodings] of climate change, then that's an issue. If they're thinking about more on the RJ [lens], our mission is to make reproductive health care accessible to *everyone*. If we're saying "everyone" then that means we need to reflect that both in our clinicians in the care that they provide and are able to provide and also patient education materials⁶⁴

⁶³ Masten, 2019.

⁶⁴ Jones, 2019.

Specifically within the industry of reproductive health care, the absence of integration with environmental justice creates large holes in application and practice as communities in need of RJ are also prone to issues of EJ. The intersection of EJ and RJ therefore encapsulate the need for an ideological approach that incorporates both human and non-human health and a stark analysis of the institutional structures that target the health of these systems specifically within Native American communities.

Chapter 4: Weapons in the Arsenal of Settler Colonialism

In analyzing the intersection of EJ and RJ, it is important to consider the unique position of Indigenous peoples in the United States. The long and violent history of colonialism directly contributes to modern social, political, economic, and health issues. The ideology of colonialism and the economic system of capitalism that shaped Western institutions is based in extraction, exploitation, and oppression of all aspects of Native life and lands.⁶⁵ In an interview with Naomi Klein, Leanne Simpson, an indigenous eco-feminist activist, summarizes the impact of extractionist colonial capitalist mindset that exploits every aspect of Indigenous life. As Simpson explains, this ideology inherently places economic value on priceless parts of life:

My land is seen as a resource. My relatives in the plant and animal worlds are seen as resources. My culture and knowledge is a resource. My body is a resource and my children are a resource because they are the potential to grow, maintain, and uphold the extraction-assimilation system.⁶⁶

The exploitation and commodification of Indigenous land, natural resources, population, and culture is ingrained in the capitalist system of continuous expansion, production, and consumption. Distinguishing between colonialism and settler colonialism, Wolfe writes that settler colonialism is “premised on the elimination of native societies” and is therefore “a structure not an event.”⁶⁷ As opposed to colonialism, which is recognized as a historic period of Western expansion to the Americas, the framework of settler colonialism recognizes the continuous and ongoing

⁶⁵ LaDuke, 12.

⁶⁶ Naomi Klein, "Dancing the World into Being: A Conversation with Idle No More's Leanne Simpson," *Yes! Magazine*, March 05, 2013, , accessed May 21, 2019, 3.

⁶⁷ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology* (London: Cassell, 1999), 2, quoted in Stephanie Teves, et al., *Native Studies Keywords*, (University of Arizona Press, 2015), 271.

process of eradicating and replacing Indigenous populations. Continuing this process, institutional structures of the United States both intentionally and unintentionally build on settler colonialist ideology with the long-term goal of elimination and replacement of Native people and access to Native land. Patrick Wolfe uses his research of aboriginal communities in Australia to demonstrate the distinct effect of colonialism to racial categorization as Native peoples are not only oppressed as a racial minority but also as “colonized people seeking to decolonize themselves.”⁶⁸ Framed as the loss of self-representation, the colonized status of Indigenous people works in conjunction with white supremacy to disempower and further marginalize the political voices of Native Americans. Dr. Janne Lahti builds on Wolfe’s definition by describing settler colonialism as:

... a distinctive form of colonialism where the settlers aim to replace the Natives/previous residents and capture terrestrial and maritime spaces with the intention of making them their own. Settler colonialism thus involves conquest, long-range migration, permanent settlement (or at least intent of such), elimination of Natives, and the reproduction of one’s own society on what used to be other people’s lands.⁶⁹

While the term “settler colonialism” is a widely debated lens within the Native Studies field, utilizing it as a framework serves this project’s purpose when considering the ongoing process of what Wolfe calls “the logic of elimination.”⁷⁰ Recognizing settler colonialist practices as continuous also addresses the mythological stereotype of the “disappearing Indian” by perceiving how even common language works towards

⁶⁸ Luana Ross, *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 3, quoted in Stephanie Teves, et al., *Native Studies Keywords*, (University of Arizona Press, 2015), 272.

⁶⁹ Janne Lahti, "Settler Colonialism and the American West," ed. Janne Lahti, Introduction: What Is Settler Colonialism and What It Has to Do with the American West? 56, no. 4 (Fall 2017): *Journal of the West*, 1.

⁷⁰ Wolfe in Teves, 271.

complete eradication or assimilation of indigeneity. This stereotype is promoted in popular knowledge by constantly referring to Native Americans in the past tense, suggesting that there are few to none left. Under the framework of settler colonialism, colonization is better understood as a continuous process and Indigenous peoples as a population continuously in resistance to government-sanctioned eradication. Unlike other forms of colonialism, Wolfe suggests that settler colonialism distinctly focuses on “replacement and access to territory, the land itself.”⁷¹ The added objective of access to land builds upon classic colonialist exploitation of natural resources by suggesting eradication and assimilation eventually gives way to expanded colonized territory. The ultimate goal of unobstructed access to Native lands also explains the geographically specific environmental contamination affecting reproduction in Native communities.

The colonialist and extractivist mindset directly relates to both EJ and RJ specific to Native American communities in terms of historic environmental contamination. Charon Asetoyer explains the multiple intersections of oppression involved in colonialist expansion, extraction, and contamination:

...throughout Indian Country, you can just about [see] all the kinds of pollutants that they have in their community by the kinds of cancers and the kind of reproductive health issues and birth defects that occur, whether it's breast cancer or cervical cancer, ovarian cancers, birth defects. You know, they all interconnect with one another, and Indian Country has definitely been the dumping grounds for waste, toxic waste, industrial waste, by the multinational corporations. So, we've had to deal with everything from uranium tailings to the byproducts of oil, lumber, logging, and mining. And so on. As they harvest our natural resources, ...we're left with the aftermath and the health effects because in the environmental regulation, under the Nations, it's not that we don't have them. We do! Just that the government doesn't assist us in enforcing them.⁷²

⁷¹ Lahti, 1

⁷² Asetoyer, 2019.

In her summation of environmental impacts associated with colonialism, Asetoyer also mentions the difference of legal enforcement that tribes mitigate when addressing environmental contamination. The lack of government assistance in enforcing environmental regulations is excused by the unique legal location of Indigenous tribes in the United States.

Tribal sovereignty:

The legal standing that tribal sovereignty allegedly guarantees to federally recognized Tribes makes Native American communities a subject of particular interest for any groups attempting to bypass federal or state laws. The 567 federally recognized United States Tribes have the distinctive legislative status of government-to-government relationship with the United States, as established by the Tribe's treaty, Congress, or executive order.⁷³ Wilkins and Stark explain tribal sovereignty as “the intangible and dynamic cultural force inherent in a given indigenous community, empowering that body toward sustenance and enhancement of political, economic, and cultural integrity,” which crucially upholds a tribe's right to maintain a measure of independence from other political entities.⁷⁴ However, the decision of the 1978 Supreme Court case *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* concluded “that tribal courts had lost certain attributes of sovereignty -- in particular, the criminal authority over nonmembers -- owing to historical presumptions of federal lawmakers.”⁷⁵ Therefore,

⁷³ Jules Bacon, "Tribal Sovereignty" (lecture, University of Oregon, Eugene, May 2017).

⁷⁴ David E. Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, "Indigenous Peoples Are Nations, Not Minorities," in *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 83.

⁷⁵ Sarah Deer, “Knowing through Numbers?” *The Beginning and End of Rape*, 2015, pg. 7.

more often than not, the legal designation of tribes causes governmental neglect, oversight and lack of accountability for acts of injustices against Native American communities. As Charon Asetoyer describes, the difference of legal standing excuses violations of basic human rights for Indigenous people:

And like I said earlier, it's not like we don't have environmental regulations. Reservations *do*, tribal governments *do*. But we're not getting backed up by the federal government, and so these corporations get by with all kinds of stuff. And because we can't *prosecute* them because of the *Oliphant* case, it just goes around and around and around. So, we really have our hands tied.... So, we're talking about human rights issues... We're not asking for anything that you don't have, that other people don't have. We want, at minimum, that equal protection of the law!⁷⁶

Although the designation of sovereignty suggests independence and autonomy for tribes equal to the US government, lack of funding, population, and power make it so that sovereignty in practice is ignored and takes the shape of explicit government neglect. Susan Masten recalls the moment in her career of Indigenous activism that she realized the legal system was not designed to protect her, her tribe, or the natural resources of their lands:

We had our fishing wars here on the Klamath, and then the federal agents came in ...the community. Because I said,... "uphold the law, and you'll be okay." And she said, "Not all laws are created just." And that was kind of like my first exposure to, oh my God! Because the laws are created, and they aren't created for us or for our resources. So, not having an influence on the law, then the laws are not providing for us or protecting us. I think it's a constant thing for us to educate Congress on the responsibilities to the trust, the trust responsibility to us and our resources, we end up spending a lot of time and money trying to educate them to do the job that they're supposed to, that they swear to uphold under the Constitution...And that, that's the main problem that I see is that we're not the lawmakers, and so the laws do not support or provide for us as a people. They most often are against us, and so that's why it's so important for us to continue to advocate for education within the school systems about the true history and

⁷⁶ Asetoyer, 2019.

then—first off, [we’re not in these hopeless] positions where we can have some [effect] on changes in the laws.⁷⁷ Emphasizing the importance of Indigenous involvement in law making and policy, Masten’s realization of government and social institutions such as the legal system working against the larger Indigenous community illustrates the subtle integration of settler colonialism in institutional practices.

Settler colonialism is a multifaceted structure aiming for the removal and replacement of Native Americans that continues using various institutions and complications of government bureaucracy promoting a “logic of elimination”⁷⁸ towards Indigenous communities. The mindset of removal and replacement prevails today, especially with narratives such as the “Disappearing Indian” and the failure to recognize tribes as independent sovereign nations. A recent example of resistance to settler colonialism is the Standing Rock protest over the Dakota Access Pipeline (also known as #NoDAPL). The proposed pipeline would run under the tribe’s major natural water supply and through sacred areas.⁷⁹ Despite the guarantee of political agency with tribal sovereignty designation, the “federal government failing to consult the tribe before the Army Corps of Engineers approved the pipeline”⁸⁰ reads more like an act of settler colonialism. This systematic process of refusing recognition of tribal sovereignty in power exchanges such as those at the core of the #NoDAPL movement clearly demonstrate the ongoing struggle that Indigenous communities fight against settler

⁷⁷ Masten, 2019.

⁷⁸ Wolfe in Teves, 271.

⁷⁹ Victoria M. Massie, "To Understand the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests, You Need to Understand Tribal Sovereignty," Vox, October 28, 2016, , accessed May 08, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/2016/9/9/12851168/dakota-access-pipeline-protest>.

⁸⁰ Massie, 2016.

colonialism. The numerous intersections of colonialist oppression that this environmental extraction project illuminated included EJ, RJ, sexual assault of Native women, and the unique legal standing of tribal sovereignty. Charon Asetoyer recounts the war-like lasting intersectional oppressions confronted at Standing Rock:

So, there's this great intersection, and it just depends on what you're having to go up against at what level of resistance you're putting up....So, you know, it's not just environment, environmental awareness, and the repercussions of the pollution, our environmental degradation...So, we really have to understand the impact that these kinds of projects have from that first group of earth that's turned over to when they pack up and leave and what it is they're leaving us with. What are they leaving behind? You know, it's like a *war*. It's very much like a war. They come in, they take what they want. And they don't care how they get it just as long as they get it. And the more you resist, the harder they're gonna fight back until they get what they want. Standing Rock was the perfect example.⁸¹

While the threat of a pipeline under the tribe's main water supply was most definitely an issue of environmental racism, "the issue of tribal sovereignty, which is just as important as the environmental hazard, is getting lost in the pipeline story."⁸² This movement of activism, which is often understood as an issue of environmental racism, more specifically threatens the RJ and safety of Native women and the autonomy of tribal sovereignty. Through environmental contamination and ignoring tribal sovereignty, the federal government continues working towards a clearly long-term goal of removal and replacement of Indigenous communities. The focus on reproductive justice and community health within Native American communities recognizes the power of resistance among Native American women and families against continued colonialist practices in its many forms.

⁸¹ Asetoyer, 2019.

⁸² Maise, 2016.

Targeted environmental pollution serves the objective of settler colonialism in two distinct ways: population control through infertility, and gaining access to Native land. The contamination of geographically specific environments demonstrates the epistemology level of slow violence against Native women through “displacement in place.” Rob Nixon describes this “more radical notion of displacement” as referring to “the loss of land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable.”⁸³ The slow, long-term poisoning of Native women’s bodies via environmental contamination is an attempt to make indigenous land uninhabitable and physically control Indigenous bodies and cultural reproduction by limiting population growth. Subsequently, in line with Lahti’s definition of settler colonialism, the eradication and replacement of Indigenous people grants colonizers uncontested access to Indigenous lands and exploitation of natural resources associated with these lands. In this way, settler colonialism, environmental injustice, and reproductive injustice are pillars of racism, misogyny, capitalism, and consumerism operating through tangible acts of oppression including pollution, limiting accessibility to health care, and forced sterilization. Power, control, and agency center these institutional oppressive systems and their material manifestations. Integrating RJ within EJ establishes a context of subjugation of bodies – specifically Native American women – and controlling cultural reproduction within a Western patriarchal, colonialist government aimed at reducing and eventually disappearing Native American Indians.

⁸³ Nixon, 19.

Chapter 5: Explicit and Obscure Reproductive Injustice for Indigenous Peoples: Establishing the Context for Current Negligence

The following chapter describes the transition from explicit practices of reproductive injustice against Native American communities to less visible, more obscure practices with the same goal of eradication. The historical context of explicit government orders by the United States for systemic extermination and sterilization of Native Americans established the groundwork for the current more concealed tactics of government sanctioned environmental contamination targeting Native American communities.

Aware of the biopolitical relation between power and population, colonialism explicitly targeted the reproductive ability of Indigenous communities. The “bureaucratic genocide” of colonialist attacks in the Western expansion of the US included strategic attacks on Indigenous community’s ability to reproduce. This is most explicitly seen in Andrew Jackson’s order for troops to “systematically kill Indian women and children after massacres in order to complete extermination.”⁸⁴ While Jackson’s orders may not have been immediately met, the institutionalized forced sterilization efforts conducted by the IHS specifically in the 1970’s demonstrates that the ideology of systematic extermination was federally supported. The systemic forced sterilization of at least 25 percent of Native American women between the ages of

⁸⁴ Andrea Smith, “Better Dead Than Pregnant: The Colonization of Native Women’s Reproductive Health,” (2002), 124, quoted in Nicole Jolly "Racial Reproductive Control Logics and the Reproductive Justice Movement" (2012), University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations, 18.

fifteen and forty-four during the 1970s.⁸⁵ Much of the process of sterilization of Native women during this time was due to improper clinical and legal practices. Many women were given inaccurate information leading up to the surgery surrounding the possible risks, the statement that sterilization is a reversible procedure, and that there were no other available forms of birth control. Jane Lawrence details the allegations against the Indian Health Services (IHS) as including:

...failure to provide women with necessary information regarding sterilization; use of coercion to get signatures on the consent forms; improper consent forms; and lack of an appropriate waiting period (at least seventy-two hours) between the signing of a consent form and the surgical procedure.⁸⁶

This period of forced sterilization, while explicit in retrospect, was largely promoted as an alternative to social inequality and the sole method to obtain sexual agency. Once again, the inherent ideology of settler colonialism ingrained in US institutional practices contributed towards achieving the larger goal of eradicating and replacing Native American populations.

Understanding the sterilization movement of Native women as an explicit form of reproductive injustice, sexual injustice, and settler colonialism with the intent of eradication also lends itself to what Daly (1990) terms “Gynocide.” Corrine Sanchez describes this process as the “killing of women and the feminine, literally and figuratively” and the ultimate manifestation of patriarchy. Gynocide, Sanchez argues, occurs at multiple occasions of silencing women: in colonizers history, through sexual

⁸⁵ Ross et al., 66.

⁸⁶ Jane Lawrence, "The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women," *The American Indian Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 400.

assault,⁸⁷ and through the “cultural stripping of the birthing process.”⁸⁸ The killing and silencing of the feminine, both physically and spiritually, is a consequence of forcing a patriarchal socio-political-economic structure on a traditionally matrilineal community. As Winona LaDuke explains, “So it is that a culture and identity that are traditionally matrilineal will come into conflict with institutions that are historically focused upon their eradication.”⁸⁹ Extermination and sterilization efforts by the US government specifically targeted Native American women and their bodies in a simultaneous effort to gain control of Native land and natural resources.⁹⁰ Resistances to genocidal efforts are therefore exemplified in Native women’s ability to reproduce. Resistance efforts also importantly include cultural and social resistances to erasure of the history of sterilization. Charon Asetoyer describes her first hand involvement with these methods of resistance:

And I’m involved in this documentary called *Ama, A-M-A*—it’s the Navajo word for mother—which documents the sterilization abuses that took place during the 60s and 70s in this country where the federal government under its family planning policy decided that for middle class white women, it would be family planning, and for Indigenous women and women of color, it would be sterilization. Without our consent. And so, this film documents it. We’re gonna be touring it around the different reservations so that history doesn’t repeat itself, ‘cause we have a whole generally that’s about your age that have never heard of it! You know, because it’s not taught in schools, even in the Indian schools in our reservation. And unless you happen to be privy to a conversation at the kitchen table with your aunties and grandma and so on, talking about those days, you don’t know about it! So, we wanna make sure that our younger generation is aware of it because look what’s going on in Canada right now. They are still doing it. And it’s full speed ahead. Big lawsuit going on up in Canada because the government is sterilizing Native women without their consent.⁹¹

⁸⁷ See: Deer, 2015; Smith, 2005

⁸⁸ See: Smith, 2002; Gonzales, 2012.

⁸⁹ LaDuke, 11.

⁹⁰ See Figure 3

⁹¹ Asetoyer, 2019.

In retelling historical events of government sanctioned sterilization, Asetoyer and her Indigenous activist peers actively resist cultural erasure. While forced sterilization may not be as obviously available in modern times, the continued methods of sterilization and settler colonialism take different forms. Notably, this currently takes place through the limitation of reproductive ability from targeted environmental contamination. Therefore, connecting the oppression of Native women to the environment is an essential part of environmental justice, as described by Patricia Hynes: “Like racial justice, a sexual justice that seeks to eliminate the sexual exploitation of women is fundamental to environmental justice, to community health, and to social goodness.”⁹²

Stealthy Injustice:

The current environmental reproductive injustice against Native Americans is a less visible reproductive injustice than forced sterilization, although it holds the same goal of eradication. I argue that the subtlety of environmental reproductive injustice is just as, if not more, effective in achieving the goals of settler colonialism as sterilization because its relative invisibility allows it to continue without significant resistance. The effectiveness of subtlety is due in part to the utilization of environmental slow violence, which occurs “gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.”⁹³ The contrasting opposite of slow violence, therefore, is sensational and instantly visible violence -- explosions, bombs, oil spills, volcanoes, avalanches,

⁹² Patricia H. Hynes, "Consumption (1999): North American Perspectives," in *Women's Lives: Multicultural Perspectives* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2010): 573.

⁹³ Nixon, 2.

etc.—that which is “visceral, eye-catching and page-turning.”⁹⁴ slow violence suggests “a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.”⁹⁵ While equally disastrous, the long term effects of “climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans” and other disasters, are less eye-catching, less immediate, and generally less appealing. Rather than a specific and disturbingly large body count, slow violence causes “long dyings—the staggered and staggeringly discounted casualties both human and ecological.”⁹⁶ The challenge of visibility associated with the slow violence of environmental racism allows the long-term destruction of entire populations with cultural and traditional ties to their immediate geographic environment.

The gradual, long-term poisoning of women’s bodies and their fetuses occurs on a generational time-scale. Thus, the reproductive injustice inherent in limiting reproductive abilities through environmental contamination occurs less immediately and less dramatically than forced sterilization. However, the results of targeted environmental contamination are equally oppressive and unjust. As Charon Asetoyer explains, the injustice of environmental contamination and its associated reproductive health effects relates to the exploitive ideology of settler colonialism and the lack of tribal legal power post-*Oliphant*:

Well, because of the *Oliphant* case, a lot of toxic dumping has occurred in our communities, not just this reservation, but I’m talking about reservations all over the United States. And either they have not been held accountable for cleaning up uranium tailings down in the Southwest or gold-mining sludge or they’ve

⁹⁴ Nixon, 3.

⁹⁵ Nixon, 2.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

ditched the level of radioactive particles on waste on reservations. I mean, there's just a phenomenal amount of toxic waste of different degrees depending on what kind of waste it is or what kind of environmental degradation or what kind of natural resource harvesting that's going on. And all of that causes birth defects and all kinds of health problems, cancers and so on.⁹⁷

Environmental reproductive justice examines institutional-scale approaches such as institutional neglect of the reproductive needs of women, especially vulnerable women, and its perpetuation of environmental inequities. Studies that examine this connection between environmental contamination and reproductive health realize that these women in vulnerable communities are largely unable to control or change their exposure to toxic chemicals due to both lack of autonomy and desire to stay in places of cultural, historical, and traditional importance. The institutions that trap marginalized communities in environmentally unhealthy areas restrict autonomy with empty-promises of long-term employment, access to education, and upward mobility.⁹⁸ Lower-income communities have limited sources of income to move or change their circumstances, and are generally institutionally trapped in the same area of environmental contamination for multiple generations. The long-term effects of targeted contamination – understood as slow violence or ordinary trauma – is especially clear in communities with cultural traditions centered around their environment.

The cultural, religious, spiritual and physical connection to the land is complex and essential to understanding Indigenous peoples' unique intersection with environmental reproductive justice. As Winona LaDuke frames it:

Understanding the complexity of these belief systems is central to understanding the societies built on those spiritual foundations – the relationship of peoples to

⁹⁷ Asetoyer, 2019.

⁹⁸ DiChiro, 277.

their sacred lands, to relatives with fins or hooves, to the plant and animal foods that anchor a way of life.⁹⁹

The stark, unmistakable difference in American governmental protection of Judeo-Christian holy lands compared to sacred Native lands is alarming. The land lust and mythical imperative of “manifest destiny” accompanying Western religions caused more than 75% of Native sacred sites to be removed from Indigenous jurisdiction or destroyed.¹⁰⁰ Displacement, loss of legal care, and destruction of environment are all results of colonialism that directly negatively affected Indigenous peoples’ right to religion, way of life, and reproduction. Without access to traditional lands and the right to practice Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Native Americans are denied the right to food sovereignty. Defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems,”¹⁰¹ food sovereignty is deeply involved with land and land management. An essential aspect of food sovereignty for Native people is the protection of traditional first foods, which form “the backbone of many indigenous societies by virtue of their religious, cultural, economic, and medicinal importance.”¹⁰² The impending threat of climate change on environmental health also threatens the safety and viability of traditional first foods. As explained in the article “Fertile Ground” (2009), Native women’s reproductive lives are very closely tied to environmental health:

⁹⁹ LaDuke, 12.

¹⁰⁰ LaDuke, 14.

¹⁰¹ Carson Viles, "Traditional Knowledge," *First Foods - Tribes & Climate Change*, 2011. accessed May 14, 2019, http://www7.nau.edu/itep/main/tcc/Tribes/tdk_ffoods.

¹⁰² Viles. 2011.

For many cultures, especially indigenous and Native cultures, the relationship to local water and traditional foods also plays a central role in people's reciprocal relationship to the land. Indigenous communities in particular are linking the impact of toxins and stolen land to the capacity of their communities and cultures to reproduce themselves. Military and mining activities directly impact sacred sites, traditional food sources, and cultural practices in addition to the physical development of women and children.¹⁰³

The unique intersection of Native American women, reproductive justice, and environmental justice becomes clear in the integration of natural environments on social and physical processes of development. The cultural connection to environment creates an additional layer of vulnerability to the already vulnerably developmental stage of pregnancy for Native American women.

The increased vulnerability of female bodies and their fetuses during pregnancy is a source of greater interest for both the environmental and reproductive justice fields. Due to the "rapidly changing and/or undeveloped metabolic, hormonal, and immunologic capabilities"¹⁰⁴ occurring in utero and during infancy, chemical exposure via placenta or breast milk can cause permanent developmental damages. Exposures during these stages of development, which are so crucial to a community's social reproduction, are proved to "trigger adverse health consequences that can manifest across the lifespan of individuals and generations."¹⁰⁵ Instead of creating the "healthy" environmental standard to satisfy those most susceptible, the United States has established a model based on objectively the least vulnerable. Humorously referred to

¹⁰³ Kristen Zimmerman and Vera Miao, *Fertile Ground: Women Organizing at the Intersection of Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice*, Oakland, CA: Movement Strategy Center, (2009), 12.

¹⁰⁴ Patrice Sutton et al., "Toxic environmental chemicals: the role of reproductive health professionals in preventing harmful exposures," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 207, no. 3 (September 2012): 167.

¹⁰⁵ Gian Carlo Di Renzo et al., "International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics opinion on reproductive health impacts of exposure to toxic environmental chemicals," *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 131, no. 3 (December 2015): 220.

as “Ken” in reference to a Ken Doll, the standard for approving environmental chemicals is a fabricated “universal ideal concept of a 5’7”, 154-pound white adult male living in an urban setting.”¹⁰⁶ Utilizing a standard for environmental safety that is representative of the institutionally protected colonialist patriarchal population once again demonstrates the influence of biopower as risking a population for the benefit of a population supported by white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. As the leading standard for appropriate levels of toxic chemicals in the environment, a more thorough analysis of the effects of toxic chemicals on vulnerable populations – specifically pregnant women – is necessary.

Two major medical journals in Obstetrics and Gynecology have published pieces drawing attention to the issue of environmental reproductive justice and the systemic oppression affecting the personal health of pregnant women. These medical journals adopt an intersectional approach to the issue of gendered environmentalism by considering other identities that create increased vulnerability. The research presented by these medical journals focus on disseminating information to not only their patients and peers but also policymakers and corporations. Sutton et al. brings attention to environmental toxins by listing harmful toxins and their effect on reproduction.¹⁰⁷ Figure 2 lists examples of reproductively harmful environmental contaminants, common exposure sources and pathways of those contaminants, and the reproductive/developmental health impact of those chemicals. The chemicals listed in scientific reports of environmental contamination affecting Akwesasne Mohawks

¹⁰⁶ Corrine Sanchez, "Herstories and the Braiding of Environment and Reproductive Justice to Protect Those Most Vulnerable," *Journal of American Indian Education* 55, no. 3 (2016): 50.

¹⁰⁷ See Figure 2, Table from Sutton et al., 2012.

included Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), fluoride, dichlorodiphenyl dichloroethylene (DDE), mercury, mirex, hexachlorobenzene (HCB) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).¹⁰⁸ At Shoalwater Bay, specific chemicals were not included in scientific reports but the primary source of contamination was pesticide application to cranberry bogs.¹⁰⁹ According to the table provided by Sutton et al, PCB's cause "development of attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder-associated behavior; increased body mass index; reduced IQ."¹¹⁰ Pesticides cause "impaired cognitive development; impaired neurodevelopment; impaired fetal growth; increased susceptibility to testicular cancer; childhood cancers."¹¹¹ The list continues with a myriad of health effects specific to reproductive and developmental health that explains the connection of environmental toxins on personal reproductive health.

In addition to analyzing the specific effects of toxic chemicals on physical reproductive systems, Sutton et al. also assesses larger industries that present opportunities for exposure on a daily basis. Understanding the connection of social injustice to reproductive injustice aligns with the expanded definition of RJ provided by SisterSong that recognizes how social inequalities influence reproductive choices. Analyzing the connection of socioeconomic factors to environmental and reproductive health, Di Renzo et al. and Sutton et al. bring attention to both institutional and individual levels where reproductive health is most affected. Di Renzo et al. and Sutton

¹⁰⁸ Fitzgerald, 2001.

¹⁰⁹ United States of America. Environmental Protection Agency. *The Shoalwater Bay Reservation: a limited environmental assessment: 1994-1995*. Seattle, WA: U.S. EPA, Office of Environmental Assessment, Region 10, (1997) vi.

¹¹⁰ Sutton et al., 2012.

¹¹¹ Sutton et al., 2012.

et al. consider socio-economic factors such as poverty, occupational disparities, racism, and discrimination, which increases stress and influence exposures,¹¹² and specifically, the place-based practice of environmental racism that causes targeted pollution. Sutton et al examines the multiple places of potential exposure to harmful chemicals within one aspect of life, food:

For example, our industrialized food system is associated with many and varied threats to reproductive and developmental health, including exposure to pesticides, chemical fertilizers, hormones in beef cattle, antimicrobials in beef cattle, swine, and poultry, fossil fuel consumption and climate change, toxic chemicals in food packaging and cookware, and the production and promotion of food that is unhealthy for pregnant women.¹¹³

On a larger scale, Di Renzo et al. explains the statistic connection between a country's wealth and the health of its infants: "For instance, the rate of lower respiratory infections attributable to environmental causes is more than twice as high among low-income countries (42%) than among high-income countries (20%)."¹¹⁴ Their research also evaluated the impact of high-risk jobs as well as the explicit influence of mothers experiencing stressful social factors such as racism, discrimination and poverty concluding that each of these can influence exposures and associated health outcomes.¹¹⁵ While toxic exposure during pregnancy may seem ubiquitous due to the increased production and use of harmful chemicals in the past 70 years, these studies demonstrate the sociological, economic, and political factors that make some groups more vulnerable than others. As previously mentioned, this vulnerability directly increases for communities with cultural and traditional ties to their environment.

¹¹² Di Renzo, 220.

¹¹³ Di Renzo, 169.

¹¹⁴ Di Renzo, 220.

¹¹⁵ Di Renzo, 220.

Pregnant Native women are especially susceptible to any environmental risks due to cultural connection to the environment through traditional first foods and the inadequate model of the “Ken Doll” for determining safe levels of environmental toxins. The amalgamation of both disregard for Native religious connections to the environment, contamination/destruction of traditional first foods, and the increased vulnerability of pregnant women to environmental toxins illustrate the prevalence of settler colonialism and misogynistic ideology in US institutions. The long term environmental racism of production-based, capitalist, countries has placed targeted, marginalized communities at the brunt of environmental contamination. Contamination sites occur through the polluted by-products of production as well as through targeted marketing of toxic or potentially dangerous products.¹¹⁶ This directly intersects with public health, as the majority of the communities with highest exposures also lack access to medical resources, healthy food, employment, higher education, and a variety of other factors that influence one’s well being.¹¹⁷ The generational impact of consistent, long-term exposure also creates a longer lasting effect on a larger scale. Long-term exposure to an entire community affects many aspects of reproduction, as both men and women are affected at all developmental stages.¹¹⁸ This directly affects the choice of social reproduction for women in marginalized communities, those who have much higher risk of exposure to environmental contaminants.

¹¹⁶ Ami R. Zota and Bhavna Shamasunder, "The environmental injustice of beauty: framing chemical exposures from beauty products as a health disparities concern," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 217, no. 4 (2017).

¹¹⁷ Sutton et al., 2012.

¹¹⁸ See note 1.

Chapter 6: Slow violence as Place-Based

Environmental justice at large therefore requires critical analysis of consumerism, capitalism, pollution, and racism in land laws and the ways that these larger institutions work simultaneously to allow targeted environmental pollution of minority communities. As there are larger systems and interlocking institutions invested in this issue, much of the damage and violence caused by environmental racism goes unnoticed by the general public. The negative effects on business and industry that media exposure of this issue would cause also influence this. Due to the relative lack of acknowledgement of this issue and the extreme time scale at which environmental racism affects the health of communities, researchers have coined specific terms to describe the damage of environmental injustice. The most consistent of these ideas is that of slow violence, which, I argue is tied intrinsically to place.

One of the core texts examining environmental justice is Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Although this text focuses on the effects of climate change on poor people without specifically addressing Native Americans, the framework developed exposes the systemic and institutional differences making marginalized groups more vulnerable to environmental disasters. To address the disproportional effects of climate change and environmental disasters on marginalized people, Nixon suggests the reframing of environmental violence requires a redefining of speed, time, and space outside of the current neoliberal structure. While Nixon convincingly argues that redefining speed and time allows for a more thorough analysis of the destructive and fatal effects of slow violence as a boundless phenomenon. I push back on Nixon's point that spatial reconsideration demands an abstract consideration of

political “boundaries” to which ecological destruction and pollution are unaware. In many cases of environmental racism, the contamination, pollution, and negative health effects are explicitly shown as targeted within political boundaries that define not only space, but also race and socioeconomic status. In the following chapter, I analyze instances and effects of slow violence and demonstrate how issues of environmental injustice are intrinsically tied to place, especially in cases of Native American communities.

Both the scientific and sociological aspects of environmental reproductive justice are time-oriented; as the length of time in an area of environmental toxicity increases, the more generations are both physically and socially harmed. In an effort to increase the visibility of slow violence and environmental injustice, Nixon proposes a major redefinition of speed and time. Mainstream media largely ignores modern instances of environmental and reproductive injustices on the basis that without the same spectacular violence as instantaneous destruction, audiences quickly lose interest. This is maximized in a time of increasingly short attention spans and global media outlets.¹¹⁹ Therefore, the re-conceptualization of speed demands analysis of the world’s privileged classes “who live surrounded by technological time-savers”¹²⁰ that broadcast attention grabbers encouraging insatiable consumption. When addressing visibility, it is essential to keep in mind those who directly benefit from maintaining invisibility. In the case of slow violence, Nixon argues that it “provided prevaricative cover for the forces that have the most to profit from inaction: under cover of deferred consequences, these

¹¹⁹ Nixon, 4.

¹²⁰ Nixon, 8.

energetic new bewilders...led by Big Oil and Big Coal”¹²¹ make doubt a bankable product. The issue, then, lies in convincing the current “spectacle-driven corporate media,”¹²²—the same corporate media which is coincidentally funded by the aforementioned bankers of doubt – to bring attention to an issue so lacking in dramatic images and economic incentives. In an attempt to gain attention and visibility, environmental justice incorporates attention-grabbing and time-centered language: “accelerated species loss, rapid climate change.”¹²³ These modifications to headlining language are a start, but do not begin to consider the attritional and exponential impacts of slow violence and cannot compete with more “newsworthy” spectacular violence. Therefore, rather than exclusively examining the immediate, the environmental justice movement must reframe time to be consistent with the effects of slow violence; or, in other words, time as “landscapes of temporal overspill.”¹²⁴ Expanding the temporal scale from one’s lifetime when considering slow violence allows for better understanding of the cumulative, generational effects of ecological destruction and targeted pollution.

Similar to Nixon’s requirements for considering slow violence equal to spectacular violence, Robert Bullard’s analysis of the differential vulnerabilities represented by environmental injustice requires a rethinking of both time and speed. However, the undeniable tie to location specific contamination in politically and geographically sectored neighborhoods also challenges Nixon’s call for rethinking

¹²¹ Nixon, 40.

¹²² Nixon, 6.

¹²³ Nixon, 11.

¹²⁴ Nixon, 8.

“space.” Bullard explains the disparities in environmental health for historically contaminated areas are due to both increased risk of exposure over time and lack of proper government assistance based on location: “If a community happens to be poor, black, or located on the ‘wrong side of the tracks,’ it receives less protection than communities inhabited largely by affluent whites in the suburbs.”¹²⁵ Geographically constricted due to lack of autonomy and cultural tie to the land, Native women are especially susceptible to any environmental risks associated with their community, including historic environmental contamination. The contribution of governmental neglect was clearly demonstrated in the cases of both Akwesasne and Shoalwater Bay as unmonitored environmental contamination continued until mainstream media publicly exposed the issue. Issues of government neglect are echoed in environmental reproductive justice as federal institutions fail to accurately assess or support susceptible communities that have been geographically separated by socioeconomic-racial status.

The system of oppressing poor communities and communities of color within the United States is in fact so politically-geographically based that it can be mapped using data from Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This analysis system is evaluated by Jeremy Mennis in an article that explains using GIS to map multi-scale analysis of socioeconomic character and environmental risk. This method of data extraction is a “geometric representation of the real world” and may “simplify and

¹²⁵ Robert D. Bullard, "Differential Vulnerabilities: Environmental and Economic Inequality and Government Response to Unnatural Disasters," *Social Research* 75, no. 3 (Fall 2008), Web of Science, 757.

generalize the spatial distribution of a demographic variable according to the nature of that geometry.”¹²⁶ It also helps sociological research by creating a visual representation of many scales and demographics. Therefore, this method has become a new and useful tool in the field of environmental justice by producing “more accurate models of the distribution of demographic character than conventional U.S. Bureau of Census areal units.”¹²⁷ With the information provided by GIS mapping, grassroots environmental justice organizations can better inform their intersectional approach and address the issues of slow, environmental violence in their communities. Further tying environmental racism and the efforts of the environmental justice movement to place, Mennis demonstrates scientifically the close connection of geography and environmental justice. Locating areas of contamination and pollution onto a map allow for better analysis of individual and community health in regards to both Environmental and Reproductive Justice.

Examining Environmental Justice and its effects require a culmination of Nixon’s definition of slow violence and a redefinition of time and speed, with equal attention given to sense of place. The political, legal, and social conditions creating neighborhoods, states, and areas are essential to the process of systemic environmental pollution and contamination. The process of sanctioning different tracts of land for specific people also demonstrates the continuation of colonialism in land practices of the United States today. Given that slow violence, differential vulnerabilities, and

¹²⁶ Jeremy Mennis, "Using Geographic Information Systems to Create and Analyze Statistical Surfaces of Population and Risk for Environmental Justice Analysis," *Social Science Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (March 2002): 285.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 295.

general environmental contamination are explicitly tied to geographic location, one can better understand the generational effects of contamination on the community and individual health of Native Americans due to the integration of geographically specific environments to multiple aspects of Indigenous cultures.

The importance of land and environment to Indigenous cultural and religious traditions, which makes Indigenous communities more vulnerable to environmental contamination, also importantly establishes a sense of place. Winona LaDuke explains the importance of sense of place to Native spiritual practices and rituals describing that they “are frequently based on the reaffirmation of the relationship of humans to the Creation.”¹²⁸ The differences between Indigenous spirituality and Judeo-Christian traditions, which are not land-based, created oppressive religious legislation as part of colonization. LaDuke explains that the United States passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1978 secured a conceptual rather than practical freedom of religious practices:

While the law ensured that Native people could hold many of their ceremonies, it did not protect the places where many of these rituals take place or the relatives and elements central to these ceremonies, such as salt from the sacred Salt Mother for the Zuni or salmon for the Nez Perce.¹²⁹

Without recognition and protection of the physical aspect of Native spirituality, Indigenous religious practices are consistently destroyed with ever-expanding development and environmental destruction. Due to the difference in religious values between Indigenous people and the colonizers’ Judeo-Christian belief system, the

¹²⁸ Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the sacred: the power of naming and claiming*(Chicago, IL.: Haymarket Books, 2016): 12.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

spiritual value of sacred sites will ironically be “determined by the government that has been responsible for doing everything in its power to destroy Native American cultures.”¹³⁰ As a result of colonialism, Indigenous people experienced extreme land loss. Between 1776 and 1887 through treaty and executive orders, the United States seized over 1.5 billion acres from Native Americans.¹³¹ The loss of physical land and division of existing land to individual families under the 1887 Dawes Act created complete upheaval of “traditional institutions of use rights and lineage systems.”¹³² The importance of geographic specificity in Native cultures for place-making and subsequent cultural and traditional practices cannot be overemphasized.

The interconnectedness of Indigenous culture to the surrounding environment is best exemplified by language and the use of “place-names.” In analyzing oral and textual narratives of Western Apache, linguistic anthropologist Keith Basso emphasizes the coalition of language, culture, and environments specifically in Native American communities. The linguistic practice of place-names takes the definition of place-making to a new level as place-names spatially anchor narratives in “close conjunction with their physical settings.”¹³³ The colonialist interactions with Native place-names recognized the benefit of their “minutely detailed environmental knowledge,” “insight into native conceptions of the natural world and all that was held to be significant within it,” and “the cognitive categories with which environmental phenomena are

¹³⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹³¹ Claudio Saunt, "Invasion of America," ArcGIS Web Application, , accessed May 08, 2019, <http://usg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=eb6ca76e008543a89349ff2517db47e6>.

¹³² LaDuke (2016), 51.

¹³³ Henry Hojier, personal communication, 1973 as quoted in Keith H. Basso, "'Stalking with Stories': Names, Places, and Moral Narratives Among the Western Apache," in *Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 107.

organized and understood.”¹³⁴ However, in order for the inherent ecological metaphors to “work,” Basso argues, the speaker and audience must hold the same “‘presuppositions,’ ‘background knowledge,’ or ‘beliefs about the world.’”¹³⁵ For example, while Basso reported that 90 percent of the place-names in his study reflected “descriptions of the locations to which they refer,” there was a handful that did not.

Some of the other sources for place-names included:

[1] place-names that allude to activities that were formerly performed at or near the sites in question, [2] placenames that refer to ‘dangerous’ (*bégódzig*) locations, and [3] placenames that allude to historical events that are known to have occurred at or near the site they designate.¹³⁶

The value of place-names, therefore, reflects a larger cultural importance than merely geographic reference points. When both speaker and audience have the same cultural presuppositions, place-names “are used in all forms of Apache storytelling as situating devices.”¹³⁷ Basso’s study of the cultural and linguistic importance of place-names within Native communities explicitly demonstrates the importance of physical place to Indigenous culture, oral history, and communication. Understanding environmental slow violence as place-based, therefore, emphasizes the targeted intersection that Native communities exist in. Settler colonialist practices are aware of the intimate cultural and traditional connection of Indigenous people to the environment and therefore pursue the objective of eradication through the slow and gradual contamination of the environment and Indigenous bodies.

¹³⁴ Keith H. Basso, “‘Stalking with Stories’: Names, Places, and Moral Narratives Among the Western Apache,” in *Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1992), 105-106.

¹³⁵ Basso, 135.

¹³⁶ Basso, 110-111.

¹³⁷ Basso, 112.

Chapter 7: Hurricane Katrina as a Case Study of Place-Based Slow Violence

In terms of exposing slow violence and attention from mainstream media, one of the best examples of geographically specific governmental disaster relief response is Hurricane Katrina. The attention Hurricane Katrina demanded in terms of media, relief efforts, and financial assistance exposed the slow violence experienced by those most severely affected. The delayed governmental response to climate disasters in more vulnerable communities demonstrated the lack of protection and preparedness of deliberately geographical confined, marginalized communities. Utilizing the example of spectacular violence associated with the mass media images of Hurricane Katrina, Robert Bullard explains his theoretical framework of differential vulnerabilities focusing on the long-term effects of contamination and displacement. Analyzing the various levels of trauma caused by Hurricane Katrina, Klopotek et al. relates Nixon's framework of slow and spectacular violence in terms of "ordinary and extraordinary trauma."¹³⁸ Further explaining the exposition of differential vulnerabilities and multiscalar trauma Katrina caused, Klopotek et al. writes "The extraordinary trauma of Katrina briefly exposed the slow but ongoing trauma of being a poor person of color in the urban United States in ways that shocked some observers, but merely confirmed the harsh reality of life for many people of color for others."¹³⁹ From this Indigenous

¹³⁸ Brian Klopotek, Brenda Lintinger, and John Barbry, "Ordinary and Extraordinary Trauma: Race, Indigeneity, and Hurricane Katrina in Tunica-Biloxi History," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 32, no. 2 (2008).

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 57.

perspective, analysis of Katrina relief efforts further ties the issue of environmental justice to geographic place.

The long and thorough history of environmental racism associated with hurricanes and disaster relief in the Southern United States provides the context for Bullard's closer examination of Katrina and the place-specific environmental contamination it left behind. In analyzing the debris, toxic waste, and "untold tons of 'lethal goop'"¹⁴⁰ Katrina left behind, Bullard focuses specifically on the long-term, slow violence associated with spectacular disasters. The difference in vulnerabilities, Bullard argues, is more about the long-term effects most clearly seen in disaster relief: "What gets cleaned up and where the waste is disposed are key environmental justice and equity issues. Pollution from chemical plants located in populated areas poses a health threat to nearby residents."¹⁴¹ Two years after Katrina, a remaining 32% of the pre-disaster New Orleans population had not returned home. Three organizations – "A Safe Way Back Home," the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Dillard University (DSCEJ) and the United Steel Workers (USW) – undertook a cleanup project focusing on removing the tainted topsoil from New Orleans East neighborhoods. While it was allegedly the government's responsibility to clean up after the large-scale disaster, the EPA and LDEQ's insistence that there "was no immediate cause for concern" despite high levels of "lead, arsenic, and other toxic chemicals"¹⁴² found in samples catalyzed the community organized response. Despite multiple contests to the EPA's findings, the government argued that the contested areas were contaminated

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 769.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 778.

¹⁴² Ibid, 773-774.

previous to Katrina and therefore should not be included in a government funded clean up effort. The contaminated neighborhoods denied official recognition of post-Katrina pollution were disproportionately poor, Black neighborhoods.

The disaster caused by Katrina and the lasting effects the storm left behind is written off as a “naturally occurring.” Using Mother Nature as a scapegoat villain, the social and political forces contributing to the place specific impacts of such a disaster often go unanalyzed. However, Bullard argues, “Much of the death and destruction attributed to ‘natural’ disasters is in fact unnatural and man-made”¹⁴³ in terms of failing infrastructure in poor, Black communities and inaccessible public transit. With the right infrastructure, emergency evacuation plans, and available transit – all of which are generally available to the wealthy white – disasters are much more easily mitigated. The failure of levees in specifically Black and impoverished neighborhoods of New Orleans explicitly represents the geographically specific inadequacy of the built-environment. Even “After three years and \$7 billion of levee repairs...The mainly African-American parts of New Orleans are still likely to be flooded in a major storm.”¹⁴⁴ The potential for future disasters in these neighborhoods leave residents not only insecure but financially vulnerable as “These disparities could lead insurers and investors to think twice about supporting the rebuilding efforts in vulnerable black areas.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, Katrina’s lasting effects on Black neighborhoods in the natural and built environment have generational impacts that continue the slow violence against Black communities’ health, financial stability, and ability to regain a sense of place. Once again, Nixon’s proposal to

¹⁴³ Ibid, 757.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 776-777.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 777.

conceptualize “space” across “physical space as pollution compounds and expand”¹⁴⁶ does not align with the reality of politically and geographically sanctioned neighborhoods bearing the brunt of location-specific contamination of both natural and built environments.

Hurricane Katrina stands out because of the cultural significance of the specific geographic region it affected. For perhaps the first time, a valuable piece of America’s colonizers history was threatened by “natural” disaster, so that even the most privileged people could sympathize: “the city’s unique culture and history became part of the rallying cry to rebuild...the majority of people understood what a cultural loss it would be if New Orleans ceased to exist.”¹⁴⁷ While the idea of losing New Orleans and the culture the city contained awoke national relief efforts, the loss of a culturally and historically valuable place was not a new phenomenon for Native Americans. For those subjected to legal forms of racism, erasure and displacement, whose cultural and religious connections to place are consistently disregarded in favor of expansion and development, the trauma associated with displacement and cultural loss was nothing new. Klopotek et al. analyzes the long-term displacement of Indigenous Louisiana peoples, Tunica-Biloxi, by comparing the effect of two traumatic events of displacement: once in 1938, when the pressure to leave Louisiana meant losing their legal right to the land, and again in 2005 with the added media attention of Katrina. In evaluating the economic, social, as well as spiritual and emotional recovery efforts of

¹⁴⁶ Nixon (2011).

¹⁴⁷ Klopotek (2008), 58.

Katrina on the Tunicas, Klopotek et al examines the connection of both ordinary and extraordinary trauma to place.

The history of ordinary trauma in terms of land displacement for the Tunicas is long and often explicit. Beginning in the lack of acknowledgement for aboriginal sovereignty in response to the Louisiana Purchase, the Tunica-Biloxi confederation faced many. For example, when a colonist named Bordelon claimed land including a part of a Tunica village in 1842 it was initially approved. Despite this approval, Bordelon's claim to tribal land later became the center of a lawsuit, as his successor "would have his crew of slaves move the fence over ten feet [annually], encroaching on tribal land (the very definition of slow trauma)."¹⁴⁸ Almost a century later, Ruth Underhill visited the tribe in 1938 in an attempt to analyze their "authenticity" and whether or not to grant the tribe federal recognition. Her final report, which was "riddled with historical, linguistic, and ethnological inaccuracies"¹⁴⁹ effectively disempowered and misrepresented the Tunicas and resulted in denial of federal recognition. Without the political, economic, or cultural assistance that federal recognition would have given the tribe, many Tunica-Biloxi tribal members were forced to leave their home despite deep ties to their native lands. Given the previous historical context of gradual, unseen displacement, the rejection and resentment Katrina evacuees felt were "amplified especially for those who had suffered under the ordinary trauma of racism prior to the evacuation."¹⁵⁰ Thus, the events of the 1930s in the Tunicas' struggle for federal recognition allows for a more visual comparison of the extraordinary trauma

¹⁴⁸ Klopotek, 59.

¹⁴⁹ Klopotek, 60.

¹⁵⁰ Klopotek, 62.

endured by Hurricane Katrina victims—“forced emigration, dispossession, cultural devastation, loneliness, anger, disconnection from family, death by federal neglect”¹⁵¹—to the ordinary and continuous trauma of colonialism and racism.

After navigating the legal battles of displacement, social battles of anti-Native racism, and the economic battles derived from the combination of these forces, the Tunicas were not new to the concept of a government working against them. The authors argue that the skills learned by the Tunicas navigating ordinary trauma made their recovery from the extraordinary trauma of Katrina more attainable. While the Tunicas were equally, if not more explicitly affected by the “natural” disaster due to their previous displacement and therefore lack of cohesive community, they also gained knowledge in navigating the barriers they faced:

The required political, economic, and legal maneuvering would not have been possible even fifteen years earlier, much less fifty years earlier. It demonstrates the savvy that the tribe has developed through years of experience in dealing with governmental roadblocks based in anti-Native politics designed to protect the interests of white Louisianans.¹⁵²

Throughout the hidden – and not-so hidden—continuations of racism and colonialism experienced by the Tunicas, their ability to recover after Katrina is “emblematic of both continuities and changes since the days of Ruth Underhill’s visit”¹⁵³ and the government’s attempt to slowly but effectively drive them from their Native land.

The lasting effects and differential vulnerabilities illustrated by Hurricane Katrina demonstrate the specifically geographic aspect of slow violence. While government neglect is most obvious in delayed response to major environmental

¹⁵¹ Klopotek, 62.

¹⁵² Klopotek, 70.

¹⁵³ Klopotek, 71.

disasters, it occurs more subtly through the slow violence of environmental contamination. Directly intersecting with public health, the majority of communities with highest environmental exposures also lack access to medical resources, healthy food, employment, higher education, and a variety of other factors that influence one's well being. The generational impact of consistent, long-term exposure also creates a longer lasting effect on a larger scale. This directly affects the choice of social reproduction for women in marginalized communities, those who have much higher risk of exposure to environmental contaminants. Therefore, slow violence occurs over a generational time scale with incremental speed and specifically effects reproduction of Native communities due to its specificity of targeted pollution in specific geographic places previously sectorized by socioeconomic-racial status.

Chapter 8: Injustice in Environmental Policy

Examining reproductive justice within the framework of environmental justice requires closer analysis on how intrinsically the two are linked. The intersections of multiple systems of oppression also link the oppressors who control environmental policy decisions and reproductive/health policy decisions. An important primary distinction between the mainstream environmental or reproductive rights movements is in the language of justice movements that necessarily center the experiences of historically oppressed peoples. Within these justice movements, one must also examine the distinction and differential vulnerabilities by gender. Considering the increased vulnerability of Native women in the face of climate change and environmental pollution, the environmental reproductive justice movement focuses on the specific overlapping of vulnerabilities in pregnancy and childbirth. The most unifying goal of the feminist movement with environmental justice is social reproduction. Supporting social reproduction of historically colonized and marginalized communities allows population restoration, re-attainment of political strength, and community health. In deconstructing the general approach of social and environmental movements and removing the western binary hierarchy between humans and nature, the commonalities between reproductive and environmental movements become even more apparent.

Addressing the issues of sexist environmental policy that specifically target poor women and women of color first requires analysis of the gender differences in both the environmental movement and policymaking. Explaining the gendered differences in energy use, resource use, direct harm, and decision-making, Geraldine Terry calls for an integration of gender in environmental policymaking as, “gender justice is central to the

achievement of climate justice.”¹⁵⁴ By exploring the gendered differences in access to resources, divisions of labor, physical mobility, and agency in community decision-making, Terry argues that a consideration of which people are using what resources is essential in order to avoid an explicitly sexist environmental policy that targets women, poor women, and women of color more than men. For instance, there are many examples of gendered climate justice as environmental harms have direct and disproportionate effects on women. Terry explicitly lists recent “natural” disasters or extreme climate events, that have rendered women more vulnerable than men in the aftermath:

Since the start of the twenty-first century, several extreme climate events have clearly demonstrated women’s specific gendered vulnerability to disasters, including the 2003 heat wave in Europe, the Asian tsunami of 2004, and Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans in 2005. The cyclone that hit coastal Bangladesh in 1991 also killed many more women than men.”¹⁵⁵

The so-called “natural” disasters experienced in the last two decades alone demonstrate a gendered difference in impacts. In the same vein on a less spectacular scale, “In urban areas, poor women are more likely to bear the brunt of health problems caused by ‘urban heat island’ effects.”¹⁵⁶ While the direct harms of climate change seem targeted towards women, one must also consider the gendered imperial forces causing both sensational and ongoing environmental destruction.

Ignorant to the immediate effects of climate change that poor women and women of color experience, those controlling policy change continue allowing

¹⁵⁴ Geraldine Terry, "No climate justice without gender justice: an overview of the issues," *Gender & Development* 17, no. 1 (March 19, 2009), 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

disproportionate harmful effects targeting poor women and women of color. Terry argues that the forces of globalization, consumerism and capitalism are “driven by a particular type of masculinity that values power and ruthlessness, and is creating a tiny number of super-wealthy people, mostly men, at the expense of millions of poor men and women who endure its negative effects.”¹⁵⁷ With western, patriarchal, and settler colonialist masculine destructive forces causing environmental harm and degradation, it only follows that male decision makers -- proved as not perceiving the same environmental risks as women – would create policies that focus on culturally female participation in carbon. For example, the so-called “school run” of mothers driving their kids to school receives media attention regarding the increased traffic congestion and carbon emissions. The blatantly contrasting fact to this media sensation that more men than women own cars demonstrates how easily women are scapegoated and targeted for climate mitigation policies without considering the larger picture of Big Oil, time-poverty of working mothers, and a car-reliant society. Therefore, the call for integrating gender politics into climate politics seeks to ensure that “new mitigation and adaptation policies do not disadvantage poor women, but rather deliver them some benefits; for instance, through increased transfers of useful and appropriate technologies, which meet women's energy-service needs.”¹⁵⁸ By considering the needs of women while creating environmental policy, the resulting laws attempting to mitigate climate change will help protect instead of harm those bearing the brunt of negative environmental effects.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 9-10.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 16.

In mainstream environmental discourse, poor women and women of color are frequently blamed for climate change due to overpopulation. Thomas Malthus created a theory in 1798 asserting, “unchecked population growth would threaten the survival of people on the planet because of food scarcity.”¹⁵⁹ In fact, modern iterations of neo-Malthusianism beliefs that blame overpopulation for climate change and global warming are well recognized as a modern reincarnation of eugenics. Commonly referred to as “population control ideology,” this approach avoids the true root causes of environmental destruction while putting the blame on women of color and poor communities and fueling “classist, ableist, homophobic, and racist practices under the guise of environmental and reproductive rights.”¹⁶⁰ Instead of blaming environmental factors on poor women in resource-exploited countries, radical environmental reproductive justice challenges both feminism and environmentalism to consider how women in impoverished and marginalized communities experience long-term environmental contamination that inhibits their right to social reproduction. In this way, environmental reproductive justice centers on the attainment of individual biopower and agency. It also shifts the blame from the victims of this contamination to the consumers and structures that promote capitalism, consumption, and environmental exploitation and degradation.¹⁶¹

Challenging the ideology that blames poor women and women of color requires a more thorough examination of both movements and the way mainstream efforts have

¹⁵⁹ Ross et al., 67.

¹⁶⁰ Ross et al, 361

¹⁶¹ Giovanna Di Chiro, "Living environmentalisms: coalition politics, social reproduction, and environmental justice," *Environmental Politics* 17, no. 2 (April 08, 2008): 283.

discounted and discouraged participation of these populations. Gathering a group of four organizers with explicit interest in the intersection of environmental and reproductive justice, SisterSong facilitated a round-table discussion centering on the oppressive politics at the heart of population control ideology. Central to the conversation was distinguishing environmental and reproductive rights from environmental and reproductive justice:

The environmental justice, reproductive justice, and other justice movements are, for me, about collective liberation and are about centering the margins, and ensuring that our self-determination and community autonomy are first and foremost, and that we're prioritizing the work that has historically been marginalized by systems of oppression.¹⁶²

After determining the difference between “rights” and “justice” movements, interviewees considered the intersections between both Environmental and Reproductive Justice. The direct intersection of “reproductive justice and anti-population-control and environmental justice and economic justice work,”¹⁶³ prison abolitionist activist and organizer Vanessa Huang argues, is seen most explicitly in confinement to place. Specifically, Huang claims that the industry of confinement aims “to target and harm the environments where our communities have less access to institutional power.”¹⁶⁴ Bianca Encinias, with the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, added onto the understanding of the intersection of EJ and RJ that both movements fight for “the right to control our bodies and how to make decisions.”¹⁶⁵ Similarly, Cara Page, former director of the Committee on Women,

¹⁶² Ross et al., 364-365.

¹⁶³ Ross et al., 365.

¹⁶⁴ Ross et al., 365.

¹⁶⁵ Ross et al., 366.

Population and the Environment, explained the intersection of movements as a “fight for sovereignty of land and body”¹⁶⁶ and looks forward to an expanded definition of the environment as one that explicitly includes the physical body. Finally, Shawna Larson, an Indigenous activist and organizer, eloquently summarizes her indigenous perspective on the intersection of the two justice movements and the oppressive politics behind the population control ideology:

From my Indigenous perspective, these people came on a boat from Europe, they came here, they came into our area, and they took our land and they claimed our knowledge and they took over and then we tried to explain sustainability to them and they refused to listen and then they raped and pillaged the land and blamed us for overpopulation.¹⁶⁷

The lapse in logic behind the overpopulation ideology supporting mainstream environmentalists also reveals an even more telling concept: “Environmentalism is just a symptom of colonization.”¹⁶⁸ This statement forces environmentalists to confront the warped logic blaming poor women and women of color for climate change rather than addressing the larger issues of imperialism, consumerism, and capitalism contributing to environmental destruction. More often than not, “green” movements and pushes towards “organics” are targeted towards upper class white people while simultaneously harming marginalized communities – not a far stretch from colonialism.

Approaching the intersecting movements of EJ and RJ within Native American communities requires an analysis of how mainstream environmentalism continues patriarchal and colonialist structures by maintaining a fictitious concept of conserving “wilderness.” William Cronon establishes a functional definition for sublime in relation

¹⁶⁶ Ross et al., 371.

¹⁶⁷ Ross et al., 374.

¹⁶⁸ Ross et al., 375.

to a colonized understanding of wilderness as those “rare places on earth where one had more chance than elsewhere to glimpse the face of God.”¹⁶⁹ As a constructed Westernized approach to the natural world, this view required minimizing the voices of those already existing on the land in order to achieve an unachievable “sublime” and unmaintained wilderness that aligned with views of women’s sexuality, or lack thereof: “The myth of the wilderness as ‘virgin’ uninhabited land had always been especially cruel when seen from the perspective of the Indians who had once called that land home.”¹⁷⁰ In an attempt to purify both the land and women involved in colonization of the United States, both are generally categorized as virginal or barbaric and always in association with each other. To accurately capture the vast destruction of patriarchal colonialism, unfortunately, is outside of the scope of this thesis and to attempt one in this limited space would be unfair and unjust. Instead, by focusing on the structures colonialism created, the ideologies it entrenched, and the impact on Indigenous communities today, we can better understand the importance of ERJ specifically for Native American women.

¹⁶⁹ William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1995): 73.

¹⁷⁰ Cronon, 79.

Chapter 9: The Long Fight -- Organizing and Addressing

Environmental Reproductive Injustice

The complicated nature of this issue and the direct neglect by the government that further contributes to harms experienced by these communities necessitates creative political action and resistance efforts. These responses generally stem from grassroots organizations created by those most affected and exemplify the environmental justice movement, which “grew out of an awareness of the increasing environmental risks people of color faced and a dissatisfaction with the reform environmental agenda.”¹⁷¹ These groups are supported by scientific data generated from Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which helps sociological research by creating a visual representation of many scales and demographics. This method has become a new and useful tool in the field of environmental justice by producing “more accurate models of the distribution of demographic character than conventional U.S. Bureau of Census areal units.”¹⁷² With the information provided by GIS mapping, grassroots environmental justice organizations can better inform their intersectional approach and address the issues of slow, environmental violence in their communities. This information is especially important in understanding the correlation of location of environmental health risks and effects on pregnant mothers.

Those making the connection between feminist reproductive rights and environmental justice are those most directly affected by these issues: poor women and

¹⁷¹ Dorceta E. Taylor, “Race, Class, Gender and American Environmentalism.” General Technical Report. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station (2002): 38.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 295.

youth of color.¹⁷³ Due to lack of government or political response, as well as a distrust of government, these groups are focused on collective, intersection, and grassroots social activism. Understanding the connection between the mythological scale of climate change as well as the direct effects on poor and marginalized communities here and abroad is a crucial aspect of the mission of these organizations. Connecting the global issue of climate change to people's everyday lives through the very intimate decision of parenting/child-rearing make the phenomenon more approachable and personable. While political action amongst activist groups most generally takes the form of organizing groups and mass action (protests, marches, etc.), it also makes a more lasting impact in the form of education within a community and individual level. An example of this is the Akwesasne Mother's Milk Project, spearheaded by midwife Katsi Cook in 1985 to "understand and characterize how toxic contaminants have moved through the local food chain, including mothers' milk."¹⁷⁴ The persistence of this organization, made up mostly of determined women and mothers in the community, led to the research studies previously examined in this paper. Grassroots organizations include a commitment to justice that generates the pressure and later results necessary to make long-term change.

Another group generating responses to this issue is medical professionals, specifically gynecologists and obstetricians who publish work directly correlating the issues of reproductive health with environmental health. While the response at the individual and professional scale generally does not look like traditional activism or

¹⁷³ DiChiro, 293.

¹⁷⁴ LaDuke, 19.

organized action, it is focused on education and prevention. Those groups publishing studies correlating these issues generally include some sort of preventative plan for both medical professionals as well as their patients which outlines both the environmental hazards to avoid as well as healthy behaviors/activities to help ensure a safe pregnancy. In recognizing the greater risk of women in vulnerable communities, these preventative measures focus on food accessibility and nutrition, and infiltration of professional organizations to bring these issues to light. These opinion pieces in medical journals necessarily outline the increased vulnerability of marginalized women and women in poverty, including preventative measures that begin to acknowledge the institutions within which these women operate, establishing a framework of social justice for developing future prevention methods.¹⁷⁵ While these publications primarily serve as a platform for informing other medical professionals instead of individuals or communities, they are also importantly used to inform, educate, and “arm” activist groups. As RHAP representative Hailey Jones describes, the incorporation of activist language and efforts into larger institutions like the health industry:

I think, it’s been interesting for me as someone who’s not a clinician and seeing how there’s tons of women of color and Indigenous women who’ve been organizing for decades around RJ and who have been on the frontlines. From that perspective now, you really see in (quote) “mainstream medicine,” just the inkling, just starting to break the ice of talking about RJ and environmental justice and how there’s these...huge academic concepts with these frameworks that are actually rooted in actual activism and direct action and how it applies to the medical field, because we are dealing with the hierarchy of, you know, “This is medicine. We don’t have space or time to dive into reproductive justice and environmental—How does that connect?” And I think we’re starting to see this turning point of clinicians applying these... frameworks to their work and seeing

¹⁷⁵ Gian Carlo Di Renzo et al., "International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics opinion on reproductive health impacts of exposure to toxic environmental chemicals," *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 131, no. 3 (December 2015): 225.

how, if they're patient-centered, if they're truly patient-centered, and what that entails is applying this lens.¹⁷⁶

The incorporation of terms, movements, and goals developed through decades of organizing and activism into professional, medical fields is a step towards normalizing and centering the goal of achieving environmental reproductive justice. The importance of individuals operating within larger institutions recognizing and incorporating goals of environmental and reproductive justice cannot be overemphasized.

Approaches and Legal Limitations:

In interviewing representatives from each of these organizations and continuing to ask questions on the intersection scientifically proven to exist, I gathered information on the current coverage of organizations, limitations that they face, and opportunities for possibility of integrating multi-scalar issues. Although I had initially intended to analyze a wider variety of existing organizations whose missions relate to or mentions the objectives of ERJ for Native Americans, the three organizations that I interviewed provided a basis for the different approaches and legal limitations of non-profits. The three organizations varied geographically across the United States, with RHAP based in New York City, NAWHERC based on Yankton-Sioux reservation in Lake Andes, South Dakota, and WEWIN operating out of San Francisco, California. The organizations that participated in interviews were also generally representative of a variety of approaches to achieving ERJ for Native Americans. Due in part to the different approaches and geographic locations of these organizations, the three nonprofits interviewed also demonstrated a spectrum of limitations and barriers in

¹⁷⁶ Jones, 2019.

achieving ERJ for Native American communities. The obstacles facing these non-profit organizations addressing ERJ for Native Americans were similar and contrasting in important ways. The similarities and distinctions of limitations to organizational success is best demonstrated by broadly sorting the variety of specific impediments to justice into two distinct areas: social barriers and legal barriers. Social barriers generally included addressing stereotypes, misrepresentation, misinformation, etc. while legal barriers focused on explicit laws, regulations, or court cases that obstruct the goal of Environmental Reproductive Justice for Native Americans.

The various approaches represented by the three participatory nonprofit organizations provides the foundation for understanding the wide spectrum of approaches across ERJ organizations. For example, the first organization interviewed, RHAP, is a “clinician-focused organization, focused on reproductive health”¹⁷⁷ that focuses on the three key areas of “early pregnancy loss, aka miscarriage, and abortion care and contraception.”¹⁷⁸ When asked specifically about RHAP’s approach, Jones acknowledged its unique avenue of focusing on bringing knowledge of reproductive health care to primary providers:

I think RHAP’s approach to making reproductive health care accessible to everyone is unique in that we’re focusing on primary care. We provide a different model than Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood, I think, is great and if folks want the option of kind of having an anonymous clinician provided with abortion care or other services, I think I support that, and we support that. That’s a great option. But we also want to make sure that folks have the option of going to their primary care providers who they’ve seen throughout their whole lives. So, I think in bringing that to the conversation of how primary care is important, and if we want to make it accessible to everyone and destigmatize

¹⁷⁷ Jones, 2019.

¹⁷⁸ Jones, 2019.

this care, it really has to be mainstream because abortion care is fundamentally reproductive health care.¹⁷⁹

Focusing on primary care providers, Jones asserts that RHAP addresses their goal of universal accessibility to reproductive health care, including rural, conservative areas of the US. While RHAP primarily focuses on the education of clinicians across America, the organization also utilizes their “position of power and privilege,” which “carries a certain amount of weight,” to address legal obstacles to RJ.¹⁸⁰

On the legal side, currently what RHAP is working on, I’m not sure if you’ve seen it on our website, is our petition for Mife, Mifepristone, also known as the abortion pill. It’s currently distributed by Danco, Danco Lab, who we’ve been in conversation with. It’s been great speaking with them, but Danco Lab, and [coincidentally] the FDA, regulates Mife as a—under the REM classification. It’s like Risk Adverse Management¹⁸¹....So yeah, dropping the classification on Mife would be great so that patients can access this medication easily and that clinicians can prescribe it. So, that would be awesome. I mean, currently, that’s what RHAP is working on, is kind of a petition where clinicians and supporters are signing on, to push Danco, to push the FDA to re-apply for labeling, so the next time they’re up for re-labeling by the FDA, hopefully it won’t be with the REM classification.¹⁸²

In focusing on clinician training about reproductive health care, RHAP aims to make reproductive health care universally accessible. Their focus on established medical institutions and practitioners also creates a certain amount of political sway, which RHAP then uses to promote policy that aids the goal of RJ.

The approach of NAWHERC varies from that of RHAP, as the explicit goal and focus of the organization incorporates holistic justice for Native American women. As Charon Asetoyer describes of NACB and NAWHERC, “We’re here to improve the

¹⁷⁹ Jones, 2019.

¹⁸⁰ Jones, 2019.

¹⁸¹ See note 2.

¹⁸² Jones, 2019.

health and wellbeing of Indigenous women and families, and you can't work on one area and say that you're really improving the lives of women and families. You've got to look at the holistic approach and encompass all of those areas.”¹⁸³ In terms of specific approaches, NAWHERC focuses primarily on providing direct services for Native women “at those critical moments,” and contesting unjust policies. In addressing various instances of political injustice and “human rights violations,” NAWHERC works

...with groups like Amnesty International and the ACLU because they have teams of attorneys that can assist us with the legal challenges. And at the...policy level, I mean, they are great. We partner with them. They've been instrumental in helping us. We drive the ship and they're right there. They're right there to file injunctions or file Freedom of Information Acts. They are our ... *compañeros*, our partners in these endeavors, and we couldn't do it without them!¹⁸⁴

An example of successful policy opposition that NACB was directly involved in was making emergency contraceptives accessible as an “over-the-counter” on reservations. This process, while merely demanding the compliance of Indian Health Service with the national Food and Drug policies standardized for non-Native women, was an extreme struggle. As Asetoyer recounts, “we got this policy into a federal agency at a time where Congress was like, you know, not wanting--still don't---contraceptives to be institutionalized I guess I should say. But we did.”¹⁸⁵

Motivated to make “sure that young [Native] women are aware of what their rights are,” NACB focuses on a variety of social injustices that affect Native women.

¹⁸³ Asetoyer, 2019.

¹⁸⁴ Asetoyer, 2019.

¹⁸⁵ Asetoyer, 2019.

For example, throughout the interview, Asetoyer repeatedly emphasized NACB's current focus on combating sexual assault and violence against Native women:

Well, we work a lot, right now we're working on sexual assault and sexual violence and trying to prevent it... from occurring in our community. So, that's kind of where our focus is right now because violence against women is huge! Native women. Especially... trafficking... missing and murdered Indigenous women. And just violence against Native women in general. So, we're working a lot on rape policies, the handling of rape kits within Indian Health Service. We're looking at trying to... work with young women in terms of their disclosure. A lot of them do not want to disclose because they don't feel safe reporting or disclosing. They have the retaliation, and law enforcement is... it's a very slippery slope on reservations.¹⁸⁶

As the current focus of Asetoyer and her nonprofits, both the political and social aspects of sexual violence of Native women are thoroughly addressed. In addition to NACB resisting injustices at the policy-level, at the grassroots level, the program called "Break the Silence, End Sexual Violence" focuses on:

Getting them involved to help stop it and prevent it and also working with women to disclose, because until you've disclosed a lot of women will—a lot of people—who've been sexually assaulted will enact their feelings and drown themselves in the bottle or take drugs and become very dysfunctional and stop moving forward. They get stuck. And so, we help facilitate by bringing, their disclosure, by bringing them together in groups and working so that they can disclose and start the journey into healing.¹⁸⁷

Asetoyer summarizes the goal of her organization and its associated branches of nonprofits as fighting for basic human rights and social justice: "We're not asking for anything that you don't have, that other people don't have. We want, at minimum, that equal protection of the law!"¹⁸⁸ This Indigenous led organization focuses on restoring

¹⁸⁶ Asetoyer, 2019.

¹⁸⁷ Asetoyer, 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Asetoyer, 2019.

justice to Native American communities by specifically focusing on issues affecting Native women.

Finally, my interview with WEWIN founder and co-president, Susan Masten, illustrated the many ways that the organization's approach is rooted in empowering, uplifting, and supporting Native women through community outreach. Masten's vision for the organization is for women to be "supportive of other women and create a network amongst women so that we could have a stronger voice and be better leaders."¹⁸⁹ When discussing the audience her organization reaches, she mentioned the importance of creating a return to holistic traditional organization:

They come because they're looking for something and then they all seem to find what they need. I think it's because it's such a—we don't often gather in a positive, encouraging environment for women because somehow... we've lost that piece of our traditional world, our cultural and traditional world. I think that's what's important about our organization is that while we also provide them with trainings to help them professionally or personally—'cause they're trainings from health to finance to coping, finding a balance in their lives.¹⁹⁰

WEWIN's focus on individual empowerment, networking, and leadership among Native women represents an entire approach of nonprofit organizing against environmental reproductive injustice, which focuses on supporting individuals.

Limitations:

The three organizations interviewed, while varying in approaches to addressing environmental reproductive injustices against Native American communities, all faced barriers in achieving their goals. While the number of interviews was lower than originally expected, in analyzing both the legal and non-legal limitations restricting the

¹⁸⁹ Masten, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Masten, 2019.

productivity of these organizations in achieving their goals are largely representative of the barriers that organizations focused on achieving social justice face. The legal limitations included the Hyde Amendment, which bans federal funding towards abortion care, the *Oliphant* case, and limited legal representation. The social barriers described by the organizations' representatives included confronting stigmas surrounding abortions, miscarriages, and birth control, encouraging consistent and resilient Native leadership, and approaching social justice from a holistic perspective.

The main legal limitation limiting reproductive justice access is the Hyde Amendment. In place since 1976, the Hyde Amendment blocks federal funding for abortion services, meaning Medicaid cannot cover abortion even with a doctor's recommendation and/or a woman's life is at risk.¹⁹¹ Hailey Jones explains the repercussions of the Hyde Amendment:

If federal funding can't go toward abortion care, that means that patients who are seeking this care have to rely on Abortion Funds, who are awesome and kickass, but that shouldn't have to be the case. So, in terms of making sure that we're accessible to everyone and everyone can afford it, it's great to work with, [to have the support] from National [Network] of Abortion Funds, but that is like an uphill battle and then it's easier, you don't have to jump through as many hoops if you're working within a private clinic. Again, if you're working within a private clinic serving mostly populations that are under private insurance, you're not accessible to everyone. 'Cause that's kinda like the easier pie, but it's not accessible.¹⁹²

The national scope of the Hyde Amendment limits the productivity of organizations focused on providing accessible reproductive health care by restricting sources of funding for people reliant on Medicaid funding for health services. When I asked Jones

¹⁹¹ Planned Parenthood, "Official Site," Planned Parenthood, , accessed June 04, 2019, <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>.

¹⁹² Jones, 2019.

what laws or policies she would like to see enacted that would better help RHAP achieve its goal of RJ for all, she narrowed it down to three specific policy aims, one of which includes abolishing the Hyde Amendment:

--I think, if I could choose one... I mean, I could choose one from the clinician perspective, it would mandate that all residency programs in the United States train—I mean, you can't opt out of it—train their clinicians to provide early pregnancy loss management, abortion care, and...contraception that is patient-centered. Because [programs] *can* opt out of it, residencies *can* not offer it, and for me, if your provider's caring, you should be able to provide patients with all the services. And if you get that established at a residency level, that means we can have folks who *are* trained to competency in their scope of practice, and so that helps us in terms of how many folks are able to provide this care. Second would be... Oh, my gosh. This is like your wish list of things to have but let me think. Definitely, one would be the residency. Two would be down with the Hyde Amendment so that FQHCs, Federally Qualified Health Centers, don't have to jump through all these hoops in order to provide care because that would increase accessibility. [whispers] Oh, my god. And then also, there's a lot of, once you get into the contracts—again, I'm not as well versed in this—once you get into providers' or clinicians' contracts, some folks will try to, will work at one center and then [ease] off to moonlight during off hours to be an abortion care provider at a clinic because where they mainly work, they're not be able to provide that abortion care. And so, but then they'll have certain [supervisions] in the contract where they know, "We will release you from your duties, you will no longer have a job here if you moonlight."¹⁹³

These three changes to reproductive health care policy and practices would directly increase the accessibility of reproductive health care by giving clinicians more agency and knowledge on providing abortion care.

While RHAP shares the struggle of battling legal limitations with other organizations in their pursuit of social justice, WEWIN and NAWHERC directly work against a legal structure built upon a framework of settler colonialism. Therefore, the legal barriers of organizations focusing explicitly on achieving justice in Native American communities are more deeply and structurally ingrained into the institutional

¹⁹³ Jones, 2019.

fabric of the United States. Due to the deeply rooted ideology of settler colonialism in institutional structures such as the legal system, in many cases infringement on the civil rights of Indigenous communities goes largely unnoticed by the mainstream, Western world. Asetoyer describes the effect of this ideology on the blatant disregard of Native American rights:

The rights of Indigenous people, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has articles in there that address those very points, and these big multinational corporations think they don't have to abide by it or respect Indigenous peoples' rights to the land. And that is not only here in our community in the United States, but that's globally! So, back to Standing Rock. That was a huge show of resistance, and you see that in the Middle East. You see it in South America. And it's going to continue to happen as long as these big corporations continue to depend on fossil fuels as opposed to alternative energy. You know, it's... it's a life and death situation at the grassroots level, not only in this country but globally.¹⁹⁴

The global level of oppression Asetoyer speaks to here signifies the prevalence of settler colonialism ideology in Western practices of capitalism, consumerism, contamination, extractivism, and exploitation. WEWIN founder Susan Masten also discussed the impact of settler colonialism ideology in the development and execution of policies.

I do believe that policies have a great impact on us in the government's management of our water and our resources. So, regardless if we're...within our reservation boundaries, everyone else does because the law in the reservations is checkerboarded, directly impact us. As a result, because typically in Indian Country, because we're the dominant population, then we continue to be impacted by the decisions because they are more for growth and development than they are for protecting the environment. So, the result of that, that continues to have a negative impact on us for our health. The health of our resources and the health of the people 'cause we're all... we're so intertwined with our world, and so anything that impacts our water, our land, impacts us and our health...¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Asetoyer, 2019.

¹⁹⁵ Masten, 2019.

Masten eloquently connects the legal limitations her organization faces with the holistic, interconnected impacts of environmental and physical health within Native American communities. Using this holistic perspective, policies rooted in settler colonialism clearly have an impact on natural resources, environmental health, public health, and organizations attempting to address these issues. Understanding the multiple levels of oppression that ideology based in settler colonialism causes through policy, environment, and health creates a more thorough perspective of the social limitations organizations addressing ERJ encounter.

Often less tangible than the legal limitations that ERJ organizations face but equally as restricting are social limitations. These include stigmas surrounding issues of environment, reproductive health, and Indigenous communities. While the source of these stereotypes and stigmas would require an equally long thesis to fully analyze, the representatives of ERJ organizations that I interviewed spoke directly of both instances and effects of social limitations. The stigmatization of reproductive health care is a primary obstacle to reproductive justice that is maintained through social institutions. RHAP's representative, Hailey Jones, discussed how her organization addresses the issues of social stigmas surrounding their objective of providing accessible abortion care:

... if we're thinking about hostile landscapes and stigma, that is a large goal in our leadership and folks' ability to provide because if you're working in a hostile state, it's not just, "Oh! I want to provide this care. I'm okay with being stigmatized." You're also bring your family into it. There's also protesters. There's also, you know, stress is another layer...And then also just folks face hostility, like say if you were in a, if you're in Louisiana and... or another hostile state and colleagues of yours are kind of the stereotypical, good old white boy club, and you're a female...individual trying to vocalize and you do think there are consequences in terms of you voicing your opinion, you're trying to get into the club to see how it works, how the power is distributed, but then you

get kicked out of that because you're viewed as this liberal, you know, 'killing the children.' It's like how do you break into that power dynamic when you're isolated? Our network helps bring folks who feel isolated in their states and their communities and helps bring them together and realize their collective power. But it's hard.¹⁹⁶

As the Trump administration increasingly restricts access to abortion care and reproductive health care, the socially developed concepts of morality and Western religious beliefs enter the legal sphere. However, before these specific legislative attacks on reproductive justice the social stigma of abortion and reproductive care limited the success of RHAP, as many clinicians doing residency in socially conservative states are never properly trained in abortion care or early pregnancy loss. RHAP spends time, personnel, and resources addressing this gap in education to increase national RJ:

In terms of sufficient training, a lot of the folks who, we kinda work with folks post their residency, the training that we really provide at RHAP is really medication, abortion, for folks who are post-residency because it's very simple training that they're supposed to incorporate into their practice. But we don't have the capacity currently for folks who are like, "Hey! I never got this training in abortion care or early pregnancy loss in my residency because," either they worked at a religiously-affiliated hospital or just it wasn't part of the curriculum, we're trying to get that training, and we kind of don't have the capacity. But, you know, "Hey! You know what? Sign right up, and we can give you a crash"—we don't have that capacity to do that for multiple folks. So, there's a question of capacity when you're working with a lot of residencies across the nation that aren't that progressive, that aren't providing this care, or this training, from day one. That's an uphill battle to provide that training post-residency.¹⁹⁷

The institutional impact of social stigmas and ideologies influence ERJ at multiple levels including medical practice, accessibility, and emotional traumatization associated with protestors ridiculing individuals' choice to reproductive agency. The impacts of

¹⁹⁶ Jones, 2019.

¹⁹⁷ Jones, 2019.

social stigmatization surrounding reproductive justice provides context for the effects of an institutionally based and supported social ideology.

The impact of settler colonialism, much like its approach, is holistic and cannot be isolated to one aspect of life. Therefore, in the same way that settler colonialism ideology affects the legal system and policy-making, it also influences social prejudices against Indigenous communities. Asetoyer describes the infiltration of this kind of mentality and ideology through the example of “man camps”¹⁹⁸ and the limited prosecution available due to *Oliphant*.

So, whether these guys are coming in to—no matter what stage they’re at—they’re coming in to build a pipeline or they’re coming in to harvest our oil or our gold or our uranium, our water, whatever it is they’re after, they bring their trash with them. They bring their rape, they bring their diseases, and their lack of accountability. And definitely the lack of respect for the community. So, it all intersects... depending on which step you’re looking at, you know, environmental degradation and what comes with that. I mean, all kinds of environmental issues, all kinds of reproductive health issues. All kinds of violence against women and families issues. So, there’s this great intersection, and it just depends on what you’re having to go up against at what level of resistance you’re putting up. And is it the harvesting? The action of them putting in the pipeline. Is it the aftermath of having to clean up all the toxins after they’ve come in and harvested? Is it the crimes that are committed on other humans during a time that these workers are in our community? So, it’s just varying levels and at what stage of the process that community is in, determines the level of whether it be health issues they’re having to address. Or is it criminal activity? It’s all criminal activity.¹⁹⁹

The explicit example of violence and injustice that accompanies projects focused on environmental destruction and resulting in contamination of Indigenous lands demonstrates the embodiment of settler colonial ideology. Masten explained the more long-term, holistic effects of this mentality in Native American communities in terms of

¹⁹⁸ For definition of “man camps,” see note 3.

¹⁹⁹ Asetoyer, 2019.

the motivation it gives her and her organization to maintain a strong force of Indigenous leadership and activism:

It's more in the sense that it impacts Indian Country, and so that's why we are trying to provide for the...for the families and children in the nations. It's what drives us all in our individual roles to be the best that we can be so that we can be strong advocates to [great things that are]—and to provide for protections for any future laws that impact us. And so, it's more from that sense of recognizing that as long as we as the people have anything, that there will always be people that look to take away from us. So, what we can do is prepare leadership to fight for our rights and to be prepared for those roles.²⁰⁰

While fighting to maintain visibility, resisting erasure, and support healthy and sustainable environments and reproduction, organizations such as NAWHERC and WEWIN face the daunting task of arming Indigenous leaders with resilience. Thusfar, the resilient efforts of Indigenous communities and organizations fighting deeply embedded ideologies of settler colonialism to establish a more just future for coming generations demands recognition, respect, and support.

²⁰⁰ Masten, 2019.

Chapter 10: Conclusion -- Call to Action

Analysis of Organizations:

In assessing which existing organizations to contact for this research, I was interested in finding groups that observed the intersection of environmental and reproductive justice and the effect of oppression in these areas on Native American women. Many of the organizations I was able to get in contact with were focused on only one aspect of the issue, whether it be environmental justice, reproductive justice, or Native American justice. I theorize that this is due in part to a continued lag of integration of intersectionality into the mainstream activist sectors. Although Jones notes the progress of incorporating “justice” and activist language into larger institutions, the absence of recognizing processes of settler colonialism as focused on eradication of Indigeneity demonstrates a delay across academia, activism, and institutional recognition:

I do, I think, again, we’re getting to this point where (quote) “mainstream medicine” where RJ’s being brought up, especially in majority-white spaces, but I do think in terms of success (quote) “by the mainstream medical field,” there’s a severe lacking in terms of talking about Indigeneity and settler colonialism and understanding what settler colonialism is and how that affects folks’ work. And in terms of the medical industrial complex, how that is all tied in. So, I think we have a long way to go in terms of that being language and concepts that are talked about and then being incorporated into programs from the get-go in the (quote) “mainstream medical field” and those who hold power. There’s still have a long ways to go on that.²⁰¹

While radical activist circles and academia focusing on explicit issues of environmental contamination and medical journals may already support environmental reproductive

²⁰¹ Jones, 2019.

justice for Native American communities, the current issue lays in making intersections of injustices visible and unignorable. This is most effectively done through organizations that establish a strong intersectional framework that actively recognizes intersectional oppression rooted is rooted in ideologies of settler colonialism, capitalism, consumerism, and exploitation. For example, NAWHERC and its founder Charon Asetoyer explicitly recognize and acknowledge the intersectionality of multiple systems of oppression targeting Indigenous communities and the resulting effects on social and cultural reproduction.

It's not just a very cut-and-dry kind of a program where we're only talking about environmental degradation. We're talking about human degradation. About why is there so much rape on the road? Why is there so much drugs on the road? How is this happening? And why is it happening? You know, a lot of it is because of these huge environmental projects, these huge environmental degradation [sic], which is under fire because of the pipelines that are coming through. These huge construction sites where they're setting up these man camps for the construction workers, and they prolong shifts and they make a lot of money, but when they get the day off, they're out for some entertainment. And since a lot of these projects go near and through reservations, it means that our young people are compromised, and so we are fighting that. It's a whole—it encompasses not just one area. The environmental degradation, the violence against young people, the drug trafficking, the sex trafficking. So, it's something that you have to look at, like I said holistically, and how do these things all connect.²⁰²

Connecting the issues of environmental and reproductive justice through the lens of biopower and control of physical, cultural, and social reproduction creates the basis for a continuously expanding intersectional framework.

While NAWHERC and Asetoyer center intersectionality in their approach, other organizations hold potential for expanding their intersectional framework. During interviews, both representatives from RHAP and WEWIN acknowledged the need for a

²⁰² Asetoyer, 2019.

more thorough and explicit intersection of environmental reproductive justice within their organizations. As Jones reflected more personally on the potential for including EJ framework within RHAP, she mentioned the lack of involving EJ means not achieving a truly inclusive and accessible RJ:

But... without adding a lens of, at least of analysis, of how environmental injustice impacts our clinicians, it impacts the communities that they serve—I'm speaking from, you know, Hailey's perspective—without incorporating a lens, definitely we're not an RJ organization, but we do apply a lens of RJ to our work. I'm thinking about patient education materials. We're thinking about what organizers are we partnering with. Without bringing that into your analysis, I think we will fall short of our mission, of our goals, of making reproductive health care accessible to everyone. Yeah, so I think it's... it's seeing in medicine the framework of RJ and environmental justice being mainstreamed, so it's not just the activists who have been working on this for decades coming to the table saying, "Hey, y'all need to pay attention." It's being initiated by the clinicians on the front lines, saying, "Hey, we need to incorporate this into our work," yeah, in order to build power and to make reproductive health care accessible to everyone.²⁰³

Integrating the framework of EJ within an organization focused on RJ, as Jones describes, would create a more solidified basis of RHAP's intersectional and universal objectives. Similarly, Masten seemed inspired by the discussion of Environmental Reproductive Justice for Native American women to incorporate an explicit focus on ERJ within her organization:

I think that—and we could absolutely focus on that, and because you raised the issue, that I'll probably bring that to the table as something that we do at our next session, because we already set our agenda for this session, and to take a closer look at it. 'Cause there is within Indian Country, because we're the last pockets of resource, there is—we're constantly faced with the actions of others, so there's a lot of environmental injustice on reservations, and we are impacted as women through our health and the health of our children and our families. So, it's an issue that I just have—and I should know because that's where I started in the fishery and representing our fishing rights, and so I've seen more of those environmental injustices and how they occur in Indian Country. You've made me become more aware. Although we've done it on a national level, we haven't

²⁰³ Jones, 2019.

really focused on it in our workshop sessions, and I think it's something that we need to do. So, next year I'm gonna specifically ask for that.²⁰⁴

Across two organizations with work in the ERJ activist movement, the potential for further integration of intersectional oppressive forces demonstrates the need for continued focus in this area. The interest and intrigue expressed by Jones and Masten demonstrates the strong potential for integration of an explicit conversation and focus on ERJ for Native American women in existing organizations. Although the approaches of RHAP and WEWIN differ structurally, in creating a solid foundation of intersectional framework connecting issues of environmental health to reproductive health both organizations will more thoroughly fulfill their objectives.

Call to Action:

My initial approach to this topic as a potential research project was to interview Indigenous women of the Pacific Northwest and create a collection of their narratives and experiences with environmental reproductive injustice. However, the limited time and resources associated with an undergraduate level honors thesis was not appropriate or respectful of the necessary time that this emotional interviewing process entailed. Therefore, in shifting my focus to analyzing existing organizations, I discovered the multiple existing organizations already working to address the issue of environmental reproductive injustice in Indigenous communities throughout the US. The interviews and insights provided by representatives of RHAP, NAWHERC, and WEWIN grounded my research with the perspective of women deeply involved and invested in a cause I was just discovering.

²⁰⁴ Masten, 2019.

Working on this research, I am continuously and constantly forced to acknowledge my own privilege in new and often uncomfortable ways. As a young white woman in academia researching the systematic oppression and historical traumatization of entire populations, I approached the first few drafts of my thesis self-conscious of my social status and insecure about my ability to accurately research, analyze, and present an issue that my own ancestors contributed to. This is something I struggled with throughout the process and will continue to wrestle with for the rest of my career as an academic, activist, and individual. I continued my research for this thesis due to my initial passion for researching the subject and the rare opportunity to bring attention to issues of injustices within an institutional and academic platform. My initial and constant motivation throughout this process was the lack of material taught in Environmental Studies courses at a “liberal” public university about the blatant injustices apparent in the intersections of environmental and reproductive health in Native American communities. I believed that the lack of justice-centered courses available at an institution already associated as socially “leftist” deserved attention and used my limited agency as an actor within the institution to address this. Therefore, this thesis is an opportunity to inform myself and others of institutionalized oppression against Native Americans through environmental contamination and infertility and raise awareness of existing organizations addressing this issue in need of support from allies. It is a call to action.

In concluding my interview with Charon Aestoyer, she mentioned I should be careful to not “skim over” the issues at hand. My initial confused reaction to her mandate later evolved to inspiration that fuels not only this research but the rest of my

career as an activist. Instead of attempting to rephrase Aestoyer's wisdom and inspiring words, below is a copy of the interview transcript as we concluded the interview:

Eleanor Williams (E): I don't really have any more specific questions, but if you have anything else that you'd like to include for this interview, feel free. Any sort of relevant materials is awesome.

Charon Aestoyer (C): Well, you know, after you have typed everything up, you might have some voids, some areas that you might want to elaborate a little on. Feel free to call me.

E: Okay!

C: Email me and say, "Hey, I want another session," and we can do that. Or "I should have said/I should have asked her this."— I understand that. I've been interviewed many times, and so it will probably happen. And I guess my advice to you is to really go in depth more than just skim over it, because a lot of times people have done thesis work on this kind of stuff and they skim over it. So, don't be afraid to really investigate.

E: Well, what do you mean by "skimming"? By like skimming over it?

C: Well, you know, generalizing and not really detailing. Not getting—you know, you really want to make the impact, and you can't please everybody and sometimes a little shock and awe is necessary. So, don't be afraid to get a little radical and to tell the truth. Don't—what do I want to say? Don't... soften it. It isn't a pretty picture. I don't know how many reservations you've been on, but it's... policies are, the lack of policy, it's for the convenience of the government, and it's not for our convenience. And so, it can be very dangerous in terms of the effects of a lot of stuff, the health and wellbeing when communities stand up to challenge the policies and to assert their jurisdiction. You know, our jurisdiction, we have jurisdiction, but when we stand up to assert it, it gets met with a lot of resistance from the federal government. Standing Rock's a really good contemporary example. The tribes said, "No. It's our right to say, 'No.'" And the federal government said, "Hey, we're gonna open the way for our friends, our multinational corporations, so they can make money at your expense! Because you're indispensable," or, "dispensable," that is. And when you organize to resist, you go to prison, they kill you. It's no, it's nothing to be taken lightly. It's very serious.

E: Yeah, definitely.

C: Very, very serious. And so, don't be afraid to tell it like it is. That's dangerous.

Notes:

1. Pesticide effects on reproduction at different stages of developments:

“Prenatal exposure to certain pesticides has been documented to increase the risk of cancer in childhood; adult male exposure to pesticides is linked to altered semen quality, sterility, and prostate cancer; and postnatal exposure to some pesticides can interfere with all developmental stages of reproductive function in females, including puberty, menstruation and ovulation, fertility and fecundity, and menopause.”²⁰⁵

2. REMS stands for Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies and “is a drug

safety program that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration can require for certain medications with serious safety concerns to help ensure the benefits of the medication outweigh its risks. REMS are designed to reinforce medication use behaviors and actions that support the safe use of that medication. While all medications have labeling that informs healthcare stakeholders about medication risks, only a few medications require REMS.”²⁰⁶

3. “Man camp” Definition: “camps of thousands of male workers who have

come to their territory to profit from the Bakken oil boom – settling into what are commonly called ‘man camps,’ and more than doubling the population with an influx of non-Indian oil workers.’ North Dakota’s Uniform Crime Report shows that violent crime has increased 7.2 percent, while 243 reported rapes occurred in 2012 – an

²⁰⁵ Sutton et al., 167.

²⁰⁶ “Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS),” FDA, February 02, 2018, accessed 2019.

increase from 207 in 2011. According to the Bismark Tribune, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem stated that 12 of the state's top oil-producing counties accounted for much of that crime.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ "Man Camps Fact Sheet," Honor The Earth, , accessed May 22, 2019, http://www.honorearth.org/man_camps_fact_sheet.

Figures:

Figure 1: The 17 Principles of Environmental Justice as drafted and adopted by the Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held on October 24-27, 1991 in Washington D.C.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to ensure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

The Principles of Environmental Justice (EJ)

- 1) **Environmental Justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
- 2) **Environmental Justice** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
- 3) **Environmental Justice** mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
- 4) **Environmental Justice** calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
- 5) **Environmental Justice** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
- 6) **Environmental Justice** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
- 7) **Environmental Justice** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
- 8) **Environmental Justice** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
- 9) **Environmental Justice** protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
- 10) **Environmental Justice** considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
- 11) **Environmental Justice** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
- 12) **Environmental Justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.
- 13) **Environmental Justice** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
- 14) **Environmental Justice** opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
- 15) **Environmental Justice** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.
- 16) **Environmental Justice** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
- 17) **Environmental Justice** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

More info on environmental justice and environmental racism can be found online at www.ejnet.org/ej

Delegates to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held on October 24 -27, 1991, in Washington DC, drafted and adopted these 17 principles of Environmental Justice. Since then, the Principles have served as a defining document for the growing grassroots movement for environmental justice.

Figure 2: Table of toxic chemical effects from Sutton; reproductive health impacts of prenatal exposure to environmental contaminants.

TABLE Examples of reproductive health impacts of prenatal exposure to environmental contaminants		
Chemical	Exposure sources and pathways	Reproductive/developmental health impact
Bisphenol A	Chemical intermediate for polycarbonate plastic and resins; found in consumer products and packaging; exposure through inhalation, ingestion, and dermal absorption.	Recurrent miscarriage ³¹ Aggression and hyperactivity in female children ³²
Lead	Occupational exposure occurs in battery manufacturing/recycling, smelting, car repair, welding, soldering, firearm cleaning/shooting, stained-glass ornament/jewelry making; nonoccupational exposure occurs in older homes where lead-based paints were used, in or on some toys/children's jewelry, water pipes, imported ceramics/pottery, herbal remedies, traditional cosmetics, hair dyes, contaminated soil, toys, costume jewelry.	Alterations in genomic methylation ¹⁷ Increased likelihood of allergies ³³
Mercury	Coal-fired power plants are largest source in the United States; primary human exposure by consumption of contaminated seafood.	Reduced cognitive performance ^{34,35} Impaired neurodevelopment ^{36,37}
Polybrominated diphenylethers	Flame retardants that persist and bioaccumulate in the environment; found in furniture, textiles, carpeting, electronics and plastics that are mixed into, but not bound to, foam or plastic.	Impaired neurodevelopment ³⁸ Premature delivery, low birthweight, and stillbirth ³⁹
Polychlorinated biphenyls	Used as industrial insulators and lubricants; banned in the 1970s, but persistent in the aquatic and terrestrial food chains, which results in exposure by ingestion.	Development of attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder-associated behavior ⁴⁰ Increased body mass index ⁴¹ Reduced IQ ⁴²
Polyfluorochemicals	Widely used man-made organofluorine compounds with many diverse industrial and consumer product applications; examples are perfluorooctane sulfonate and perfluorooctanate, which are used in the manufacture of nonstick Teflon and other trademark cookware products and in food-contact packaging to provide grease, oil, and water resistance to plates, food containers, bags, and wraps that come into contact with food; persist in the environment; occupational exposure to workers and general population exposure by inhalation, ingestion, and dermal contact.	Reduced birthweight ⁴³
Perchlorate	Used to produce rocket fuel, fireworks, flares, and explosives and can also be present in bleach and in some fertilizers; primary pathway for exposure is through drinking water caused by contaminated runoff.	Altered thyroid function ⁴⁴
Pesticides	Applied in large quantities in agricultural, community, and household settings; in 2001, >1.2 billion pounds of active ingredients were used in the United States; can be ingested, inhaled, and absorbed by the skin; pathways of exposure include food, water, air, dust, and soil.	Impaired cognitive development Impaired neurodevelopment ^{45,46} Impaired fetal growth ⁴⁷ Increased susceptibility to testicular cancer ⁴⁸ Childhood cancers ⁴⁹
Phthalates	Synthetically derived; used in a variety of consumer goods such medical devices, cleaning and building materials, personal care products, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, food processing, and toys; exposure occurs through ingestion, inhalation, and dermal absorption.	Reduced masculine play in boys ⁵⁰ Reduced anogenital distance ⁵¹ Shortened gestational age ⁵² Impaired neurodevelopment in girls ⁵³
Toluene	Exposure occurs from breathing contaminated workplace air, automobile exhaust, some consumer products such as paints, paint thinners, fingernail polish, lacquers, and adhesives.	Decreased fetal and birthweight ⁵⁴ Congenital malformations ^{55,56}

Sutton. Toxic matters. Am J Obstet Gynecol 2012.

Figure 3: Table from Lawrence (2002) “Average Number of Children per Woman by Tribe for 1970 and 1980” created from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census documenting the statistical shift in Native American reproduction across the US

TABLE 1
Average Number of Children per Woman by Tribe
for 1970 and 1980

TRIBE	1970	1980
Navajo	3.72	2.52
Apache	4.01	1.78
Zuni	3.35	1.90
Sioux (combined)	3.41	1.94
Cherokee (Oklahoma)	2.52	1.68
Ponca/Omaha	2.73	1.51 ¹
Average for all tribes	3.29	1.30

NOTE

1. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census Report of the Population Subject Report: American Indians* (Washington dc: Bureau of the Census, June 1971), 141–47; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of the Population Subject Report: Characteristics of American Indians by Tribes and Selected Areas: 1980* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1981), 150–202. The 1980 census records are much more detailed than the 1970 records; therefore, the statistics were combined for all Sioux tribes in South Dakota and for the Ponca and Osage tribes in Oklahoma. These specific tribes were chosen because of their location in the Indian Health Service areas included in the Government Accounting Office report on the Indian Health Service.

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