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# "Architects of Their Own Solutions:" A Comparative Study of Gender in Environmental Justice Work

Ellen Olack

"ARCHITECTS OF THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS:"
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GENDER IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WORK

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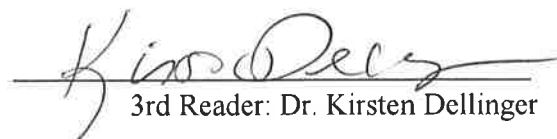
Approved:

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Advisor: Dr. John Sonnett

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2nd Reader: Dr. Schenck

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3rd Reader: Dr. Kirsten Dellinger

ABSTRACT

Ellen Elizabeth Olack: Gender Identity
(Under the direction of Dr. Sonnett)

Backgrounds, identities and beliefs of the people within a group can dictate the

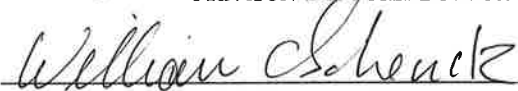direction a movement takes and whether or not that movement will be able to endure.

Using a series of interviews, I aim to determine how gender plays a part in shaping a

person's role within the environmental justice movement by studying if and how gender

constructions influence the mindsets of not only the people working to end environmental

injustice, but also of the community members living in zones affected by environmental

injustice.

# Table of Contents

# List of Tables

## Introduction

I began my work in environmental activism when I started college. Although I have worked on a variety of campaigns and focuses, my main drive is environmental justice work because it deals with people. I love the environment, and I believe it should be respected and protected. However, I also believe that there should be a higher level of respect and protection of people. As a member of multiple grassroots organizations within the Environmental Justice Movement, I believe in the power of people. I think it is important to recognize that a mobilized mass has the potential to affect great change. As a potential determining factor, it is crucial to understand who a movement is comprised of. In other words, to understand who feels welcomed and invited to not only join the movement but to become involved within the organization and its leadership roles.

I believe that the backgrounds, identities and beliefs of the people within a group can dictate the direction a movement takes and whether or not that movement will be able to endure. The more open and inclusive a movement is able to be, the stronger it will be. The more aware a group is of their members and what they can offer, the more strategic an organization can be in furthering outreach and formulating actions. Inclusion varies between groups based on transparency and understanding which can either create obstacles or can quickly pave the way for effectiveness (Skrentny, 2006). However, there must also be an awareness and understanding of the social context in the area a movement takes place. The group can either seek to alter social constructs before they

begin their true campaign, or they can adhere to the current social constructs in the strategies they chose.

   As a woman, I am interested in studying if and how gender constructions influence the mindsets of not only the people working to end environmental injustice, but also of the community members living in zones affected by environmental injustice. Gender identity and its correlating implications in all social aspects have been studied for many years. I will focus more on the social aspects such as how gender and gender roles dictate what a person can and cannot do within a community to include jobs as well as activism and roles in movements towards social awareness and action (Bradley, 2013). Through my research, I hope to identify if and how groups inside and outside of affected communities relate and overlap by seeing how gender plays a part in shaping a person's role within the environmental justice movement to answer my larger question of does the structure of patriarchy move women in affected communities to action or does it deter them.

## **Chapter 1: Historical Overview of Case Studies**

In my research, I chose to focus on two areas affected by environmental issues caused by oil excavation. One case is in Northern Ecuador while the other is in the Southern United States. I will compare the two cases for similarities and differences in both strategies and tactics used and the effectiveness of these campaign tools in terms of outreach and success of local environmental justice movements. These movements seek to rectify negative environmental impacts caused by human action. These impacts disproportionately affect communities of color, low economic standing, or a combination of the two (Cooper, 2013). Throughout my research, I strived to keep cultural relevance in mind. I hoped to better understand how cultural and social context can reinforce or diminish an individual's drive to become involved in the environmental justice movement on a local level.

Before comparing cases for the content mentioned above, I took into account general commonalities between the two. Both cases involve resource extraction. This refers to any method of removing raw materials and minerals from the ground in order to process and refine them into energy. The use of resource extraction impinges on the health and livelihoods of local populations of minority and disadvantaged persons. Unfortunately, the governments in each case place energy independence and economic gain first. There is also a universal component of class and race/ ethnicity in addition to gender. Similarly, I compared the variations between the two case studies. There are differences in the method of extraction used in the two areas as well as the extent of

extraction in years and magnitude. In addition, there are differences in class, race, and ethnicity between the two countries.

The first case is located in the Amazon of Ecuador. The second takes place in northern Alabama. To understand the reaction of the community members located in these areas, I will follow the work of four major environmental groups through my research and interviews. These groups are Pachamama Alliance (Ecuador), Rehearsing Change (Ecuador), Southern Energy Network (US), and Alabama Rivers Alliance (US).

Pachamama Alliance is a global organization that has a variety of paid organizing positions and volunteer positions. The mission of Pachamama Alliance is "to empower indigenous people of the Amazon rainforest to preserve their lands and culture and, using insights gained from that work, to educate and inspire individuals everywhere to bring forth a thriving, just and sustainable world" (Pachamama Alliance, 1996).

Rehearsing Change is a study abroad program that allows international students to become involved with Ecuadorian communities through Pachaysana, an organization that works towards global education. Their mission is "creating new models for sustainable community development by empowering local Ecuadorian communities to actively participate in the global development dialogue. A balanced global development dialogue, in which local Ecuadorian communities work together with global actors to identify and transform conflicts that prohibit equitable and sustainable development" (Rehearsing Change, 2014).

Southern Energy Network is a coalition of groups comprised entirely by volunteers throughout the southeast. Their mission is "to combat climate change and advance a just renewable energy economy by building a diverse movement of young

people in the Southeast. We empower and mobilize Southern students to organize at the forefront of the climate fight, demanding their colleges and universities act as leaders by implementing bold solutions to the climate crisis" (Southern Energy Network, 2004).

Alabama Rivers Alliance is an organization funded privately and through donations. The purpose of the organization is "to protect & restore Alabama's rivers. To do this, we advocate smart water policy, organize at the grassroots level, and teach citizens how they can protect their water… Our goal is to achieve healthy rivers, healthy people, and a healthy system of government for the state of Alabama" (Alabama Rivers Alliance, 2007).

Ecuador

The case of Ecuador has a long history. It is part of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). It comprises half of the national budget on oil earnings alone. Consequently, it is believed that in order to maintain and grow a stable economy oil exploration and production is imperative. Unfortunately, this reliance on fossil fuel is detrimental to Ecuador's diverse and rich environment which is home to many indigenous groups (TED Case Study, 1997).

Groups like the Tagaeri clan and the Taromenane clan of the Waorani who seek to live in voluntary seclusion are unable to. They have been forced to fight for the rights to and protection of their ancestral lands. Through my interviews, I hope to have an opportunity to explore how oil extraction has affected First Nation groups in Ecuador. The Ecuadorian government, who has laws that protect their ancestral lands, have also passed legislation that allows that same land to be excavated for oil.

From 1964 until 1990, Ecuador has allowed Texaco to drill for oil in ancestral

lands belonging to indigenous communities. In 2001, Chevron acquire the Texaco

company and therefore unintentionally took ownership for what is now referred to as

Texaco's Toxic Legacy. Activists joined together to force the company to clean up the

18.5 billion gallons of intentionally dumped toxic waste issued by Texaco. In 2011,

Chevron was brought to court, found guilty, and charged to cover the 18 billion dollars to

fund clean-up initiatives (Chevron's Toxic Legacy in Ecuador, 2011). However, they

have yet to clean up their mess of over 900 open-air, unlined waste pits that to this day

are continuing to seep toxins into the ground. Instead, they are seeking further legal

action to avoid the responsibility of cleaning up the Ecuadorean Amazon.

In the wake of this long, drawn-out legal battle, activist groups have chosen to

react with grassroots organizing. These groups seek to raise awareness of the issues

community members living in these affected areas face. While studying in Ecuador, I was

introduced to a program called "Rehearsing Change." This program seeks to connect

young people of all backgrounds to people from communities that have been devastated

by unregulated oil extraction is a great example of alliances to raise awareness in hope of

finding peace.  These communities share their personal experiences on how the toxic

areas created by dirty extractive methods have shaped their lives and what they have done

to combat the problems that arise. I will also be following the organization Pachamama

Alliance which I learned about via word of mouth from organization representatives

while I was abroad. This group is based in the United States, but works closely with

communities and provides resources such as environmental lawyers and health

professionals.

<u>Alabama</u>

In the second case I am looking at, there is still time before the community faces devastating and lasting environmental results due to oil drilling. Currently, the sandstone project is still in a planning stage. Mississippi governor Phil Bryant and Alabama governor Robert Bentley publically announced partnership in July 2013 via a Memorandum of Understanding in reference to studying the Hartselle Sandstone which crosses the border between the two states (Press Release, 2013). I will be focusing my research on what is happening in Alabama.

Governor Bentley hopes to use Alberta, Canada as a model of how to approach extracting oil from the Hartselle sandstone. According to the governor partnership, "Canada has proven to be a leader in oil sand recovery, and we hope through this evaluation process, we can collaborate and share knowledge on best practices" (Press Release, 2013). Bentley served as the chairman of the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission in 2013 and was chosen to serve as the Chairman of the Interstate Mining Compact Commission for the year 2015 (Press Release, 2014). These positions show how open Governor Bentley is with his support of fossil fuels.

Many towns could be affected by future oil extractions. Africatown, a town in Alabama founded by former slaves and previously affected by other toxins, rests on top of a pipeline over 30 years old. The residents of this town fear that the future oil extracted from the sandstone and shipped to Blakely Island would be done so via this pipeline. Due to its age and lack of maintenance, potential leaks would be inevitable. Additionally, Lawrence, Franklin and Colbert Counties also fear the potential ramifications of oil

drilling. These counties sit on the Tennessee river. It is estimated that Mississippi Industries has already purchased 2,500 acres in Alabama for exploratory research (Kroh, 2014).

In reaction to Bentley and Bryant's Memorandum of Understanding environmental groups are hosting community meetings in cities that could potentially be affected. In these meetings they express potential health risks to the area and to the people living in that area. They also highlight different actions that can be taken to stop or slow future drilling as well as different legal actions that can be taken in effort to keep companies in adherence to EPA regulation or to relocate individuals and families should it become necessary.

In my interviews, I spoke to individuals from the Alabama Rivers Alliance. This organization fights to protect waters from pollution in order to protect all living things from coming into contact with that contamination. I also spoke to members of the Southern Energy Network.

Comparison of Cases

As seen above, there are differences in these cases. Their unique histories have led to unique social contexts. It is important to acknowledge these in order to better understand the communities and their reactions to degradation or potential degradation in their areas due to fossil fuel extraction. In this section, I will outline how colonization has set the stage for environmental racism and injustice by enhancing inequality in these areas.

Both North and South America experienced colonization. Colonization, though existing since humans began conquering each other, became most popular during a period of our economic history known as mercantilism. A mercantilist system was based on need to import only raw materials, and export only finished products. In order to supply their markets with cheap raw materials, mercantile nations exploited resources from their colonies (Olson, 2014).

In Ecuador, Spaniards first used indigenous groups as slaves. With the introduction of African slave trade, indigenous groups were forced out. Spanish-Americans organized two legal systems: the república de indios y the república de españoles (Republic of Indians and the Republic of Spaniards). This dual system resulted in economic development and population growth in addition to considerable racial and social mobility. However, it also led to the emergence of a racial hierarchy caste system (Rodrigues, 2000).

Currently, the Ecuadorian government has passed legislation that protects ancestral lands. According to Chapter 4, Section 2 Article 171 of the current constitution which states:

> The authorities of the indigenous communities, peoples, and nations shall perform jurisdictional duties, on the basis of their ancestral traditions and their own system of law, within their own territories, with a guarantee for the participation of, and decision-making by, women. The authorities shall apply their own standards and procedures for the settlement of internal disputes, as long as they are not contrary to the Constitution and human rights enshrined in international instruments (Ecuador's Constitution of 2008, 2015).

The indigenous populations should have the right to determine what industries can excavate on their lands. Yet, the drive to grow economic dependence has outweighed the drive to adhere to this legislation and leave ancestral land and its rights in the hands of the First Nation people currently living there.

In the United States, colonization was slightly different. Colonization was exercised under British rule, not Spanish. However, African slaves were still a huge part of building colonies and expanding economies. British-Americans differed in their newly gained independence from Britain in that they did not constitute the inclusion of fundamentally different cultures. This means that to this day, the constitution applies to a single group, there were no amendments added specifically addressing African descendants nor is there a constitution added giving autonomy to Native American groups (Rodrigues, 2000). After the civil war and the abolishment of slavery, newly freed slaves sought to found their own towns such as Africatown mentioned previously. These towns still exist and are still predominantly black communities.

In Peru during the colonial era, many indigenous people were employed by the colonizers: women as cooks and men as laborers in the mines. While men worked in the mines, the trustees violated indigenous women who were the employees of the house (Silverblatt, 1987: 138-139). This was not unique to Peru. This was common also in plantations in the southern United States. Families in Peru who could not pay the high taxes they sold their daughters to the houses of colonizers to take on the daily domestic chores (Silverblatt, 1987: 147). Still to this day, indigenous women and black women are more likely to be employed in domestic jobs such as cooking and cleaning while men are more likely to work in mines or other jobs of extractive methods.

Another difference between the two case studies is the method and extension of extraction. Ecuador has had a long history of oil extraction, whereas Alabama has only had drillings for the purpose of exploratory research. Additionally, Alabama has sandstone (Press Release, 2013). Ecuador focuses its extraction on liquid oil (TED Case Studies, 1997).

Considering the similarities and differences of these two cases, I believe that there is relevance in studying them together. They both have very clear intersecting components: economically, racially, and ethnically. Both cases affected areas located outside of industrialization, Ecuador taking place in the Amazon and Northern Alabama being mostly rural. Both areas are considered in poverty. Ecuador represents an ethnic group while Alabama is a combination of towns that are majority black and towns that are majority white.

I want to understand, and I want others to understand, the role of gender and how it is affected through the lens of these other issues. Since the cases are at different stages, I think it will be easier to see the extent that extractive methods affects not only the environment but the identities and livelihoods of the people living in those environments. This will benefit my study, because I hope to see which community members are working with a movement that has been in existence in Ecuador for over twenty years in contrast to which community members are the first to step forward and begin the movement in Alabama. This will be apparent when taking into account who the first people to step forward and organize around an issue are versus who remains fighting for change years after the first action was taken. The different stages also allow for a comparison on how and to what communities react.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Social Movements Throughout the Americas

In this section, I examine communities affected by environmental injustices that have been targeted due to social inequality and follow in their efforts to protect air, water, and health (Lerner, 2010). Better understanding the context of affected areas and disenfranchised groups allow for a better understanding of the relationship between community leaders and movement leaders (Beamish and Luebbers, 2009). In addition, I use my research to analyze the strategies of organizations that take on particular identities to become more relatable and accepted by targeted groups and communities (Cadena, 2014).

Due to the long history of colonization throughout America as a whole, there is a continued presence of the instilled system of oppression that exists to this day. This hierarchy of race, class, and gender felt by many creates fuel for an atmosphere of uprising. These social movements have had varying success, but continue to grow and spread in strength.

In the United States, the aftermath of racial oppression created by the existence of slave-slave owner relationships can still be seen and felt today. The southern region of the United States not only has the highest population in general in comparison to the rest of the country, but it is also the region with the highest concentration of blacks Although there have been many efforts and public relation campaigns that aim to portray the South

as something other than the "socially and economically 'backward' region" it is often

seen to be, the fact remains that there are many communities that face the consequences

of racially and economically uneven development (Bullard, 2000).

> "Blacks, women, and people living in rural areas have, in varying degrees, received
> little or none of the job opportunities and economic affluence that has washed over
> the region. The quality of life and opportunity for improvement for these "people
> left behind" have remained essentially unchanged over the last fifty years" (Falk &
> Watkins, 1989).

The Colonization of the Americas resulted in the oppression, forced migration,

and in many cases intense violence and death of many of the indigenous peoples of the

land.  These peoples have fought for centuries to regain rights to areas of land from

centuries ago. However, these societies are currently fighting to beat back oil expansion

and other threats, win rights protections, and obtain justice for past environmental crimes

(Olson, 2014).

Control and oppression of Indigenous groups have led to an ancestral land pull

across Latin America not only for the excavation of natural resources but, as in Bolivia,

for building major highways (Avelar, 2014). It is no different in the Amazon of Ecuador.

The extraction of oil has led to deforestation and pollution of ancestral lands which has

resulted in driving communities to retreat further into the Amazon (TED Case Study,

1997).

It is interesting to note that the huge presence of indigenous social movements

have been not only noted, but used by politicians. Evo Morales, current president of

Bolivia, is a charismatic leader who uses strategic outreach to direct his political

campaigns to the common people. He is supported by "Moviemento al Socialismo" or

MAS, an ethnic political party. His political platform centers around the prioritization of interests of ethnic groups and seeks to appeal to them as a member of that grouping (Madrid, 2012). Although Morales truly is indigenous, it is not always the case that politicians who seek out indigenous support are. For example, the current president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, has a unique platform. Although he is not indigenous, he adopts the indigenous culture. He speaks quechua and dresses in traditional clothing not only during elections but also for events. Correa is not alone in using this strategy to win popular votes (Cadena, 2014). This allows for a basic understanding of the organization and strategy of political institutions and entities that take on particular identities to become more relatable and accepted by targeted groups and communities. However, unlike Evo Morales, a populist leader who has also sought to represent oppressed groups in order to be a leader of the people, Correa does not try to protect the country's natural resources as Morales has (Madrid, 2012).

Targeted groups and targeted areas are not limited to ethnic identity. There are multiple areas that have been targeted due to social inequality that includes class, race, or a combination of the two. These communities have come together in varying degrees in their efforts to stop the damages being made to their air, water, food, and health (Lerner, 2010). Other social issues exist outside of race and ethnicity that are relevant in the case of the movement I study in Alabama and Ecuador. I think it is important to acknowledge the variety of differences and intersectionality that comes into or does not come into practice within a social movement. This allows for an understanding of what obstacles are in place that might discourage or limit a community's efforts to form a coalition.

The case of environmental contamination and degradation of Mount Dioxin in Pensacola, Florida is a prime example of the health issues that can arise in areas affected by chemical toxins introduced by industries. The case of Mount Dioxin highlights the possibility that an area can become so overcome by the entering toxins that relocation becomes the only last resort (Lerner, 2010). It is a possibility that the extractive processes that are being considered to take place in Alabama counties Lawrence, Franklin and Colbert (located just under the Tennessee River) can have their residual toxic waste leak into the Tennessee River leading to a contamination of a large water table which could result in unlivable conditions. However, this is not a viable option in the case of Ecuador because it involves ancestral lands. These areas are being destroyed, but due to the connection that Indigenous groups have to these lands, a majority is unwilling to be relocated. In the case of Texaco's presence in Ecuador, cleanups are deemed necessary but the big oil companies (now Chevron) refuse to pay. Some indigenous groups have retreated farther and farther into the Amazon to escape outside industrialization, but they refuse to leave the rainforest (TED Case Study, 1997). There has been no discussion of relocation in the Alabama case. Although because there is no ancestral connection to the land, the idea of relocation would probably be better received as many community members in the rural areas have lived there for generations. I hope to learn more about this through my interviews.

I want to explore how backgrounds and identities shape a person's beliefs. There is a common belief that a movement begins with people fighting to not be made a victim by institutional structures. It grows and becomes stronger and stronger as it creates more and more change (Archibald, 2008). When people affected by institutions make the

conscious decision to fight against the entities making them "victims," they become part of the movement regardless of the degree of participation they hold. As such, institutional factors can unknowingly bring people into social movements. When these social movements make victories by receiving acknowledgement or passing legislation, they grow in both strength and numbers. However, in the same line, when social movement are unable to gain ground, participants are more likely to become less active and in some cases leave the movement altogether (Archibald, 2008).

There is a spectrum of power in social movements, which I believe can be linked to stated or implied inclusion or lack thereof expressed by those within the movement. A part of this can be seen in who stands on the frontlines of a social movement, who is fighting in solidarity, and who they are fighting to protect. Social movements of all varieties can join together and build coalitions between two or more organizations based on the theory of groundwork for understanding. This theory presents all social advocacy groups as fundamentally similar in ideals and goals. This allows for groups to come together under the common goal of working to achieve social justice for all entities (Beamish and Luebbers, 2009). However, coalitions are only possible if there is a relationship built between community leaders and movement leaders. In my research I explore the relationship between community leaders and representatives from Pachamama Alliance, Rehearsing Change, Southern Energy Network, and Alabama Rivers Alliance. With this study, I identify who is representing these organization, who they are working to protect, and if there is a disconnect between these groups. I also show the intersectional overlapping found between the social movements for environmental

justice with the social movement for gender equality. I focus mainly on strategies and tactics used.

<u>Feminist Movements</u>

In this section I discuss the drive to deconstruct the institutional structure of patriarchy (Archibald, 2008). I study the climate of women's rights through the lens of race and ethnicity (Richards, 2004). Furthermore, I attempt to deconstruct the hierarchy of gender throughout the Americas that has been linked to the introduction of Catholicism through colonization. Throughout this section and my paper as a whole, I rely on the beliefs of feminism generally agreed upon in ecofeminist theory.

*Eco-Feminism*

A lesser known argument against the continued inequality between genders is the ideology known as ecofeminism. As a woman and an environmental activist, I am drawn to the subject of ecofeminism. This branch of feminism seeks to overlap the intersecting aspects of environmental injustice and gender inequality. In this section, I will address the impact that ecofeminism has had on the environmental movement.

This section helps to articulate the main roots of ecofeminism, the framework of belief system for each division of ecofeminism, and the critiques against each. Spurred by the current climate issues and concerns for the future of the Earth, environmentalists are linking human-centered philosophy with earth-centered philosophy. Human-centered philosophy refers to environmentalists who believe that harm against the earth is harmful for the human population because we need the earth's resources. Therefore, it is in

17

humankind's best interest to care for the earth. On the other hand, earth-centered philosophy refers to the idea that humankind should take care of the earth because it is such a valuable thing. By combining these, environmentalists are able to create a more well-rounded approach justified by the anthropomorphic view based on Biblical texts (Tong, 2009: 239).

Ecofeminism is created by merging the ideologies of ecology and feminism. It "explores how male domination of women and domination of nature are interconnected both in cultural ideology and in social structures" (Ruther, 1992: 2). In essence, it compares injustices to the environment to injustices to women. Essentially, ecofeminism sets out to bring to light the connection between women and the earth, as well as how that connection has been exploited. On a deeper level however, ecofeminism is not only predicated off the relationship between woman and nature but extends to all power relations. These relationships may be affected by male dominance and a domineering relationship to the earth. This includes gender as well as other intersectional reams such as class, race and ethnicity. Some feminists are taking another step further, calling for a notion of "eco-justice," or a "social reordering to bring about just and loving interrelationship between men and women, between races and nations, between groups presently stratified into social classes, manifest in great disparities of access to the means of life" (Ruther, 1992:3-4). Ecofeminism, then, becomes the true advocate for justice to all, including the Earth and any disenfranchised group which in today's society includes women.

Although in this paper I address ecofeminism in its broadest sense, the beliefs and ideologies I will note are most similar to those held by individuals who identify as

spiritual ecofeminists. Although this sect of ecofeminism is not connected to any one theology, religion or spirituality exclusively, it still criticizes any practice or ritual within religions such as Christianity that allows a male entity to rule over a female entity, whether that be women or the earth (Tong, 2009: 252). I believe this spiritually falls most closely with indigenous spirituality that values Pachamama as the earth goddess.

Some people may think the relationship between religion and feminism is unlikely or even impossible. However, others see ecofeminist theology as a relevant and essential path to understanding and healing. They believe ecofeminism should be incorporated into theology in order to reach this healing. Most important is the reshaping of the dualistic split between female matter and male consciousness (Ruether, 1992: 255-257). A simple theoretical change in the systems of power which have control over nature and women is not sufficient. Instead, what is needed is a drastic social, political, structural, and civilizational change from the need to phase out petroleum and fossil fuels as the primary energy source to the return to the biorhythms of the Earth (Ruether, 1992: 259-264). This manner of thinking spotlights the roots of ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism stems from the radical branch of feminism which highlights women centered culture and seeks to destroy the structure of patriarchy. This is the first and main path of ecofeminist theology. However, I think it is important to note all three levels. The second path seeks to dissect the theology of nature-based religions past and present including Christianity to take back passages that emulate environmentalism (Ress, 2006: 77). This is a task that should not be treated lightly. It is difficult to remain objective when studying one's own religion and difficult to understand all rituals and practices when it is not one's own. Academic study of religion in its simplest form is not

attempting to find "the" religion and criticize the rest (Gross, 1996: 8). At the same time, it is equally important to adopt an empathetic outlook when analyzing a religion. This does not interfere with academic observance (Gross, 1996: 11). The third path is mostly grassroots environmental action both politically and socially (Ress, 2006: 77). Activist groups have chosen to react with religious as well as spiritual grassroots organizing. These groups seek to raise awareness of the issues community members living in these affected areas face.

There is great debate between feminist ethics and natural law. In this section I hope to show how faith and feminism can be complementary instead of being continuously contradictory. Over the years, some Christian theologists have begun to close the space between natural law and feminist ethics. Through analysis of natural law of the Roman Catholic faith in relation to modern feminist ethics it is evident that there exist commonalities. However, the main conflicting ideal of natural law to ecofeminist principles is that because human beings are said to have been made in God's image they are placed at the top of the power pyramid. In contrast to the earth and its other inhabitants, human beings are said to "bear the image of God in our intellectual nature" (Traina, 1999: 59). However, ethical reason requires humans to adhere to a moral code. "Progress in moral virtue, then, occurs through the union of well-intended ends with care in reasoning about and acting on them" (Traina, 1999: 75). In other words, even with the human drive for progress and advancement, a need to limit progress that has negative ends is an ethical obligation. Ecofeminism and feminism in its broader sense are in no way aligned with anti-progress sentiments. Instead of a rejection to science, technology and progress, these theologies call for a balance between the fields.

It is important to address the role of ecofeminism in a postcolonial age. In this postcolonial age, there are many transgressions against the earth. Colonization brought Christianity to Latin America. One of the goals of the colonizers was to convert the natives to Catholicism (Elliot, 2006: 58). Colonization also brought domination over ancestral lands that continues to exist today in a variety of forms including dumping toxic waste and crude forms of extracting oil (Warren, 1997: 23). Just as these areas where the governments seek energy independence and economic gain over the protection of the earth, women continue to "be beaten by men, raped by men, and traded between men as commodities" (Ruther, 1992: 264-265).Whether it is oil or women's bodies, the forced ownership over any living entity, human or non-human, is wrong. It is a sin against Gaia.

I realized that colonization set the stage for environmental racism and injustice by enhancing inequality in these areas. The unique history of Latin America led to unique social contexts. I will attempt to deconstruct the hierarchy of gender throughout Latin America that has been linked to the introduction of Catholicism through colonization. It is important to acknowledge these in order to better understand the reactions to degradation or potential degradation on both an environmentalist and feminist scale in addition to how it is incorporated into both spiritual and religious practices and rituals.

Western thought not only influenced religious beliefs in Latin America, but also language patterns. "Woman is identified with nature, referred to as 'Mother Earth,' and man is identified with science that seeks to control and dominate her (Clifford, 2001: 19)." However this argument does not look into how this language pattern may deter women from joining in the environmental movement to protect the lands that are being dominated as women have over time. Many philosophers agree that sexist language is

directly related to societal perception and mirrors a patriarchal society (Warren, 1997: 12).

Christianity has also had a large and lasting impact on the southeastern region of the United States. The firm and continued belief in conservative and evangelical Christian theology has led this region to be commonly referred to as the "Bible Belt" (Northcott, 2010). There are many Bible verses that center on conservation and protection of the earth. Even so, the reaction from conservative and evangelical Christian entities is not as strong as organizations based on conservation ideology. In fact, the two occasionally contradict (Northcott, 2010).

Ecofeminist theology has brought the notion of expanding and strengthening the spiritual connection between human beings and the earth which we inhabit to the environmental movement. Overall, I hope to have shown that patriarchal constructs that enforce domination over women and nature are being challenged by feminists, environmentalists, and religious followers. I personally believe that there is not enough importance or recognition placed on ecofeminism. It is true, there is much debate. There are those who believe that the connection between women and nature should be severed, others believe it should not (Tong, 2009: 244-251). As for me, I do not think the connection should be severed. Instead, I think both women and nature should be respected and not taken advantage of. Qualities or characteristics attributed to women and nature should not be treated as weak or inferior. I hope that this belief continues to grow in strength of numbers in its efforts to end domination by working together under their common ethics.

*Patriarchy*

In this section, I attempt to deconstruct what patriarchy is and how it relates to environmental work, feminist work, and the role of gender in general. I define patriarchy as "a political-historical system of interrelated dominations that should be denounced" (Salazar, 2014: 414).

I think understanding patriarchal structures is beneficial in understanding the pressure between governments wanting to grow their economies versus wanting to protect their people in both the Alabama case and the Ecuador case.

In addition to understanding why a person may be driven to action in an effort to remove the identity of a victim, I sought to identify ideas and strategies on combating social structures to discuss the drive to deconstruct the institutional structure of patriarchy, and see how women in affected communities take action against this system or how they are deterred by it. In Chile, women of the lower economic class have risen to the challenge. They participate in the political activist realm in their efforts to strive to attain representation (Richards, 2004). These examples relate to the framework of ecofeminism in their effort to create a link to Latin American Indigenous Movements as a whole. Regardless of class, race, or ethnicity, women from affected communities in Chile have come together over recent years to achieve autonomy in politics (Richards, 2013). The intersectionality of these cases showcase how efforts for inclusion can relate different movements through the common ground of gender equality.

<u>Strategies of Movements</u>

Every movement has a dream or goal. In order to achieve this, organizations must have a strategy, or a timeline of escalating tactics that will end with the actualization of the dream or goal of the group. The strategy a group choses can reflect the perspectives of the individuals involved based on their community background and shared beliefs.

In many cases, especially dealing with larger movements, there is a need for both local and global components to strategies. For example, the gender movement should also always consider the global scale. There are women in every part of the world. However, policies and social constructs are different depending on the specific area. It is important to consider how the global movement for equality for women affects individual women. With the world becoming more globalized, people can travel and migrate more easily. As such, the women's movement should include transmigration when analyzing gender identity in any area in order to more efficiently strategize for equality. This would take into account issues that face women across national borders, allowing for a mobilized grassroots movement that addresses women's issues on a global scale (Burton, 2004: 775). Similarly, clean energy movements should also keep this in mind while strategizing. It is easy to be narrow-sighted and focus solely on how the local community is or will be affected economically, physically and emotionally. However, it is as important to acknowledge how fossil fuel production affects the national and global economies and general health and wellbeing.

One, perhaps the most important, other factor to consider is community perception and acceptance. Many organizations are well-intended, but fail to create strategies with the consent of individuals being affected. Allyship is an important tool,

but a tool that should not become the focus or the driving force behind a movement. For example, when NGOs sought to assist First Nation groups grow their economies they failed to acknowledge intersectional issues as well as cultural aspects specific to the groups. They focused their attention on economic gains and advancements alone, failing to acknowledge the communities' constructs of gender. Nor did they use the communities' input on traditional economic structures (Momsen, 2002: 860). Their overall approach was rejected. This is an excellent example of the importance of customizing strategies on a case by case basis.

There does not seem to be any single apparent strategy for increasing diversity in groups. This makes sense because strategies should differ due to historical differences that have created distinct social climates. A lack of a single, unifying strategy in no way suggests that the movement will be more successful in one case over the other. It simply means that organizers acknowledge that unique approaches that take into consideration case by case issues that reflect changes in strategy result in effectiveness (Momsen, 2002). There are a variety of social resistance tactics, as highlighted in the chart below:

Table 1: Resistance Strategies (Olson, 2014)

| **Education** | ○ rewriting histories, sharing narratives, chronicling movements<br>○ hosting teach-ins<br>○ conferences and other types of convergences<br>○ distribution of literature (zines, blogs, pamphlets, other alternative publications)<br>○ popular media engagement (online awareness through social media and other website resources) |
|---|---|
| **Direct Action (civil disobedience)** | ○ non-violent & violent actions or protests<br>○ art and performance |

| Inclusion Tactics | ○ anti-oppression training<br>○ coalition building |
|---|---|
| Removal from "the Grid/System" | ○ communes; farms<br>○ alternative safe spaces/healing spaces (other than hospitals) (ex: Doulas and midwifery as an alternative to the medical-industrial complex)<br>○ support (consumption choices, vocal support, word of mouth, etc.) for progressive and socially/environmentally sustainable systems |
| Strategic Mobilization | ○ networking and coalition building across communities, issues, and identities<br>○ trainings and structured dialogue (tracking trainings between 'frontline communities' and 'allies' or caucuses and closed identity trainings and discussion spaces) |
| Providing Legal Aid | ○ giving access to trained environmental lawyers |

All four groups, Southern Energy Network, Alabama Rivers Alliance, Rehearsing Change, and Pachamama Alliance, use at least one of these tactics compiled by a student organizer working with the Sierra Club. In the analysis of my specific cases, I address strategies in relation to relocation versus displacement and indigenous culture versus communities. In addition, I analyze the idea that individuals in the movement are just that, individuals in place of women and men in the movement to determine whether gender is a factor in the movement or if organizing is something that can be understood and even implemented universally regardless of gender.

## Chapter 3: Data and Methods

An Environmental Justice Movement Throughout Americas Through a Feminist
Perspective

Environmental justice work is based on intersectionality. Meaning, in order to
understand how gender plays a part in shaping a person's role within the environmental
justice movement, I must also take into account a person's ethnicity and economic status
in addition to their gender. These different factors become related through the common,
intersecting ground of gender equality. The majority of the oil drilling in Ecuador is
taking place on ancestral lands. to understand how the role of gender affects women
within the environmental justice movement.  Latin American women living on ancestral
lands are examples of "feminization of poverty." They not only face suffering due to their
gender but also "for being poor, and for being indigenous" (Salazar, 2010: 412). The
second phase of Latin American Feminist Theology Of Liberation second phase allows
for spirituality and other forms of faith outside of traditional theology, i.e. ecofeminism.
In the third phase, the focus turns to poor people of all genders, races and ethnicities. For
this research most importantly calls into light the role of "indigenous people, black
people and women" (Salazar, 2012: 413).

I want to know if the structure of environmental justice organizations mirrors the
societal structure of patriarchy or if acknowledged intersectionality leads groups to
attempt to correct this in an effort to form a more inclusive and therefore more effective

movement.  I want to study the structure and strategy of environmental justice

organizations to find a link between inclusivity and effectiveness.

Furthermore, I want to identify the strategies used by the groups found in

Alabama and in Ecuador. Do these strategies account for ethnic, racial, and gender

inequality? Are these identities explicit or hidden in their strategies? Who are the

strongest voices in the environmental movement in Ecuador? Who are the people in the

background? Why are communities members involved in the movement? What issues, if

any, arise due to gender? Are all members of a community equally recruited to work

towards solutions? Are there internal structures of gender, race, and class within a

community that deter certain people from taking a stand? Are there internal structures

with a movement that deter certain people from the community from action? Are there

intentional strategies used by organizations that acknowledge gender bias in order to win

campaigns?

Data

I want to study the structure of patriarchy in reference to the environmental justice

movement to see if women in affected communities are driven to take action or are

deterred from taking action by this system. Does the structure of patriarchy move women

in communities affected by environmental injustices to action or does it deter them? To

better understand the intersectionality of the movement, how strategies of gender

inclusion are shaped by social context, and the role of gender within it and its

significance; I will look into the identities of those who have joined the movement to

better understand the role of gender within it and its significance. By knowing what the

experiences and reactions of key players who have persevered in the movement are and why they have chosen to do what they do, a better understanding is reached on what factors encourage and what factors discourage individuals to participate. This is important because the more open and inclusive a movement is able to be, the stronger it will be (Skrentny, 2006).

In order to accomplish this, I conducted a series of interviews with environmental organizers and people affected by environmental issues in the Alabama and Ecuador cases presented previously. I interviewed people of varying ages 18 and older. Participants varied in ages, but all had a connection to an environmental injustice whether they grew up in, currently live in, or have worked in an area polluted by dirty energy.

I conducted five interviews with both members of the Alabama Rivers Alliance and member of the Southern Energy Network in order to gauge the role of gender in the environment movement in the South. I also conducted five interviews with individuals who are involved with Rehearsing Change or the Pachamama Alliance and have worked with the Ecuadorian communities firsthand. I asked interviewees qualitative questions that allowed them to describe their personal backgrounds, their work to fight exposure to environmental pollutants, and their perspective on the organization's member composition and movement strategies.

All participants were chosen in a non-random sampling. I reached out in the form of emails collected from personal resources, websites, and contacts of contacts. Were it possible, I would have reached out personally in order to increase responses and expand my sampling pool.

There are a variety of imitations to the data I collected. Originally, I sought to look at gender issues, but gender became an issue in my data collection. After my first initial recruitment sampling geared towards Alabama participants, I received zero female responses. I had to conduct two more attempts before I found willing female participants. I received feedback from my three male participants after my first attempt. In my recruitment of participants for the case in Ecuador, I had a similar struggle. Although all previous interns for Rehearsing Change were females, I had difficulty in receiving positive responses. I opened my recruiting sampling to individuals who had participated on any level with the environmental groups before having a sufficient number of participants. It leaned towards a project that shows how white males perceive female involvement in the environmental justice movement. This was not my original intention. I agree with the philosophy that the story of women should be a narrative told by women, not a reflection made by males on the behalf of women (Salazar, 2014). It is unfortunate that more women were not available to tell their own stories. Although there were some which is a wonderful historical shift and something that will hopefully continue to change.

Surprisingly, I reached out to more women than men when trying to find participants in my interview. However, men were more likely to respond than women, and all men who did respond agreed while only a few women who responded with consent. Possible explanations to this surprising complication are numerous. For one, women are consistently less likely to take on a decision-making or leadership position (Czarniawska, 2013). Secondly, even when women are in positions of power or leadership they distance themselves from the decision making process. Women are also

less likely to take credit for ideas or accomplishments they have made personally or in a group in comparison to males (Sandberg, 2013).

Method

       I began with a structured interview, meaning I had prepared a list of about forty questions prior to conducting any interviews (Singleton and Straits, 2010). This list can be found in the Appendix. However, I allowed for slight freedom throughout each interview in the way of transitioning while still strictly following my list of objective questions I sought to answer. These main questions are the following:

- Who are the strongest voices in the environmental movement in Ecuador and Alabama?
- Who are the people in the background?
- Why are communities members involved in the movement?
- What issues, if any, arise due to gender?
- Are all members of a community equally recruited to work towards solutions?
- Are there internal structures within a community that deter certain people from taking a stand?
- Are there internal structures with a movement that deter certain people from the community from action?
- Are their intentional strategies used by organizations that acknowledge gender bias in order to win campaigns?

       The use of highly structured interviews is beneficial in that it allows for more comparable responses. However, it can also make respondents uncomfortable due to its formalness (Singleton and Straits, 2010). Taking this into account, I tried to use the most appropriate transitions and began with a slightly informal introduction while still providing relevant information provided by IRB to put participants at ease. I was able to do this because of the method of conducting interviews that I chose. Although "face-to-

face" or "in-person interviewing" would have been ideal, my interviews took place via telephone or skype call. This allowed me the freedom to control the flow of the interview and the flexibility and space to ask clarifying questions that written interview submissions would not have allowed (Singleton and Straits, 2010: 266).

## Chapter 4: Analysis

Results of Interviews

This data allows for a furthered understanding of social movements that expand throughout the Americas and across social, political, and religious boundaries. The largest difference came from race and ethnicity. There were many more shared commonalities as highlighted below.

**Table 2 - Interview Key**

| Interviewee 1 | Alabama, male, white, Southern Energy Network |
|---|---|
| Interviewee 2 | Alabama, male, white, Southern Energy Network |
| Interviewee 3 | Alabama, male, white, Alabama Rivers Alliance |
| Interviewee 4 | Alabama, female, white, Southern Energy Network |
| Interviewee 5 | Alabama, female, black, Southern Energy Network |
| Interviewee 6 | Ecuador, female, white, Rehearsing Change |
| Interviewee 7 | Ecuador, female, white, Rehearsing Change |
| Interviewee 8 | Ecuador, male, hispanic, Rehearsing Change |
| Interviewee 9 | Ecuador, female, white, Pachamama Alliance |

*Social and Political Context*

Due to the location of the Alabama issues, there were some perceptions that were taken into consideration when creating messaging. Student organizers were trained to be intentional in how they appeal to community members. Northern Alabama was described by interviewees as a "red state," quite conservative both socially and politically. As a result, "I don't think that many of them would identify as environmentalists just 'cause of the association people have with that. I would myself, but I don't think that a lot of the people that were concerned about it would so that was something that further reached across political boundaries to an extent" (Interviewee 3).

In contrast, interviewees described the political and social climate of Ecuador as less conservative. The politics of the indigenous bodies in the Amazon differ from the national governing political sphere. Indigenous communities try to stay true to their heritage and their governing practices. The Ecuadorian government gives indigenous groups rights under the constitution to create their own legislations that protect their historical practices (Interviewee 7). "Everything that we did, everything that we worked for was, when it came down to it, to ultimately preserve their way of life" (Interviewee 9).

*Demographic*

Composition of the groups depends highly on the composition of the town in which organizations are working. In towns with a majority of white citizens, gender balances are fairly equal (Interviewee 2). Most individuals working in local organizations are older, conservative males and females who are unlikely to identify as

34

environmentalists, much less feminists (Interviewee 3). In areas with a majority of black citizens, gender balances are slightly less equal. Both supporters and frontline leaders are majority black females. These women have a commonality of being either active in the workforce, or previously active in the workforce (Interviewee 1).

Student groups in Alabama were described as "more so white" (Interviewee 3). In fact, Southern Energy Network was described as having "less than ten percent non-white members" (Interviewee 2). This of course is a major contrast to the community in some cases. Alabama still has very segregated communities in rural towns, either majority black or majority white. However, if the outside group was already known and respected in the community differing racial demographics was not a major issue (Interviewee 3). Connections were based on prior community involvement. The barrier was making personal connections with community members and not racial.

Women are involved in all aspects of the movement - frontlines, leadership roles, allies. These women are mostly older women, women with governmental positions, teachers, or retired women. There seems to be a correlation between working women and women involved in social movements (Interviewee 5). As leadership positions in local community organizing is generally unpaid volunteer work, it can be understood why there are mostly women in organization meetings and in leadership positions. Women are more likely to take on unpaid volunteer work (Rosener, 1990).

In addition, men and women differed in how they self-identified their roles in the organizations they worked in. The women I interviewed were more likely to use phrases such as "I worked with..." and identified as "volunteer" and "organizer" (Interviewee 4, 5, 4). The men I interviewed used "I worked on" and labeled themselves as "leader"

(Interview 1, 2). I interpret volunteering and organizing as more passive identities whereas leader is an active identity.

Gender proportions in student groups were described as proportionately similar by Interviewees 1-4. The fact that there are so many women in all levels of participation is a testament to the work and success made to this point by feminist movements. One striking statistic was that all Rehearsing Change interns have been female interns. These women were all college students studying abroad, but were of varying race and ethnicities (Interviewee 8). It is not known if this was an intentional strategy or if women are more likely to be drawn to an international environmental internship through their time studying abroad or if it was merely a coincidence. Community members did, however, seem at ease when working with females on daily tasks and in work settings and vice versa. "It was definitely an adjustment, for myself and for members of the community. But, honestly, after the first month I felt connected, like we were all working as one. I got into the rhythm of my hosts and they seemed to be in the rhythm of having me around instead of having me in the way" (Interviewee 7). This could be explained by the idea that gender affects a person's daily routine. Women are more likely to maintain their social or institutional position, and they are less likely to accept a decision-making position than males (Czarniawska, 2013). As such, the community could feel as though a female would be a more consistent component in their daily routines.

Ecofeminism is more of an obvious factor in the case of Ecuador. An open discussion of gender rights and ecofeminism is accepted. In fact, Pachamama Alliance derived its name from the Quichua word for Mother Earth (Interviewee 9). Instead of directly addressing gender or racial injustices in the case of Alabama, organizers

approach environmental issues initially from the viewpoint of health or economic reasons in conservative areas (Interviewee 4). This indirect approach does not seem to be an issue in Ecuador.

I believe the lack of identification as feminist or ecofeminist in the case of Alabama could be explained by the political climate. The same parameters that are set forth by ecofeminist are present, but because conservative community members refuse what may be seen as progressive or radical labels, the connection is not made. The rural community members are victims of a governing body that seeks economic growth over protection of those in areas of high poverty. They still are moved to participate in stopping this. They seek policies that will protect their lands and give them equal access to resources (Salazar, 2014).

Institutionalized patriarchy does not influence grassroots organizations in an intentional way, even in strategizing. Grassroots organizations include a higher gender equality on a local level, but does not usually have a great diversity. Racial composition is determined by the community makeup.

> "Before entering a community, we have *intentional* conversations about anti-oppression. Everyone in our student group goes through at least one training that focuses on how to enter a community as respectfully as possible and how to be an ally because that is why we are there...to help when help is asked for" (Interviewee 4).

Anti-Oppression training is a tactic used to increase inclusivity of an organization (Olson, 2014). It centers around actively confronting any and all means of oppressive power structures such as racism, sexism, and classism. In order to affectively confront oppression, one must first address their own privileges or oppression before being able to combat the oppressions that affect others (Cooper, 2013).

There is also not a large range of ages found within these groups on a local level regardless of the town. "I got used to being the youngest of anyone who was at meetings. I mean, I tried to get my friends or like other people from my school, my high school, interested but it just wasn't a thing they were interested in" (Interviewee 5). Outside organizations that provide allyship to affected communities are more likely to have a larger range, including young students in organizing. Southern Energy Network is an "organization created by students for students" (Interviewee 4). Alabama Rivers Alliance, Pachamama Alliance, and Rehearsing Change engage as many age brackets as possible.

The environmental justice movement throughout the Americas should be viewed through a feminist perspective. However, this becomes a difficult task when social structures and patriarchal entities still deter females from speaking about their participation directly.

> "I was asked to speak at a few different conferences and events. People wanted to hear what was going on in my town from a young person's perspective and I wanted them to know because I thought, and still do, that young people are important and should have their voices heard. Plus it was a great opportunity for me to meet other young people who were doing the same thing as me, working in environmental issues and organizing and to be honest just caring" (Interviewee 5).

It should be noted, that she was asked to speak because she was the only young person involved in environmental issues in her community, not because she was a young woman.

*Acceptance*

The general consensus from all participants, especially from the Alabama case, was that community members were "wary of outsiders, especially students" (Interviewee

1). There has been a long history in both cases of community members being studied and used as a "lab rat" or "test subjects" in research, without receiving any help or benefits (Interviewee 1). There are not many outright strategies to correct this on the Alabama front.

Organizers who are not from the community are met with slight to severe suspicion when entering new spaces. This is especially true for students (Interviewee 4). Communities tire of being "guinea pigs" for student research (Interviewee 1). There is not the case when outside help comes from recognizable organizations, especially non-profit organizations. The Alabama Rivers Alliance, with its respectable name and no financial stake receives little to no distrust. Their only the goal is informing community members and supplying the support communities need when asked (Interviewee 4). Political entities with ties to the community are more accepted by the community than individuals without any ties to the area or any area similar to the one they are seeking to be involved in (Interviewee 5).

There were a variety of differences in the case of Ecuador one of which is that the groups in Ecuador have recognized the issue of acceptance by community members of outsiders and have employed strategies to improve this initial barrier. The main contact has stayed the same for many years, "there's an obvious trust there" (Interviewee 6). Students who enter these communities stay with host families in order to build personal relationships with them. This is an "eye-opening" experience for those who have the opportunity to live in these affected communities in the Amazon (Interviewee 7). Students are not seen as "testers" or reasons to raise suspicion as long as they are coming with a known and trusted organization, such as Rehearsing Change. They are welcomed

because there is a pretext of understanding already in place. They live with the communities they are working with and they come to learn by listening and seeing, not by asking questions. Community members share meals with volunteers and conduct other daily actions with the help of volunteers. These tactics create a sense of community for non-locals. This allows for trust to be built between the two parties (Interviewee 8). It is then possible for the community to share their personal stories through the volunteers who they trust to tell it well. In both cases it was said that "once people at least know your face and also once they had a sense of what you were doing, if you have a positive intention, then people are much more accepting of that" (Interviewee 1).

Environmental organizing has become quite popular on college campuses. It is a great way for students, sometimes for the first time, to get involved in a social issue in a potentially impactful way. "They do help people" (Interviewee 1). The "they" in this statement is not referring to students, but to student-led environmental groups. These groups help to educate both students and the people they touch. They can also be a great way for students to learn what they want to pursue as a career. "After the work I did with [Southern Energy Network] and other social justice organizations, I knew I wanted to work in that field, the field of EJ work is where my heart is and will be for at least for as long as that work is necessary" (Interviewee 4).

*Tactics and Strategies*

There is strategy on how outside entities enter communities that influence the effectiveness of the organizing work in the area. In Alabama, issues are not communicated by means that are easily found by local community members. The process

of change begins by informing people in surrounding areas of future industries and the

potential risks to health, land, water, and air quality. In Alabama, it is larger, outside

entities such as the Alabama Rivers Alliance that research and bring new knowledge to

potentially affected areas (Interviewee 3). Volunteers employ resistance strategies to

educate community members through *distribution of literature* and *popular media*

*engagement* (Olson, 2014). After informing community members through a variety of

tactics, the most effective groups seek to place local residents in leadership and decision-

making positions (Interviewee 4). The major initial task is to message the story to locals

in a way that not only gets their attention but inspires them to take action (Interviewee 3).

The groups and organization built around these issues would not consider themselves

merely an environmental group, but rather a social justice group that worked in the realm

of environmentalism (Interviewee 1). This is not surprising due to the presence of so

many intersecting issues previously highlighted.

In Ecuador, the people living in affected areas are very aware of the oil industry

and the toll it is taking on the environment in which they live. "I was shocked, really

though, I had no idea that this was such an issue anywhere, that people's lives could be so

affected" (Interviewee 7). Outside entities instead focus on informing residents of

possible *legal actions* they can use in their resistance (Olson, 2014). The Pachamama

Alliance employs lawyers that work with community leaders to take legal actions when

possible. They also help assuage the financial burden that accumulates due to lengthy

legal battles (Interviewee 9). In addition, these outside organizations work to spread

knowledge on the subject to other areas. This knowledge is acquired via personal

interactions with local individuals and information shared at the discretion of the

community as a whole. "As a volunteer for Alabama Rivers Alliance, one of the main things I did was canvassing, going door-to-door talking to residents one-on-one for hours and, yes, it was hard but it was worth it. You have to get the word out somehow, right?" (Interviewee 3).

The movement in Ecuador has sustained due to legal victories. Although Chevron still refuses to pay as previously mentioned, progress has been made. Should legal process be made in postponing plans for the Harteselle Sandstone project, the argument could be made that the group would grow in strength and numbers and continue to work towards completely stopping the project (Archibald, 2008).

Other strategies include *education* (Olson, 2014). A major tactic in the education strategy is using multi-media. In one town in Alabama, a local news network created a video outlining the health impacts of the local industries. This video was screened during the news and uploaded to their website and has been disbursed since then on multiple platforms. The video incited many community members to step forward and demand changes from the large corporations. It has also brought outside help (Interviewee 1).

In the case of Ecuador, both Pachamama Alliance and Rehearsing change are both heavily based in education first. Pachamama Alliance brings teachings to groups in order to improve health and quality of life while Rehearsing Change allows education from both parties. Students and community members learn from each other through participation in "performance art exercises" (Interviewee 7). *Performance art* is used as a form of non-violent direct action (Olson, 2014). These exercises move beyond any language or cultural barrier, using art to express thoughts and emotions (Interviewee 8).

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

In order to employ the most effective organizing in an area as an outside entity, it is important to immediately include local people. Using non-student and non-financially affiliated groups is best when making initial contact (Interviewee 4). Areas that have prior knowledge and extend an invitation to outside groups or accept an invitation from an outside group are more tolerant and accepting. However, areas that do not have a prior knowledge to the environmental degradation caused by extractive methods taking place or that plan to be taking place are not as quick to accept outsiders.

Community members are less suspicious and more willing to step forward and listen to representatives that are not participating due to personal gain or financial motivation. If this is not possible, the next most efficient strategy is to enter with positive intentions, allowing the community time to understand why the organization wants to be involved (Interviewee 1). In addition, allowing community members and leaders to get to know organization representatives. Using a familiar face or a steady group comprised of the same people will give a coalition the relationship bond needed to be a strong and effective tool (Interviewee 8).

Based on the information gathered from my interviews, it seems as though social context, or the demographic and acceptance of a community, is a higher factor of participation than gender. A person's participation in the community is a high factor in the level of participation in environmental organizing. Age affects the extent of influence

that an individual has had in the local community. As a result, there are not many young

activists on a local level (Interviewee 3). This may also be a reason why students are

looked at warily upon initial contact because they are not of similar age to community

members. In the case of Alabama, this is even more apparent in areas where younger

people have chosen relocation. In Ecuador, it is slightly better due to the understanding

that the young people involved are there to learn from community members, not study

them. They are also always joined by the same adult liaison (Interviewee 8). Consistency

and trust are key in both cases.

Women in rural areas in both the United States (Alabama Case) and in Ecuador

have high participation within local organizing. However, this does not lead to further

work in environmental organizing or other social justice work outside of the local

community with few exceptions (Interviewee 5). This is not surprising due to the

tendency of women to shy away from leadership roles and not take personal credit for

work (Sandberg, 2013). The strongest voices of the movements are not necessarily from

the people who do the most work. The most vocal seem to be men whereas the majority

of volunteer and organizing work seems to be done by women.

However, by participating in organized efforts to take back their rights and protect

their ways of live, community members become "architects of their own solutions in the

face of injustice" (Southern Energy Network, 2004). As soon as anyone takes initial

action, they shed the label of "victim" and are able to take on a different identity

(Archibald, 2008). These labels can vary, as mentioned in the analysis section. However,

in my interviews women were more likely to self-identify with supporting roles while

men were more likely to self-identify with lead roles. The internal structures within a

community organization that deters women to take a stand is partially socially constructed and partially self-inflicted (Sandberg, 2013). Women should take credit where credit is due and use the same terms to describe the equal work that they do.

I interpret this as a potential need for strategizing in order to include young people from within the local community, especially women, and women outside of the workforce. These are the groups that have the lowest participation regardless of race or ethnicity. They are consistently part of the group referred to as the "people left behind" (Falk & Watkins, 1989).

There are a few possible ways to improve this study. For one, the study could be expanded to include all genders outside of the binary man or woman spectrum. In addition, to increase the number of interviewees and include more women and people of other races and ethnicities. It would also be beneficial to travel to these areas and speak to community leaders and members on a one-on-one basis in addition to speaking to organization representatives. I would also like to expand the participant pool to include active and participating community members as well as outside volunteers and organizers to get a better overall understanding of the role of gender from both angles of environmental justice movements.

**Appendix**

<u>General Interview Questions</u>

How would you define your participation in work to end extractive methods?

Would you say that your upbringing influenced your desire to be involved in environmental work?

How so?

In what community or communities have you worked in/are you working in?

Were you immediately accepted by the community?

If so, how did you know?

If not, what did you do to be accepted? Did you ever feel accepted?

With what group or groups did you work with?

How long have you been a part of this group, or groups like it?

Can you describe your work in relation to the work of the organization as a whole?

What led you to join this organization?

Were/Are the factors, if any, that deter participation in the organization?

Who are the frontline organizers in this group?

What is the general gender and racial makeup of this group?

Who are the supporters or allies in the group?

What is the general gender and racial makeup of supporters?

Are there any groups not represented (age, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.)

What actions and strategies, if any, are being put into place to correct this?

Why do you think organizations such as this one are important?

What are the negative factors that impact the environment you work in?

What physical areas do they affect? (water, land, air)

Are there health impacts felt by the surrounding communities? (what are they?)

Are there social or political implications of these factors?

Where do they come from///What Companies/Industries are responsible for these?

Do many people from the community work for these companies?

What groups (gender and racial) are represented in the workforce for these companies?

Is/Are these a source of income for the community?

What are other sources of income for the community?

Are these sources affected by oil companies (how so?)

What is being done to offset this economic burden?

What is being done to offset this environmental impact?

In your opinion, how successful has this group been in correcting the environmental impacts?

What strategies have been used?

Who decides which strategies will be used?

Is there an intentional gender balance in decision making?

Is there an intentional racial balance in decision making?

Which were most effective?/What were the results of these?

What else needs to be done? (What are the next steps/strategies?)

Do the communities you work in look for outside help?

> Who do they go to? (local, national, international, etc.)

> For which projects/strategies?

> Do these entities have equal representation?

>> If not, what gender/race/ethnicities are represented?

Is there anything I left out that you would like to add?

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