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abolition ecologies

By

Frances B. Roberts-Gregory

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Environmental Science, Policy, and Management

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Kathryn De Master, Chair

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Professor Charisma Acey

Fall 2021

Abstract

Ecowomanist (auto)ethnography (EWAE) as methodological intervention: BIWOC everyday resistance to Louisiana state-corporate crime, anti-resilient climate justice, and emergent feminist abolition ecologies

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Frances B. Roberts-Gregory

Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Science, Policy, and Management

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Critical environmental justice scholars and feminist political ecologists currently call for more meaningful inquiry into the role(s) of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities, women, youth, and queer folk in resisting premature death, precarity, and racial capitalist climate patriarchy. Feminist activist researchers likewise strive to center feminist epistemological and methodological tools (i.e., intersectionality, embodied knowledge, partial perspectives, and an ethic of care) when researching climate change. (We) expose the under-theorization of gender in environmental justice studies and highlight the links between gendered vulnerability to climate change and the androcentricity of extractive economies. Despite these intellectual advancements, women of color (WOC) in the USA continue to be vastly underrepresented in climate policy, coastal adaptation planning, environmental decision-making, and natural resource management.

My dissertation innovatively develops and applies an ecowomanist and (auto)ethnographic methodology to theorize Black and Indigenous women's everyday resistance to state-corporate crime in Gulf Coast Louisiana. I methodologically employ Black feminist (auto)ethnography, participant observation, conversational and semi-structured interviews, and multi-sited ethnography to investigate how Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women navigate contradictory relationships with energy and petrochemical industries, resist environmental violence, and imagine a just transition to fossil fuel *freeish* futures. I likewise interrogate WOC's situated ecological knowledge, critiques of resiliency and activist frameworks, and pedagogical engagements with youth of color to facilitate decolonial and feminist political conscientization.

I furthermore push back at the positivist aims of environmental science & studies (ESS); extractive methodologies within ESS continue to inflict emotional and bodily harm on communities of color and systematically erase and invalidate the epistemic contributions of WOC to environmental solution-making and climate policy. My findings moreover indicate that Gulf Coast Black, Indigenous, Women of Color (BIWOC) resist petro-hegemony and Louisianan politics of expendability through gendered and racialized acts of refusal, recovery, rejection, rest, restoration, and reimagining (R⁶). We strategically challenge and (re)frame relationships with polluting industries and resiliency frameworks to enact anti-resilient care ethics and embody

gendered understandings of inter- and intragenerational accountability to human and *more-than-human* kin.

Broader impacts of the work include increasing opportunities for Black and Indigenous women to shape climate policy, amplifying the intellectual genius of WOC advocating for energy and climate reparations, and resisting the devaluation of life in sacrifice zones. My research also highlights contradictions in women's everyday lives that speak to contradictions in the larger environmental movement and our international dependence on fossil fuels. Feminist activist and ecowomanist methodologies thus hold the power to increase the representation of Gulf Coast women and youth of color in environmental and energy policy, build transnational solidarity around feminist climate justice, and (re)imagine toxic geographies and sacrifice zones as feminist abolition ecologies.

Dedication

For my mother Robin who taught me to *talk back* at a young age.

For my Uncle Rudy, Aunt Gloria, and Cousin Latasha who passed away from COVID-19 complications. May they rest in peace.

For my grandmother Joyce who reminds me to laugh and center my needs in an absurd world.

For my great-grandmother Mary Frances who was sassy and loving. May she rest in peace.

For Dr. Julio González-Ruiz who encouraged my love of international travel and world languages at Spelman College. May he rest in peace.

For Dr. Bruce Wade who taught me quantitative research methods, the social construction of race, and the connection between environmental and scientific racism at Spelman College.
May he rest in peace.

For my love Daniel Briggs who rescued me and my cat Raymond Grapes during Hurricane Ida.
Thank you for supporting me to the dissertation finish line.

For my kitty Raymond Grapes who helped me heal emotionally and spiritually during the COVID-19 lockdown.

For my unborn children, who will undoubtedly inherit an uncertain, yet beautiful world.

For bell hooks.

Thank you reminding me to center love as a politic of healing.

Please bless us as a divine ancestor.

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Key Terms and Acronyms

BECNO	Bard Early College New Orleans
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, People of Color
BIWOC	Black, Indigenous, Women of Color
C40	C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group of mayors committed to tackling climate change
CADA	Coalition Against Death Alley (i.e., Cancer Alley)
COP	Conference of Parties
DSCEJ	Deep South Center for Environmental Justice
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESS	Environmental Science & Studies
ESPM	Environmental Science, Policy, and Management
EWAE	Ecowomanist (Auto)ethnography
HBCUs	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
MS PHDs	Minorities Striving and Pursuing Higher Degrees of Success in Earth System Science
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NCAR	National Center for Atmospheric Research
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PWIs	Predominantly White Institutions
R ⁶	Refusal, Recovery, Rejection, Rest, Restoration, and Reimagining
REU	Research Experience for Undergraduates
SOARS	Significant Opportunities in Atmospheric Research and Science
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
UC Berkeley	University of California, Berkeley
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNO-CHART	University of New Orleans Center for Hazards Assessment, Response and Technology
WECAN	Women's Earth & Climate Action Network, International

WEDO	Women's Environment & Development Organization
WiSTEM	Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
WOC	Women of Color

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Preface

This ten-year research project developed out of numerous mentorship programs, undergraduate research experiences (REUs), campus organizing, and a literature review/poster I created on gender, vulnerability, and the emerging climate gap as a senior at Spelman College. Yet...my dissertation origin story really begins before I even entered higher education! My ancestors and my inner sociologist remind me to reflect more deeply on my ecowomanist positionality to understand the evolution of my life's calling. They remind me to start with my (her)story as an environmentalist. They remind me to start with my mother.

My mother is a math and science teacher, and as a result, I have always excelled in STEM¹, humanities, and social sciences. My mother was also an Afrocentric vegan feminist during the 1980s and 1990s. Since my mom lacked childcare as a single mom, I accompanied my mother to her biochemistry lectures at Fayetteville State University, an HBCU in North Carolina. We lived in trailers amongst chicken and hog farms in rural North Carolina until we moved to Arlington, Virginia. Before entering college, I attended 13 schools between North Carolina, Virginia, and New Jersey. Due to economic instability and sexual violence, we also lived in section 8 housing and shelters for women and children.

In high school, I was voted most likely to join the NAACP² by my White and Black peers. In 2008, I was accepted into Spelman College as an environmental science major, Gates Millennium Scholar, and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (WiSTEM) participant. As a college freshman, I won a writing award for my First Year Writing Portfolio which focused on energy efficiency and alternative energy. As an environmental science major in WiSTEM, I conducted research on soil erosion at Providence Canyon Park with Dr. Terezinha Cassia Galvao, a civil engineer and environmental geoscientist. I also interned at the Department of Interior Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation & Enforcement (OSMRE) under Sterling Rideout.

Later, I interned with the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) through the Significant Opportunities in Atmospheric Research and Science (SOARS) mentorship program. As a SOARS protégé, I conducted research on ozone formation in upper troposphere using WRF-chem data analysis under Dr. Mary Barth. I furthermore researched Atlanta greenspace accessibility at Georgia State University under community geographer Dr. Timothy Hawthorne. We collaborated with the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA) and Spelman professor and urban ecologist Dr. Na'Taki Osborne Jelks. I was likewise mentored by Dr. Fatemeh Shafiei, a lifelong environmental justice researcher from Spelman's Political Science Department, Dr. Jewel Harper, a senior adviser and counselor for environmental justice from EPA Region 4, Dr. Jerry Wever, an ethnomusicologist, and former Mayor of Atlanta Shirley Franklin. They inspired my professional interests in grassroots environmental politics after I enrolled in their environmental law & policy seminars and after I conducted ethnographic research on community perspectives on brownfields along the Atlanta Beltline.

¹ Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

² National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

In 2013, I present my SOARS research at the inaugural HBCU Climate Change Conference hosted by Dr. Beverly Wright and the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ). Dr. Wever and Dr. Shafiei also encouraged me to explore the emerging climate gap and present a poster at the 2012 EPA Southeast Regional Environmental Justice Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. While there, I met Jacqui Patterson, the former Director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, and co-founder of Women of Color United and the Chisholm Legacy Project. In 2017, I briefly conducted interviews as a research assistant for her NAACP and UC Riverside Gender and Climate Change Research Study alongside feminist political ecologist Dr. Jade Sasser. This experience later influenced my thought process as I developed my own interview guide.

In 2012, I was also offered an opportunity through SOARS to travel to Gulf Coast Louisiana to conduct participatory ethnobotany research alongside tribal communities “down the bayou” under a cooperative agreement between NCAR, Colorado State University, and the University of New Orleans Center for Hazards Assessment, Response, & Technology (UNO-CHART), an applied social science hazards research center. I was directly supervised by applied social scientist Dr. Kristina Peterson and environmental sociologist Dr. Shirley Laska. They later founded the Lowlander Center, a nonprofit designed to assist bayou communities with hazards mitigation and disaster recovery such as the Isle de Jean Charles coastal resettlement. They are furthermore professionally associated with the Gender and Disaster Network.

My time spent learning participatory action research (PAR) and ethnobotany alongside Indigenous community partners in Gulf Coast Louisiana completely transformed my life and my political commitments as a community-based environmental justice researcher. For example, I was devastated to learn the Gulf Coast Louisiana loses a football size field of land every thirty to sixty minutes. Although I did not at the time have the words to articulate my experience because of epistemic injustice, I was later able to process my feelings and understand I dealt with vicarious traumatization as a Black woman with similar personal ties to environmental justice communities. Since my SOARS project felt emotionally and intellectually incomplete, I eventually decided to return to Louisiana as a graduate student. I desired to leverage my educational privilege for the benefit of frontline communities and integrate western scientific knowledge with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and geographical information systems (GIS).

Before I graduated from Spelman, however, I studied abroad in South Africa at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, taking coursework in agrometeorology, climatology, ecology, and hydrology. Once I returned to Spelman, I joined food justice and agriculture communities as a student activist guided by Spelman art instructor Robert Hamilton. I served as a Spelman sustainability intern, food literacy intern, and intern with the Southeastern African American Farmers Organic Network (SAAFON). I assisted SAAFON in building relationships between rural Black growers in the USA and the Global South as a Slow Food Atlanta delegate at the world’s largest food conference, Terra Madre and Salon de Gusto. In 2013, I founded the first HBCU Slow Food chapter at Spelman College and wrote my senior honors thesis on African American vegetarians and food activists using a mixed methods research design. As a Spelman senior, I changed my major to sociology & anthropology and returned to Black veganism to heal from gastrointestinal issues. I later fought for nutritional accommodations from Aramark as a student with disabilities

and a compromised immune system. I worked with the Aramark Sustainability Coordinator, Sache Jones, to pick up organic fruits and vegetables from Whole Foods and local Black farmers markets.

After graduating from Spelman and completing a community geography internship at Georgia State University, I began graduate school in the division of Society & Environment at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley). I was excited to work with feminist geographer Dr. Carolyn Finney, the only Black woman in the College of Natural Resources. From 2013-2015, I busied myself with coursework in political ecology, ethnic studies, city planning, ecofeminism, geography, feminist epistemology, and natural resource management. I also moved to Oakland and joined a Black salsa dance community. In 2015, I served as a graduate mentor for an undergraduate urban ethnobotany internship under Berkeley Assistant Cooperative Extension Specialist Dr. Jennifer Sowerwine and enrolled in an ethnobotany lab and lecture with ethnobotanist Dr. Thomas Carlson. I later became president of the UC Berkeley Black Graduate Student Association to cope with the loss of my adviser, Carolyn Finney, to a negative tenure review.

In 2015, #Blacklivesmatter protests dominated the news, which impacted me both emotionally and spiritually. I began to question the separation between objective scientific research and affective activism using the tools of feminist epistemology. With increased self-awareness, I turned to rural sociologist Dr. Louise Fortmann and applied social scientist Dr. Kristina Peterson for advice to develop a do-able research project in line with my ethics and politics. Louise suggested I think critically about my ties to Louisiana and Indigenous communities as a Black woman. She also suggested that I embed myself, and my identity, in my research. Kristina suggested that I focus on Louisiana women in the oil and gas industries since there was a dearth of research on their experiences in post-disaster settings. With their advice in mind, I remembered the literature review and poster on disaster, vulnerability, and the gendered climate gap I designed as a Spelman senior. After careful consideration of my options, I decided to revisit that early Spelman poster and turn it into a doctoral research project.

My dissertation thus evolved from an ethnobotany project to integrate Western scientific knowledge with TEK and GIS to a feminist focus on barriers and opportunities for Gulf Coast WOC to resist state-corporate crime. After I passed my qualifying exam and had my dissertation proposal approved by my dissertation chair and renowned ecofeminist historian Dr. Carolyn Merchant, I spoke at the 2017 Berkeley March for Science about the need to protect the integrity of scientific research during the Trump administration and hold Western science accountable for the harms committed by eugenics, scientific racism, and environmental racism. I also marched with my mother and the #Blacklivesmatter contingent at the People's Climate March in Washington, D.C. Presentations by Black and Indigenous women at the "Women Leading Solutions on the Frontlines of Climate Change" panel hosted by the Women's Earth & Climate Action Network (WECAN) further validated my new research focus.

Acknowledgments

I recognize that I teach and research within the territory of Bvlbancha, a Choctaw word which means “place of many tongues”. Bvlbancha (i.e., New Orleans) and surrounding territories historically served as a port city and trading post for many different nations including the Chitimacha, Choctaw, Ishak, Tunica, Natchez, Atakapa, Caddo, and Houma. This region is also home to many displaced and formerly enslaved African, Creole, and Caribbean people(s) whose histories and traditions are Indigenous to the region. By offering this land acknowledgement, I affirm Indigenous sovereignty and pledge to be more accountable to the needs of Indigenous, Caribbean, Creole, and African people(s) within Turtle Island.

It Takes a Village!

An African proverb instructs us that it takes a village to raise a child. My SOARS sister and Kenyan-American colleague Sandra Maina taught me years ago that it also takes a village to raise a village. I consequently want to acknowledge all the women, Indigenous folks, and frontline communities of color in Gulf Coast Louisiana who trusted me with their stories of everyday resistance. Thank you 350 New Orleans, the Alliance for Affordable Energy, Another Gulf is Possible, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, the Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN), Extinction Rebellion New Orleans, Water Wise NOLA, the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, Jacqui Patterson, the Residents of Gordon Plaza, the New Orleans People’s Assembly, the Coalition Against Death Alley, the L’eau Est La Vie water protector camp, Justice and Beyond, the Bvlbancha Collective, and the Lower 9th Ward Global Green Community & Climate Action Center. You taught me how to imagine a just transition to environmental, energy, and climate justice.

Much thanks to Bard Early College New Orleans, the New Orleans Center for the Gulf South, and the Department of Communications at Tulane University for supporting my research intellectually and financially. I also have a lot of gratitude for the Women’s Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) and the Women’s Earth & Climate Action Network (WECAN) for inviting me to join the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal. Thank you to Dr. Kristina Peterson, Dr. Shirley Laska, Chief Albert Naquin of the Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, Chief Shirell Parfait Dardar of the Grand Caillou/Dulac Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, and Monique Verdin from the United Houma Nation for inspiring my research focus on Gulf Coast Louisiana. Thank you, Dr. Nataki Osborne Jelks, for teaching me about Cancer Alley and stormwater management in your Spelman intro to toxicology course.

This work would not have been possible without my visionary academic advisers Dr. Kathryn De Master and Dr. Carolyn Finney. Thank you, Kathryn, for being an ally and cheerleader when others presumed my incompetence; you committed yourself to my successful matriculation and post-graduate opportunities. To Dr. Dorceta Taylor, my eternal thanks for sitting me down and telling me to get my life together and GRADUATE. To Dr. Melanie Harris and Elonda Clay, thank you for inspiring the conceptual framing of my research, reminding me to live my best life, and giving me the language of ecowomanism to articulate my experience. Thank you, Dr. Irma

McClaurin, as well for writing the Black feminist autoethnography bible. I appreciate your mentorship via email conversations. Lastly, thanks to my qualifying and dissertation committee members including Dr. Louise Fortmann, Dr. Ula Taylor, Dr. Rachel Morello Frosch, Dr. Carolyn Merchant, Dr. Tom Biolsi, Dr. Timothy Hawthorne, and Dr. Charisma Acey. You shaped the intellectual direction of this research and provided the keys to my freedom. Thank you Dr. Toni Griffin too for introducing me to “Design for the Just City” and the use of social media tools to promote critical landscape literacy. To Dr. Erica Williams, thank you for being a solid mentor and encouraging me to join the National Women’s Studies Association.

Thank you, Travis London from Donaldsonville, for your friendship and research assistance. Thank you, Robert Walker, for welcoming me to New Orleans, teaching me the importance of musicians and cultural bearers, and helping me to look for my brother in the East when he went missing. My doctoral research also would not have been possible without the support of my Spelman community, my UC Berkeley Black Graduate Student Association community, my Democratizing Knowledge Institute community, and my ESPM Graduate Diversity Council community. To my friends, within and outside of the academy, thank you for encouraging me and for listening to me vent incessantly about the toxicity of academia. Our dance parties at salsa and Reggae Gold parties provided social and emotional support throughout my graduate studies.

To my family in North Carolina, Georgia, and New Jersey, thank you for loving and accepting me even when my academic journey shaped me in radically new ways and brought me to unfamiliar geographies. Finally, this 10+ year research project, from the crystallization of pre-coursework ideas to later fieldwork and dissertation writing, was generously supported by the UC Berkeley Chancellor’s Fellowship, the Ford Foundation, the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program, the New Orleans Center for the Gulf South, Sigma Xi, the Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation, the Wenner Gren Collaborative Ecologies Workshop, and the Gates Millennium Scholars Program.

Introduction

It is not a coincidence, then, that Indigenous and Black women...who are the most impacted by the interlocked systems of colonialism, criminalization, environmental degradation, poverty, inequality, and family separation, have been at the forefront of social and environmental justice movements.

- Ingrid Waldron, “Women on the Frontlines”, p. 258

The intensity, duration, and frequency of extreme weather events and “un/natural” disasters is increasing in magnitude worldwide (Bullard 2008; Dawson 2010; J. J. King 2011; Oliver-Smith 1996; Tompkins and Cogswell 2016; Gergan, Smith, and Vasudevan 2020; Crate and Nuttall 2016; Gorecki 2021). These phenomena pose global implications for human and *more-than-human* kin who must concurrently mitigate, adapt, and recover from ecological harm.

Scholarship at the intersection of environmental, energy, and climate justice further draws attention to disproportionate energy and climate change impacts on BIPOC³ and immigrant communities, women, queer folk, low income neighborhoods, and countries in the Global South (Patterson 2009; Schlosberg and Collins 2014; Dawson 2010; Danner 2016; Gaard 2015; Terry 2009; Gorecki 2021). Critical scholar-activists moreover note a historical neglect of Black and Indigenous communities during unnatural disasters; guided by statist politics of expendability and disposability, (our) communities are often abandoned and polluted as sacrifice zones (Bullard and Wright 2012; Pastor et al. 2006; Lewis 2016; Bullard 2008; Rivera and Miller 2007; Maldonado et al. 2013; Crate and Nuttall 2016; Pellow 2016; Giroux 2007).

Black and Indigenous communities in the United States are moreover disproportionately burdened by COVID-19 health inequities, housing and employment discrimination, poverty, political powerlessness, environmental racism and sexism, and hazards posed by changing weather patterns and sea level rise (White-Newsome 2016; Patterson 2010; Schlosberg and Collins 2014; Fields 2016; Shepherd and KC 2015; Cantzler and Huynh 2016; Vickery and Hunter 2016). Critical Black, Indigenous, and ecofeminist scholars similarly identify ways in which racial disaster patriarchy and accumulation by dispossession facilitate ongoing cycles of anthropogenic, apocalyptic, dystopian, and unnatural disaster (Gorecki 2021). Cycles of unnatural disaster further evolved in the aftermath of the agricultural revolution and the stealth of native lands during the voyages of discovery, transatlantic slave trade, and advent of settler-colonialism (J. Davis et al. 2019; Bullard 2008; Gorecki 2021). The climate crisis, as a symbol of multiple overlapping and intersecting unnatural disasters, is thus directly tied to the 1) rise of positivist and masculinist scientific disciplines, 2) Cartesian conceptualizations of nature as separate from culture (and spirit!), 3) the objectification of natural resources and people cast as “other”, and 4) the feminization of the earth to justify extraction, rape, and plunder (Gaard 2015).

Critical environmental, energy, and climate justice scholars consequently call for an inquiry into the role(s) of BIPOC communities, women, youth, and queer folk in resisting premature death and precarity that logically result from statist necropolitics and state-corporate crime (Davies 2018). Feminist climate researchers likewise call for a greater inclusion of feminist epistemologies and methodological tools (i.e., intersectionality, embodied knowledge, partial perspectives, and an ethic of care) when researching climate change; (we) highlight the links

³ Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

between gendered “vulnerability” to climate change and the androcentricity of extractive economies. We likewise expose the under-theorization of gender in environmental justice studies and the under-theorization of race and other markers of difference in sustainable development and feminist political ecology scholarship. Nonetheless, women of color, particularly Black and Indigenous women, are vastly underrepresented in international climate policy debates and popular imaginings of environmental activism (Macgregor 2010; Patterson 2009; Gaard 2015; Terry 2009; Mersha 2017; Kaalund 2004; Rainey and Johnson 2009; Frankland and Tucker 2013; Kurtz 2007; Unger 2012; David and Enarson 2012; Snyder 2012). It is therefore important to challenge the pathologizing of women of color and instead focus on our capacity to problem solve in relation to environmental, energy, and climate justice.

Environmental, Energy, and Climate Justice in Louisiana

Gulf Coast Louisiana is a logical starting point for the study of environmental, energy, and climate justice in the United States because (our) home is uniquely threatened by extreme weather, land loss, and the intersection of environmental racism, classism, and sexism. In fact, land loss within Louisiana is expected to continue at a rate of 25 to 35 square miles per year and the Gulf Coast region faces the highest rate of relative sea-level rise worldwide (Maldonado et al. 2013). Coastal Louisiana is also home to a diversity of subsistence-based populations including Black and Indigenous communities. These communities maintain unique stores of ecological knowledge directly gained from living and working coastal landscapes for countless generations (Maldonado et al. 2015; Maldonado 2014a). Nonetheless, these same Black and Indigenous communities currently fight to have their voices heard, concerns addressed, and suggestions meaningfully implemented by natural resource managers, climate adaptation planners, and coastal restoration decision-makers (Crate and Nuttall 2016). Since many natural resource managers subscribe to a more top-down approach to local governance (an approach that can exclude and delegitimize community input), the fight for inclusion in coastal restoration and climate resilience is both a battle over governance philosophy and a collective struggle with life or death consequences (Maldonado et al. 2013; Maldonado 2014a; Maldonado et al. 2015; Crate and Nuttall 2016).

According to Robert Bullard, the southeastern United States in the past decade also experienced the most climate related disasters (billions of dollars in lost) compared to other regions, at a ratio of 4:1 (Lewis 2016). These disasters are regularly compounded by pervasive social, political, and economic inequality. Louisiana also ranks in the bottom percentile of many quality-of-life indicators; coastal Louisiana, for example, is home to a diversity of “island nation” and “river” populations including Black communities located along the 85-mile petrochemical corridor known as “Cancer Alley” (i.e., Death Alley), Indigenous communities located in disappearing landscapes “down the bayou”, and Creole communities located throughout the region (Patterson 2009; Schlosberg and Collins 2014; Dawson 2010; Danner 2016; Gaard 2015; Terry 2009; Macgregor 2010; Davies 2018; Maldonado 2014a; Maldonado et al. 2015; Prud’homme-Cranford, Barthé, and Jolivéte 2021). Many contemporary Black, Indigenous, and Creole communities formed after enslavement on former plantation lands and along isolated marshlands once Indigenous families fled racial and ethnic persecution (C. Woods 2017; C. A. Woods 1998; Maldonado 2019). While these Gulf Coast BIPOC communities sustain a cultural legacy of resistance, entrepreneurship, and home ownership, they also fight for daily survival and for

inclusion in contemporary environmental decision making and climate policy (Crate and Nuttall 2016; Davies 2018; Maldonado et al. 2013; 2015).

Survival within coastal Louisiana is likewise complicated by the political power of energy and petrochemical industries that facilitate land loss, environmental degradation, divestment, community fragmentation, premature death, and what geographers and anthropologists term “accumulation by dispossession” (Maldonado 2014a; Fletcher 2010; Dawson 2010; Davies 2018). Oil and gas exploration, pesticide/fertilizer production, plantation agriculture, logging, industrial development in floodplains, levee construction and the historic damming of the Mississippi River by the Army Corps of Engineers have directly contributed to ecological exploitation and wetland/barrier island loss (Norton-Smith et al. 2016; Rapson 2018; Williams 2018; Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018). These contributing factors also effectively concentrate a disproportionate number of toxic industries, energy monopolies, agriculture runoff, oil disasters, post-storm debris, and dispersants within socioeconomically disadvantaged communities of color (Colten 2012; Crate and Nuttall 2016; Maldonado 2014b; Norton-Smith et al. 2016; Davies 2018; Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018; Rapson 2018; Strauss 2018; Williams 2018). Louisiana “frontline” communities finally contend with unique vulnerabilities due to their geographical location, percentage of uninsured households, food insecurity, educational inequalities, health disparities, and concentrated poverty (Lewis 2016). For example, the residents of Cancer Alley (i.e., Death Alley) experience high rates of mortality and morbidity due to outdated zoning policies, local corruption, and lax enforcement of environmental regulations. Grassroots organizations and environmental groups in Gulf Coast Louisiana nevertheless fight erasures, neglect, devaluation, and expendability (Roberts-Gregory 2021).

Using the tools of ecowomanist autoethnography (EWAE) and feminist activist methodologies, my dissertation documents, theorizes, and analyzes BIWOC⁴ environmental, energy, and climate justice activism in Gulf Coast Louisiana. My doctoral research not only centers the marginalized and undervalued voices of Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women, but also critiques positivist, masculinist, and white supremacist methods within environmental science & studies (ESS). By illuminating the violence of extractive research methods and offering alternative methods centered in healing justice and reparation of harm, I affirm and validate the epistemic contributions of Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women to environmental solution-making and climate policy. I additionally make legible and celebrate women of color’s embodied and everyday resistance to state corporate crime and other manifestations of environmental violence⁵ within petrocolonial plantation geographies.

Literature Review

My research conceptually draws inspiration from interdisciplinary STS⁶, environmental and disaster anthropology, environmental justice, women and gender studies, and feminist political ecology literature (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996; Sedeno 2001; Oliver-Smith

⁴ Black, Indigenous, Women of Color (BIWOC)

⁵ Environmental violence, as a conceptual framing, has been developed by many environmental justice scholars and critical social scientists. According to Waldron (2018: 252), environmental violence refers “to the cumulative intergenerational impacts of social, economic, political, and health inequalities that have their roots in white supremacy, colonialism, patriarchy, and racial capitalism.”

⁶ Science and Technology Studies (STS)

1996; Crate and Nuttall 2016; Kaalund 2004). I also build upon the findings of Black feminist and environmental anthropologists, environmental historians, critical race scholars, and ecofeminist theorists (Dumas and Miraya Ross 2016; R. G. Daniel et al. 2014; McClaurin 2001; Merchant 2003; Marino and Lazrus 2015; Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009; Mann 2011; Warren 2000; Gaard 2015; Winant and Omi 1994). In fact, I situate myself into what David Pellow (2016) terms the second generation of critical environmental justice scholarship. Critical environmental justice transcends traditional research concerns of race and class to also center gender, sexuality, emotions, and nonhuman species. For example, I mobilize Pellow's (2016) conceptual framing of "indispensability" to elucidate the ways in which women of color use ethical claims to assert their right to life and wellbeing. My feminist activist research further answers a call to decolonize popular understandings of climate change within the "Anthropocene" that 1) fail to account for differential gender, race, and class culpability for greenhouse gas emissions, 2) obscure the impact of settler-colonialism on Indigenous and Black imaginings of apocalypse, ancestral dystopias, and unnatural disaster, and 3) reify nature/culture binaries (Latour 2014; Gergan, Smith, and Vasudevan 2020; Bullard 2008; Kyle P. Whyte 2018; Garcia 2019).

Gender, Justice, Energy, and Climate

Feminist scholar-activists promote gender mainstreaming in climate change and environmental justice discourse and policy, as well as disaster recovery and response (Dankleman 2010; Kaalund 2004; Terry 2009; J. J. King 2011; Snyder 2012; Frankland and Tucker 2013). Feminist scholars likewise analyze the feminization of global poverty (over 70% of those living below poverty line are women), the intersectionality or "multiple jeopardy" of various forms of oppression, and gendered institutionalized sociopolitical inequalities (Dankleman 2010; Patterson 2009; Terry 2009). Feminist climate researchers moreover document an increased frequency of domestic violence, rape, sexual trafficking, and murder during disaster, as well as increased stress and caretaking responsibilities on the part of women who are normally burdened with a larger share of childrearing responsibilities (Dankleman 2010; Gaard 2015). King (2011) illuminates, for example, the vulnerability of Black women during Hurricane Katrina and the gendered and racialized pre- and post-storm housing crisis. Other feminist scholars document the role of women in grassroots struggles against multinational fossil fuel industries to manifest more energy justice and democratic futures (Allen, Lyons, and Stephens 2019; Stephens 2020). Many women also have specific post-disaster recovery needs such as healthcare, emotional support, and childcare that are often ignored, neglected, and marginalized by disaster and recovery personnel (J. J. King 2011; Patterson 2009).

According to Jacqui Patterson, the former director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program, internationally "women are disproportionately affected by natural disasters, which are on the increase, as they experience higher rates of mortality, morbidity and post-disaster diminishment in their livelihoods" (Patterson 2009: 1). Women farmers, already disadvantaged in terms of access to property and credit, also suffer during droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events. Scholars likewise note that women are underrepresented in climate change policy, devise different solutions and express different concerns over climate change, and makeup 60-80% of grassroots organizations (Gaard 2015). Nonetheless, gender and sexuality, including queer sexualities, are ignored in most environmental justice scholarship that instead frame environmental inequities primarily through race and class. Lastly, many women

organizers draw upon the powerful rhetoric of motherhood to situate their environmental claims and motivations for activism (Snyder 2012; Gaard 2015). Nevertheless, Snyder (2012) argues against a primary focus on motherhood and future generation narratives at the expense of other narratives that focus on nonhuman species and current generations. While women of color compromise the bulk and backbone of the environmental justice movement, (we) still hold various complimentary and contradictory standpoint(s) and political motivations for environmental resistance (Rainey and Johnson 2009).

Blackness and Indigeneity

Although Black and Indigenous folk today are often conceptualized as two mutually exclusive ethnic or racial categories, this is not a biological, political, or historical fact. In fact, Black and Indigenous communities within Louisiana and Turtle Island (i.e., the Americas) have a long, if contested, history of familial kinship, cultural exchange, struggle, and tension (Blackbird 2018; Prud'homme-Cranford, Barthé, and Jolivéte 2021; Jolivéte 2007; Klopotek 2012; S. N. Jackson 2014). For example, Black and Indigenous scholars document contemporary and historical “Black-Indian” relations within anthologies and scholarly works including *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Holland and Miles 2006), *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* (Tayac 2009), *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (S. N. Jackson 2012), *Fictions of Land and Flesh: Blackness, Indigeneity, Speculation* (Rifkin 2019), *An Afro-Indigenous History of the United States* (Mays 2021), and *Louisiana Creole Peoplehood: Afro-Indigeneity and Community* (Prud'homme-Cranford, Barthé, and Jolivéte 2021). Climate justice communities across the globe also self-identify as Indigenous, Black, Creole, and/or as marginalized people of color who reside in vanishing small islands and coastal sacrifice zones with strong attachment to place (Lewis 2016; Vickery and Hunter 2016; Maldonado et al. 2015; Baptiste 2016). Indigenous leaders furthermore recognize that their communities' health, wellbeing, and livelihoods depend upon a diversity of proactive and preventative approaches for climate change adaptation including planned resettlement when all else fails (Norton-Smith et al. 2016). Indigenous and Black frontline communities thus demand inclusion within emerging sustainability, climate adaptation, and energy democratization initiatives.

In addition, much of the tension ascribed to Black and Indigenous communities can be attributed to a multitude of historical and political factors. These include, for example, the disenfranchisement and exclusion of many “mixed-race” and Afro-Indigenous people(s) from membership in Indigenous communities through biased federal acknowledgement processes, anti-Black racism within Indigenous and white communities, the legacy of Indigenous enslavement of Black people(s), the erasure of Indigenous and Black histories from K-12 and university curriculums, the use of Black slave labor to replace Indigenous labor in many geographies, anti-Indigeneity within settler-colonial societies, and the participation of Black Buffalo soldiers in the expansion of the imperial frontier and genocide of Indigenous peoples (Klopotek 2011; Holland and Miles 2006). Within academic scholarship, the popular, yet contested, positioning of Black people(s) as slave-settlers within settler/native binaries also flattens the complexity of Black-Indian relations and contributes to misunderstandings and stereotypical representations of such multifaceted relationships (Holland and Miles 2006). Nonetheless, Black and Indigenous people(s) continue to share families, geographies, and struggles for resistance in the past, present, and future. Emerging Black-Native scholarship

fortunately holds the potential to innovatively theorize politics of solidarity between Indigenous, Black, and Creole people(s) (Mays 2021; Prud'homme-Cranford, Barthé, and Jolivéte 2021). Critical theories of Indigeneity, creolization, and racialization finally unpack productive tensions within strategic multiethnic coalitions such as Gulf South Rising and provide conceptual tools to grapple with issues of sovereignty and self-determination within multi-racial environmental organizing (Cantzler and Huynh 2016; Vickery and Hunter 2016).

Feminist scholars lastly discuss politics of refusal and politics of abolition amongst Black and Indigenous race-radical women who reject the sovereignty of the state and necropolitical logics which relegate communities of color to sacrifice zones; (we) also critique the criminal collusion of the state with corporate interests to the detriment of Black and Indigenous self-determination (Palacios 2016). In fact, the growth, wealth, and prosperity of plantation economies is directly tied to the othering, policing, and hyper-sexualization of Black and Indigenous women, particularly othermothers and caretakers. Decrying the “interlocking nature of interpersonal, sexual, and carceral state violence”, Palacios (2016:141) moreover asserts that any “race-radical feminist praxis is inherently and primarily pedagogical” (Palacios 2016: 151). Nevertheless, there is a need for better identification(s) of U.S.-based Black and Indigenous women’s grassroots initiatives for community well-being, our (her)stories of resistance, and our spheres of influence within regional, federal, and international climate policy (Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson 2011; Patterson 2009; Bowles 2006; Kaalund 2004; Mann 2011; D. E. Taylor 1997).

BIWOC Solidarity: Unpacking Women of Color’s Environmental Organizing

According to Black feminist and reproductive justice advocate Loretta Ross, the phrase *women of color* was coined after the 1977 National Women’s Conference by the Black Women’s Agenda. *Women of color*⁷, a conceptual tool of solidarity, enabled the Black Women’s Agenda to actively name themselves in opposition to white women’s issues, and build multiethnic coalitions; *women of color* as a conceptual frame of solidarity also evolved to refer to the experiences of Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Native, and Asian women in both the Global North and South, with a keen focus on how colonialism, imperialism, and globalization oppress women’s everyday lives (Castaneda 1992; J. J. King 2011). Scholarship on women of color furthermore confronted the exclusion of non-white women in Western women’s studies programs and associated feminist theory. Women of color activists later fought to center gender, race, sexual, and class oppression within their own communities and organizations; women of color critiqued ideologies produced within women’s studies departments that centered the experiences of middle-class white women and ideologies produced within ethnic studies departments that centered the experiences of men of color. The 1980s and 1990s thus marked the flourishing of academic writings and creative collections produced by critical women of color, as well as a focus on multicultural and mestiza frameworks (Castaneda 1992). In tandem with the rise of the environmental justice movement throughout the 1980s and 90s, women of color resisted gendered and racialized environmental violence through environmental organizing.

Although women of color comprise 60-80% of grassroots organizations and are the “movers and shakers” in environmental justice struggles, women of color are often underrepresented in

⁷ Women of color grew in popularity after the 1960s and 1970s. Women in the third world liberation movement specifically critiqued the erasures embedded within the “universal woman” framework and advocated for more intersectional analysis (Castaneda 1992).

environmental planning and policy; until recently, our contributions to Western environmental thought and environmental organizing were obscured and devalued (Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson 2011; Kaalund 2004; D. E. Taylor 1997; Rainey and Johnson 2009; Gaard 2015). Nevertheless, many women of color developed faith-based and volunteer-based community organizations to critique exclusionary processes within mainstream environmental organizations (Rainey and Johnson 2009). Long term scholar-activist Dr. Valerie Ann Johnson, for example, documents the invaluable role of spiritual Black women in rural southern environmental struggles (Kaalund 2004). Her holistic framing of Black women's environmental activism opposes dominant frameworks that position women of color as primarily victims to social inequality (Kaalund 2004; Smith-Cavros 2006). Waldron (2018) similarly discusses racial and gendered forms of environmental violence that target Black and Indigenous women in Canada and links pollution burdens, reproductive harms, and state-corporate crime; her critique of the settler/Indigenous binary moreover unsettles narrow understandings of environmental violence (Waldron 2018). It is thus important that women of color's often marginalized ecological knowledge and institutional memory be included within relevant climate adaptation strategies, environmental curricula, and futuristic imaginings of energy democracy.

Environmental Harms and State-Corporate Crime

What counts as an environmental harm or victimization is shaped by positionality, epistemological and methodological commitments, and understanding of legal and human rights theory. Environmental harms are nevertheless created by intentional action and the failure to prevent or address ongoing ecological violence; according to White (2009), environmental harms manifest as corruption, unapologetic resource depletion, misappropriation of public funds, unequal and inadequate enforcement of environmental laws and policies, injury, exposure to pollutants, as well as denial or covering up of wrongdoing. The alignment of state and corporate interests via cooperation, collusion, or corruption likewise contributes to premature death and environmental victimization despite rationalization or denial on the part of industrial and public officials (Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018; R. White 2009). While it is easy for criminologists to understand violations of the Clean Water Act or Clean Air Act as environmental crimes, it is still more difficult for criminologists to identify negligence on the part of corporate entities (that do not technically violate existing laws) as examples of environmental crime.

Fortunately, green criminologists embrace a more expansive definition of environmental crime to include various types of ecological violence and victimization that harm people, land, and nonhuman species (Ozimy and Jarrell 2017; Zilney, McGurrin, and Zahran 2006). Corporate environmental violence thus includes regulatory negligence, the production and exporting of hazardous waste by multinational corporations from the Global North to the Global South, the pursuit of profits over people's health, and disregard for "willful violations of health, safety, and environmental laws" (Zilney, McGurrin, and Zahran 2006: 58). Moreover, "the lobbying of political candidates, Congress, and federal and state regulators have not only contributed to billions of dollars in corporate subsidies, exemptions, and tax havens but have also influenced the creation, monitoring, and enforcement of consumer and environmental protection laws designed to hold corporate offenders accountable for their violations" (Zilney, McGurrin, and Zahran 2006: 56-57). Gilmore (2002) further highlights how the production of toxic geographies is evidence of both state failure and state building; the state is thus a *contributor* and *regulator* of environmental crime. Finally, many feminist criminologists have identified ecofeminism as

potentially important framework for shaping green criminological research; most green criminologists have yet to substantially elaborate or develop an intellectually rigorous ecofeminist green criminology (Lynch 2018; Wonders and Danner 2015).

Analytical Frameworks

My dissertation employs an ecowomanist and feminist activist analytical framework to document Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women's everyday resistance to environmental violence and state corporate crime (Harris 2017; D.-A. Davis and Craven 2011; Roberts-Gregory 2021; Johansson and Vinthagen 2020; Waldron 2018). I also frame my analysis using feminist political ecology (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996; Mollett and Faria 2013) and Black feminist standpoint theories (Hill Collins 2000).

Black Feminist Standpoint Theory and Feminist Political Ecology

Black feminist standpoint theory (Hill Collins 2000) acknowledges that everyone's unique lived experience shape one's perspective; in addition, one's subjective knowledge can be used to create transformative change. Theorization of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) and multiple jeopardy (D. K. King 1988) concretizes the interrelatedness of all oppression and the transformative potential of politics of solidarity (Lorde 1993). Black feminist theories also complement understandings of feminist objectivity and women's relationship(s) to nature found within ecofeminism and feminist epistemology. For example, Donna Haraway (1988) theorizes the need for at times contradictory, partial perspectives that derive from situated knowledges; ecofeminists furthermore analyze women's relationship to land and reproduction through the "double subordination of women and nature" thesis (i.e., racial capitalist patriarchy creates conditions that lead to women's subordination and, via the feminization of the earth, environmental degradation) (Haraway 1988; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996; Harcourt and Nelson 2015; Merchant 2003; Plumwood 2008; Shiva 2012; Harris 2016; Gorecki 2021).

Feminist political ecology moreover stands at the intersection of feminist studies, cultural ecology, and political economy (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996). As a methodological framework, feminist political ecology critically interrogates environmental practices and women's uneven access to and control over natural resources. Historically positioned at the nexus of gender and development, feminist political ecology centers gendered ecological knowledge and gendered experiences with collective survival, as well as how women's environmentalism and grassroots organizing redefine what counts as environmental problems. Feminist political ecology moreover links micro and macro approaches that illustrate "gender as a system structuring power relations" (Gaard 2015: 22) and highlights how gender and queer sexualities are ignored in most environmental justice research. Finally, feminist political ecology provides the necessary theoretical tools to critically interrogate barriers and opportunities for women of color to participate equitably in local environmental decision-making while employing an "ethic of care" to fight for community survival (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996; Belsky 2002).

Critical Environmental Justice: An Approach and Praxis

Critical environmental justice, the next wave of environmental justice scholar-activism, encourages a radical critique of the state in opposition to collaborative and reformist

relationships with the state and corporations. It also draws parallels between the othering of bodies and communities seen as expendable and the subsequent disposability of *more-than-human* kin. Critical environmental justice likewise builds upon the historical legacy of anti-toxics and environmental racism scholarship, especially statistical and legal research which investigates whether race or class predict proximity to hazardous waste, differential vulnerability to disaster, and the now irrelevant “chicken or egg” debate i.e. whether people or polluting industries arrived first to toxic communities (Pulido 1996; D. E. Taylor 2014; Mohai, Pellow, and Timmons Roberts 2009; Bullard and Wright 2012). Finally, critical environmental justice scholars encourage multi-disciplinary, multi-scalar, intersectional, non-speciesist, activist-oriented, and transformative methodological and epistemological approaches to environmental research; (we) also maintain intellectual ties to anarchists, ecofeminists, criminologists, critical race theorists, and political ecologists (Pellow 2016).

According to critical environmental justice scholars, environmental injustice is thus redefined as state-sanctioned and corporate facilitated racial and gendered violence. Environmental justice is likewise reframed as efforts to radically reimagine political possibilities in sacrifice zones and toxic communities, decolonize masculinist relationships with ecology, and fiercely love and care for expendable people(s) and vernacular BIPOC places. Critical environmental justice similarly aims to prevent premature death, disease, and disposability (W. J. Wright 2018; Pellow 2016; Pulido and De Lara 2018; Davies 2019). Critical environmental justice scholars furthermore partner with grassroots organizations and utilize engaged, collaborative, and participatory approaches (i.e., participatory mapping, toxic tours, biomonitoring, citizen science, photovoice, community arts, community organizing, and storytelling) (Raphael 2019). Finally, traditional environmental justice scholarship aims to manifest procedural, distributional, process, restorative, and transformational justice (Raphael 2019). Critical environmental justice scholarship, in contrast, “extends beyond questions of distribution to incorporate consideration of theory and the ways that gender, sexuality, and other categories of difference shape EJ struggles...by embracing interdisciplinarity and methodologies and epistemologies including and beyond the social sciences” (Pellow 2016: 223).

Engaged Anthropology and Multi-Sited Environmental Ethnography

According to Low and Merry (2010: S204), North American anthropology increasingly turned its’ eye towards engagement and activism during the 20th and 21st centuries. Engaged and activist anthropologists today experiment with a multitude of practices including “(1) sharing and support, (2) teaching and public education, (3) social critique, (4) collaboration, (5) advocacy, and (6) activism.” Service-learning, internship, and civic engagement courses also set engaged anthropology apart from non-applied forms of research and scientific investigation. Social critique and collaboration furthermore provide opportunities for engaged anthropologists to identify unequal power relations, expose everyday gendered, classed, and racialized violence, and involve communities in research conceptualization, design, data collection and analysis, and dissemination of findings. Engaged anthropologists continue to devise creative ways to balance commitments to academia with commitments to freedom struggles; (we) denounce the violence of apolitical ethnographies and believe that inaction is indeed political (Low and Merry 2010).

Multi-sited ethnographic research is furthermore known to be messy, iterative, nonlinear, time consuming, and emotionally exhaustive. Multi-sited climate ethnography also encourages

researchers to jump scales, follow community partners as they travel between grassroots, science, and policy spaces, and draw connections between the local and global (Crate 2011). Radical ethnographic approaches such as militant ethnography are moreover utilized by critical geographers and environmental anthropologists to bridge the gap between activism and academia, as well as investigate anarchist, anti-capitalist, and anti-authoritarian social movements (Russell 2015; Apoifis 2017). Feminist, Black, and public anthropologists finally advocate for more diverse methodologies, “insider anthropology”, and community-based research; we promote direct action, partial perspectives, multivocality, and co-constructed knowledge (Low and Merry 2010). Critical ethnographies ultimately create opportunities to address power inequalities between the researched and the researcher, validate techniques of embodiment, and center experiential knowledge (De Onis and Pezzullo 2018).

Positionality

I situate myself as a Black feminist political ecologist, critical environmental justice scholar-activist, ecowomanist methodologist, and ecofeminist climate justice educator. As a descendant of formerly enslaved Black sharecroppers and fieldhands, northern industrial workers, and urban gardeners, I also embody the migratory routes of the African American Great Migration. Raised by a single mom in urban cities in Essex County New Jersey, rural working-class communities in North Carolina, and public housing and shelters for women and children in wealthy but gentrified Arlington, Virginia, I carry first-hand knowledge of gendered, classed, and racial oppression. I am a Black woman and woman of color with personal and familial connections to three environmental justice communities. Nevertheless, I use these adverse experiences to inspire my pursuit of higher education and feminist climate justice; in fact, I graduated with a BA in Sociology, Anthropology, & Environmental Science from Spelman College. I will also be the first in my family to obtain a PhD in Environmental, Science, Policy & Management (ESPM) from UC Berkeley. Finally, I am a survivor of gendered poverty, sexualized domestic violence, housing instability, heteropatriarchy, and university violence through tenure denial. All these identities shape my epistemic and methodological choices as a feminist scholar-activist.

The conceptualization of my doctoral project was also influenced by methodological and ethical lessons learned during prior ethnobotany, participatory action research (PAR), and community geography research experiences for undergraduates (REUs). For example, I worked with Indigenous communities in Gulf Coast Louisiana in 2010 to identify medicinal and cultural plant species vulnerable to sea level rise. In 2013, I worked with Black communities in Southwest Atlanta to identify barriers to urban greenspace accessibility and usage. I also worked with mentors associated with the Significant Opportunities in Atmospheric Research & Science (SOARS) program at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), the University of New Orleans Center for Hazards Assessment, Response & Technology (UNO-CHART), and later the Lowlander Center⁸. My various mentors, working as environmental justice advocates, environmental anthropologists, rural and environmental sociologists, and community geographers, encouraged me to situate myself in my research, critically reflect on my personal and political connections to my field sites (i.e., Gulf Coast Louisiana), and consider interviewing women who worked in oil and gas.

Despite both external and internal validation, my initial years of fieldwork were still terrifying,

⁸ The Lowlander Center is an environmental justice education, research, and advocacy nonprofit.

confusing, traumatic, and emotionally draining. My mother often fussed at me and worried about my potential exposure to carcinogens when I attended community meetings along the river parishes known as Cancer Alley (i.e., Death Alley). It was likewise difficult to establish rapport with Black and Indigenous women when I centered my university credentials and employed an objective, analytical approach. I eventually realized I needed to radically revisit my methodologies, do research differently, and center my embodied knowledge. After salsa dancing with petroleum engineers and hiking with environmental scientists who formerly worked for oil and gas, my project evolved to focus on how Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women navigate contradictory relationships with energy and petrochemical industries, resist environmental violence, and imagine a just transition to fossil fuel *freeish* futures. I also began to question the utility of resiliency frameworks and explore the extent to which Gulf Black and Indigenous women embrace and resist self-identification with environmental activism and advocacy.

Over time, reflexive (auto)ethnographic writing has allowed me to quilt together disparate strands of feminist scholar-educator-activism into a cohesive and theoretically rigorous doctoral project. I ultimately theorize my learning journey as a Black feminist environmentalist to gain closure on a decade of research, emotional turmoil, and real-time “adulthood”. For example, it was extremely difficult to maintain focus on data analysis and writing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While I watch loved ones pass away without the opportunity for final goodbyes or rites, ecowomanist and embodied writing practices allowed me to process my grief, confusion, and anger. When I struggled to discover and hone an authentic voice as an (auto)ethnographic writer, I remembered my former advisor Dr. Carolyn Finney’s advice to speak “my own tongue”. She encouraged me to never question whether I belonged in academia. Her wisdom continues to inspire me to use feminist activist methods to trouble superficial lines between the personal and the political within environmental science & studies (Roberts-Gregory 2020c).

Research Questions

My feminist scholar-activist research aims to identify barriers and opportunities for Black and Indigenous women in Louisiana river and bayou parishes to organize around environmental justice, resist racial capitalist climate patriarchy (Gorecki 2021), and shape energy policy.

R1: How do Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women navigate contradictory relationships with energy and petrochemical industries?

R2: How do Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women resist environmental violence and state-corporate crime?

- How do (we) rearticulate the politics of expendability and disposability? How do we perform the politics of indispensability?

R3: How do Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous (re)imagine a just transition to fossil fuel *freeish* futures?

- What are (our) solutions for sustainability, adaptation, and “resilience”?

I research also explores how Gulf Coast women of color engage youth through feminist environmental curricula, communicate climate science in politically fraught environments, and

do the “work” of environmental, energy, and climate justice whether they self-identify as activists, educators, or environmentalists. Given the history of gendered racial violence in Louisiana, my project additionally asks: *How are women of color, particularly Black and Indigenous women, uniquely impacted by changing climate, land loss, pollution, epistemic injustice, and rising seas? What role(s) do women of color play in local environmental politics? How do pleasure, desire, and the erotic inform the ways in which frontline communities organize around the violence of toxicity, displacement, disaster capitalism, land loss, health disparities, and COVID-19? What is ecowomanist (auto)ethnography and how might feminist activist methodologies promote healing in southern geographies dominated by plantations, petrochemicals, and pollution? Most importantly, what solutions do Gulf Coast women of color imagine and design for feminist abolitionist climate justice?*

Methodology

From 2017-2021, I conducted (auto)ethnographic and feminist activist research as an ecowomanist educator and climate justice scholar-activist in the Greater New Orleans region. I employed Black feminist (auto)ethnography (Griffin 2012; McClaurin 2001), participant observation, semi-structured and conversational interviews, and multi-sited ethnography to investigate how Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women navigate contradictory relationships with energy and petrochemical industries, resist environmental violence, and promote climate and energy solutions. I also co-managed and developed environmental curriculum for the DSCEJ⁹ Gulf Equity Water Corps Project and taught feminist environmental justice and sustainable development courses for Bard Early College New Orleans (BECNO), Tulane University, and the University for Peace in Costa Rica. I later created curricular resources and facilitated a workshop for the C40 and City of New Orleans Mayor’s Office for Sustainability and Resilience Women4Climate Mentorship Program. Finally, I co-founded the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal, joined the advisory board for the HIVE Fund for Climate & Gender Justice, participated in a 2021 Sierra Club and Women’s Earth Alliance (WEA) U.S. Accelerator for Women Grassroots Environmental Leaders, and supported the UNFCCC¹⁰ Women and Gender Constituency at COP25 in Madrid and COP26 in Glasgow.

Fieldwork

In 2017, I successfully passed my qualifying exam, advanced to candidacy, and completed my human subjects (IRB) application. I later relocated from California to New York to intern with the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA) and Dr. Dorceta Taylor as a University of Michigan Environmental Fellow. My fellowship at the EGA Harlem office ultimately enabled me to better understand contradictions within environmental philanthropy; I also gained a greater appreciation for the role of environmental grantmakers in funding movements for environmental, energy, and climate justice. After attending the UPROSE Climate Justice Youth Summit and the Women and Climate Change Workshop for the NY Human Rights Funders Network Convening, I analytically connected women of color’s mentorship of youth and youth of color’s subsequent climate activism.

⁹⁹ Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ)

¹⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

After successfully completing my EGA internship, I relocated to the gentrifying Marigny neighborhood (9th ward) of Bvlbancha (i.e., New Orleans) on the outskirts of the touristy French Quarter. I relocated to Orleans parish so that I would a) have access to public transportation and feel safer as a woman of color without a car and b) live near my on-again, off-again boyfriend's place of unemployment (i.e., the Blue Nile live music bar) on Frenchmen Street¹¹. I also unsuccessfully applied for fieldwork grants and briefly provided research support to a NAACP project that interviewed women's organizations on best practices to integrate gender justice and climate justice. Once I initiated contact with local environmental justice groups using social media, I began to develop relationships with multi-racial activists, advocates, and community organizers. I eventually joined 350 New Orleans, the Climate Reality Leadership Project, the Coalition Against Death Alley (CADA), and the Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans.

I furthermore carpooled with activists from 350 New Orleans, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, the Alliance for Affordable Energy, and the New Orleans People's Assembly to community events, commemorations, and marches along Louisiana's riverine and bayou parishes. These events included, for example, the Louisiana NAACP Environmental Climate Justice Sea-level Rise Training at Southern University in Baton Rouge, the GCCLP #Katrina13: Honoring Women & the Sacred Feminine in Climate Disaster Symposium at UNO in New Orleans, the DSCEJ HBCU Climate Change Conference in New Orleans, and the GCCLP Black and Native Sacred Water Pilgrimage down the Mississippi River. To build rapport with grassroots organizers resisting Entergy's astroturfing scandal, concerned citizens involved in raising awareness of petrochemical pollution and political corruption in Cancer Alley (i.e., Death Alley), and local water protectors fighting the Bayou Bridge Pipeline, I attended direct action planning meetings, community forums, a water protector camp, the State of the Coast and HBCU Climate Change conferences, policy workshops on gender and climate change, net metering and renewable portfolio standards meetings, and rallies/protests to support CADA.

Data Analysis

I ultimately recruited a purposive sample of Black and Indigenous women to interview; I used snowball sampling and my personal contacts to identify Black and Indigenous women involved in grassroots organizing for environmental, energy, and climate justice, coastal resilience and disaster planning, environmental grantmaking, STEM and environmental education, and climate policy. I collected iterative ethnographic data as I carpooled between riverine and bayou communities in southeast Louisiana. I also analyzed digital content such as websites, YouTube videos, policy documents, and public Facebook posts produced by Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women to better explicate strands of emergent ecowomanist and anti-resilient environmental politics (Pellow 2016; Baker 2019; Harris 2017). I used Otter.ai speech to text transcription software and Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software, as well as spreadsheets and tables, to manage large qualitative datasets. I likewise kept clearly organized digital fieldnotes that were backed up on Microsoft OneNote and a password protected computer. I finally analyzed qualitative data through descriptive data analysis (i.e., categorization) and theoretical data analysis (i.e., connecting ideas and making meaning).

¹¹ When I first moved to New Orleans, I dated a trombone player and brass band musician from the Desire neighborhood in New Orleans. I'm forever grateful for his introduction to native New Orleanian culture.

Since I am a southern woman of color, but am not originally from Louisiana, I constantly switched between etic and emic perspectives. Switching between etic and emic perspectives served as a constant validity check. I also looked for consistencies and inconsistencies in narratives as patterns emerged and compared my interview data with data obtained from other sources to ensure validity. Data triangulation was extremely helpful because I understand what people say they do and what people actually do are very different (Hesse-Biber 2014; Burns and Walker 2005; McClaurin 2001). I lastly used hierarchy trees and metaphors to elucidate abstract concepts and their interrelationships (as well as build theory from the ground up) and connected emerging theoretical insights gleaned from my research to theories discussed in critical environmental justice, feminist political ecology, and climate change anthropology literature. I ultimately used my feminist data analysis to challenge extractive research practices within petrocolonial and plantation geographies.

Chapter Roadmap

My dissertation explores the role of feminist activist research and scholar-educator-activism in realizing the abolitionist aims of critical environmental justice and building local and international solidarity around feminist climate justice. I creatively developed ecowomanist (auto)ethnography to document, theorize, and analyze Gulf Coast women of color's everyday strategies of resistance and futuristic imaginings for environmental, energy, and climate justice.

My first chapter, "Ecowomanist (Auto)Ethnography (EWAE): A Feminist Activist Methodological Intervention for Critical Environmental, Climate, and Energy Justice", introduces the ethics, curatives, and praxis of ecowomanist (auto)ethnography (EWAE). I argue that environmental science & studies only superficially centers embodied, affective, and spiritual knowledge within ecological research; it moreover insufficiently critiques Eurocentric, positivist, and masculinist forms of knowledge production. EWAE, by contrast, answers a growing methodological call for critical environmental justice and feminist abolition ecologies, facilitates research as healing, and furthers a long tradition of BIPOC counternarratives.

My second chapter, "Ecowomanist Pedagogy: The Promises and Perils of Feminist Scholar-Educator-Activism", reveals the role of ecofeminist/ecowomanist pedagogies and feminist scholar-educator-activism in inspiring youth climate action and facilitating decolonial processes of unlearning, co-learning, and re-learning. I argue that feminist climate justice pedagogies promote political conscientization using an intersectional lens, disrupts neoliberal schooling and tokenistic youth engagement, and addresses cyberviolence and students' implicit biases through feminist accountability. Most importantly, ecofeminist/ecowomanist pedagogies encourage critical landscape literacy and care-centered climate communication.

My third chapter, "Everyday Resistance to Louisiana State Corporate Crime: Black and Indigenous Women Visioning Abolitionist Futures and Feminist Ecologies of Anti-Resilience" narrates Louisiana's history of political corruption and identifies Black and Indigenous women's everyday acts of refusal, recovery, rest, rejection, restoration, and reimagining (R⁶) within petrocolonial geographies. Gendered strategies of everyday resistance not only center the abolitionist and visionary dreams of Gulf Coast women of color but also illuminate the contradictory realities of fossil fuel dependence and anti-resilient energy modernization. Despite

toxic entanglements, Black and Indigenous women demand energy and climate reparations and accountability from extractive industries in their pursuit of a just transition to fossil fuel freeish futures.

Finally, I use my conclusion chapter to reflect on my epistemic journey throughout my dissertation process and highlight broader impacts and future directions for my scholar-educator-activism. I also provide an overview of how feminist activist and ecowomanist methodologies innovate epistemic and intellectual debates within critical environmental justice, feminist political ecology, and climate change anthropology. I conclude with suggestions for how to advance feminist care economies in the post-COVID political landscape and build international solidarity through the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal. Broader impacts of my current work include increasing opportunities for women of color to shape climate policy, amplifying the intellectual genius of Black and Indigenous women advocating for sustainability and healing justice, and resisting the devaluation of life in sacrifice zones. I ultimately hope to increase the representation of women and youth of color in environmental decision-making and reimagine Black and Indigenous petrocolonial geographies as feminist and kin-centric abolition ecologies.

Chapter 1

Ecowomanist (Auto)Ethnography (EWAE): A Feminist Activist Methodological Intervention for Critical Environmental, Climate, and Energy Justice

Frances Roberts-Gregory

Abstract

Feminist activist scholarship at the intersection of environmental, climate, and energy justice has grown substantially in recent years, particularly amongst a new generation of scholars who embrace interdisciplinary, critical, decolonial, queer, and narrative approaches to environmental science & studies (ESS). Nevertheless, mainstream ESS research only superficially centers embodied and spiritual knowledge, insufficiently critiques Eurocentric and masculinist forms of knowledge production, and rarely investigates methodological approaches for ecological justice developed specifically by and for women of color. Furthermore, very few environmental studies proactively address research fatigue and translation exhaustion within frontline communities, and even fewer studies acknowledge burnout, eco-anxiety, and vicarious traumatization amongst Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) ESS researchers. As part methodological intervention and part manifesto, I introduce the ethics, curatives, and praxis of ecowomanist (auto)ethnography (EWAE). EWAE radically addresses epistemological and ontological omissions commonly found within positivist ESS research as well as shallow methodological engagements with embodiment, affect, spirituality, and subjectivity. EWAE similarly encourages recovery of ecomemories and feminist partial perspective, thus providing analytical tools to reflexively examine environmental (her/their/his)stories and center embodied ecowomanist standpoint(s). I finally focus on EWAE's potential to facilitate *research as healing* in opposition to research as emotional violence and epistemic extraction. Feminist activist approaches to environmental research such as EWAE ultimately answer a growing methodological call for feminist abolition ecologies in relation to the ethnographic crisis of representation, and further a long tradition of Black feminism's minor empiricism, polyvocality, and BIPOC counter narratives.

Introduction

Research played a key role in the growth of the environmental justice movement. Where research did not exist to substantiate claims being made by grassroots environmental groups, people of color and other activists conducted research that validated the claims.

- Dorceta Taylor (1997), *Women of Color, Environmental Justice, and Ecofeminism*, p. 44

Environmental science & studies (ESS), despite the field's demonstrated embrace of interdisciplinarity and mixed (i.e., qualitative + quantitative) methodologies, continues to reckon with a lack of diversity in scholars, the marginalization of politically radical scholarship, and the underdevelopment of feminist approaches to science communication (Lloro-Bidart and Finewood 2018; Ruf 2020). This crisis in embodiment, politics, and communicative creativity, as well as resistance to humanistic, interpretative, and narrative analytical approaches, reflects the field's insecure positioning in a hierarchy of "hard" sciences as well as positivist ontological,

epistemological, and methodological leanings. Even participatory and applied ESS scholarship fetishizes masculinist approaches to empiricism, theory building, and quantification, and problematically endeavors to collaborate with “bodies of difference” while disciplining “ecological others” (Jaquette Ray 2013; Nygreen 2009). Finally, most normative approaches to ESS research and fieldwork reify Cartesian mind/body splits, fail to theorize the role of affect, polyvocality, and trauma on scientific research findings, and ignore phenomenological interventions from marginalized researchers (Ellingson 2017; Lloro-Bidart and Finewood 2018). These are my/our/their conclusions after developing feminist partial perspectives¹² and excavating painful ecomemories as an exhausted Black feminist political ecologist.

Whether the positivist status quo within ESS, with its’ concomitant epistemic hubris and paradoxical yearning for respect within hierarchies of STEM, should continue unperturbed is a matter for philosophical and political debate. Nevertheless, ESS requires methodological intervention if, we, concerned environmental and ecological scientists, hope to combat rampant environmental degradation, ongoing fossil fuel extraction and petro-colonialism, and devastating global pandemics. In fact, unnatural disasters such as COVID-19 exacerbate racialized and gendered health disparities, worsen (and are worsened by) social inequality, and increase public awareness of toxic air that intensifies morbidities and mortalities within low income communities of color (Wilson et al. 2020; T. Daniel and Dolan 2020). Frontline communities of color are furthermore overburdened with environmental pollution, suffer the brunt of harm from greenhouse gas emissions and extreme weather events, and reside in energy sacrifice zones (Maldonado 2019). Consequently, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) cautions that without swift, coordinated action and intervention from a multitude of transnational political actors, we will all suffer (albeit at different rates and scales due to the intersections of our identities) from a lack of sustainability, livability, and climate resiliency within the next ten years (Berwyn 2019).

Considering the urgent need for environmental action, collaboration, and accessible science communication, feminist activist researchers play an increasingly important role in reimagining fossil fuel free-*ish* futures and healing current and future generations of human and more-than-human kin (Roberts-Gregory 2021). For example, feminist and critical ESS researchers currently critique the extractive nature of positivist and androcentric helicopter research¹³, elucidate research fatigue and translation exhaustion¹⁴ within over-researched sacrifice zones, identify

¹² Feminist partial perspective (Haraway 1988) refers to an understanding that all knowledge is embodied, situated in time and space, and therefore partial; partial knowledges from multiple, critical, split, contradictory, and limited locations promise to manifest feminist objectivity and feminist politics of solidarity.

¹³ Helicopter research is a problematic neocolonial research model that encourages wealthier, better resourced researchers to parachute into underdeveloped communities or countries to build scientific careers. Helicopter researchers extract information, analyze data, and publish results with little to no involvement from local communities or scientists.

¹⁴ Research fatigue occurs when over-researched communities become tired of participating in research and no longer wish to engage in further research because past research projects did little to benefit their communities. According to Indigenous scholar Dr. Twyla Baker, translation exhaustion is experienced by BIPOC communities when they must constantly provide historical and contemporary context on their struggles to community outsiders before they can begin the actual work of addressing and healing oppression.

problematic representations in ethnographic narratives that worsen epistemic injustice, and bemoan dishonest ESS research that unrealistically promises to improve the material and affective conditions of frontline and fenceline communities (Long et al. 2015; Roberts-Gregory 2020b; L. T. Smith 2012; Maldonado 2019; McClaurin 2001; Shange 2019; Lloro-Bidart and Finewood 2018). Feminist climate researchers furthermore call for stronger gender analysis within environmental sciences and greater support for feminist climate research within the social sciences (Macgregor 2010). Fortunately, a growing chorus of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) scholar-activists and allied feminist researchers currently rethink ESS methodologies and demand space for critical, creative, spiritual, and narrative approaches within interdisciplinary ecological research (Vaccaro, Smith, and Aswani 2010; Lloro-Bidart and Finewood 2018; de Onís and Pezzullo 2017; Harris 2017).

I consequently champion ecowomanist (auto)ethnography (EWAE) as one possible epistemological and methodological intervention. Guided by longstanding and varied traditions within decolonizing methodologies and feminist activist research, EWAE draws upon the strengths and liberatory insights of Harris' ecowomanist spiral method, critical environmental, climate, and energy justice studies, autoethnographic storytelling as method and counter narrative, and the principles of community geography (Harris 2017; de Onís and Pezzullo 2017; Shannon et al. 2020; Baker 2021; Pellow 2016). As feminist activist intervention, EWAE also uniquely embraces 1) embodied, affective, and spiritual knowledge, 2) positively addresses vicarious traumatization, burnout, and eco-anxiety experienced by BIPOC researchers during fieldwork, and 3) aims to manifest a more environmentally justice future for all (Roberts-Gregory 2021; 2020b; Ellingson 2017; Pihkala 2020; Head and Harada 2017; Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017).

By embracing more autoethnographic approaches, critical ESS scholars redefine the methodological boundaries of ecological justice scholarship. They ultimately demand new tools, strategies, techniques, perspectives, and approaches for human liberation and earth justice (Haraway 1988; Roberts-Gregory 2021; de Onís and Pezzullo 2017; Sollund 2017). The following article thus outlines the distinguishing characteristics of EWAE, specifically its' epistemological harmonies, methodological praxis, ethical meditations, and curative possibilities. I likewise utilize EWAE to narrate my evolution into a Black feminist climate activist, environmental educator, and digital griot with a methodological focus on *research as healing*. Finally, I lovingly draw upon a long tradition of Black feminism's minor empiricism and growing call for abolition ecologies to offer solutions for research fatigue and translation exhaustion, center polyvocality, and make space for ethnographic refusal (Andrews 2015; Heynen and Ybarra 2021; Shange 2019; Tuck and Yang 2014). EWAE ultimately allows me, an exhausted Black feminist political ecologist, to explore analytical tools to better relations between self, community, and field as feminist action, while intentionally cultivating Black girl

reliability, humor, and ethnographic sincerity¹⁵ (Roberts-Gregory 2020b; Hill 2018; Harris 2017; J. L. Jackson 2010).

Epistemological and Methodological Harmonies

EWAE draws inspiration from many radical and liberatory traditions within the social, environmental, and geographical sciences. These traditions include feminist climate research (Macgregor 2010), feminist science studies (Haraway 1988), feminist activist research (Craven and Davis 2013), and feminist political ecology (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996). It also includes community geography (Shannon et al. 2020), Black feminist anthropology (McClaurin 2001), Black feminism's minor empiricism (Andrews 2015), Black queer feminist ecology (Bowmani 2021), and ecowomanist methodology (Harris 2017). Finally, EWAE is inspired by critical environmental, climate, and energy justice studies (Stephens 2020; Baker 2021; Pellow 2016; Sze 2020), Indigenous methodologies (L. T. Smith 2012; Dawson, Toombs, and Mushquash 2017), critical autoethnography (Boylorn and Orbe 2014; Jones, Adams, and Ellis 2016), environmental and climate storytelling (Moezzi, Janda, and Rotmann 2017; Wiebe 2019), and abolition ecologies (Ranganathan and Bratman 2019; Heynen and Ybarra 2021). Although all these analytical and methodological threads are important for the development of EWAE's epistemological and methodological harmonies, for the purpose of this article, I will focus primarily on the role of a) critical and feminist approaches to environmental, climate, and energy justice, b) autoethnographic storytelling, and c) the principles of community geography. Critical and feminist approaches to environmental, climate, and energy justice scholarship provide an *exemplum perfectum* of new epistemological and methodological trends within ESS. Environmental justice and ecofeminist scholars like David Pellow, Dorceta Taylor, Julie Sze, and Greta Gaard encourage a new generation of environmental researchers to embrace intersectional, interdisciplinary, feminist, and multi-scalar analysis; in particular, they champion scholarship that a) moves beyond identity categories such as race and class to analyze gender, sexuality, and species, b) encourage anti-authoritarian approaches that acknowledge the role of ineffective governance and corporate cooptation in creating sacrifice zones, disposable communities, and toxic geographies, and c) acknowledge the problem of environmental racism (and sexism) as a form of state violence (Pellow 2016; Sze 2020; D. E. Taylor 2014; 1997; Gaard 2018). Other environmental studies researchers, feminist scholar activists, and communication professionals call for intersectional, interdisciplinary, autoethnographic, decolonial, queer, and feminist methodological approaches that foster engaged environmental scholarship (Lloro-Bidart and Finewood 2018; Raphael 2019; de Onís and Pezzullo 2017; Vickery and Hunter 2016; K. Whyte 2020; L. T. Smith 2012; Craven and Davis 2013; Snyder 2012).

Critical BIPOC researchers and allies likewise maintain that reform of our current energy system is not only highly suspect, unlikely, and practically impossible, but increasingly unethical. Instead, critical environmental social scientists advance the need for anti-oppressive, anti-racist, visionary, and anti-resilient systems transformation (Baker 2019; Lennon 2020; Stephens 2020;

¹⁵ Ethnographic sincerity, according to J.L. Jackson (2010), allows ethnographers to embrace vulnerability, reconcile incomplete expression, and negotiate uncertain ethnographic interactions, all while rejecting the fetishization of authenticity within anthropology.

Baker 2021). To illustrate, energy justice and legal scholar Shalanda Baker (2021) makes the case for transformational energy justice via anti-resilience measures that center BIPOC communities' right to choose to disconnect or connect to the power grid and share ownership of the energy system. Environmental anthropologist Myles Lennon similarly advocates for decolonized energy systems and energy research that acknowledges racial grief, eschews the fetishization of quantifiable metrics for "clean" energy that facilitate further racialized violence, and critiques utopic post-carbon and postcolonial amnesia inherent to renewable energy transitions and techno-centric sustainability solutions (Lennon 2020; 2017).

Within the environmental social sciences and natural sciences, a diversity of epistemologies, methodologies, and methods are similarly utilized to study human-environment interactions and challenge the positivist/subjectivist binary (Vaccaro, Smith, and Aswani 2010). Engaged, public service, and participatory approach to environmental justice research have similarly grown in popularity due to their methodological focus on reflexivity, co-production of knowledge and dialog, ethics, reciprocity, accountability, relevance for and collaboration with oppressed communities, reach to multiple audiences, and rigor in design, data collection, and analysis of "wicked" planning problems (Balazs and Morello-Frosch 2013; Raphael 2019; Rittel and Webber 1973). We also see growth in multi-sited environmental justice ethnographies and action research, a multimodal research approach which embraces messiness and iterative cycles of reflection, observation, and action (Herr and Anderson 2015; de Onís and Pezzullo 2017). Furthermore, multi-sited climate ethnographies allow researchers to jump scales, follow community partners as they travel between grassroots, science and policy spaces, and draw connections between the local and global (Crate 2011). Critical ethnographies that create opportunities for dialog to a) address power inequalities between the researched and researcher and b) center embodiment and experiential knowledge are similarly increasingly popular in environmental justice research (de Onís and Pezzullo 2017).

Community geography similarly provides a radical participatory praxis for engaged teaching, scholarship, and action (Shannon et al. 2020). Like EWAE, community geography values marginalized voices, experimentation, the need for intersectionality, accessible research findings, reciprocity, public scholarship (i.e., blogs, podcasts, creative writing, spatial analysis, videos, etc.) and, once again, messy research approaches. Community geography practitioners similarly engage in iterative cycles of action, reflection, and revision while maintaining and sustaining community-university partnerships (Shannon et al. 2020). Finally, community geographers critically interrogate their relationships to power, privilege, and oppression by reflecting on the power structures they represent and challenge, the resources that they bring to community partners, the heterogeneity of community, and the need to prepare for burnout during fieldwork. Community geographers take care to differentiate between research projects universities and scholars "want" and research projects communities "need" (Roberts-Gregory and Hawthorne 2016; Shannon et al. 2020).

Finally, Indigenous scholars, grassroots coalitions (i.e., the Climate Justice Alliance and the Indigenous Environmental Network), and climate communicators promote story-based narrative strategies to restructure public discourse, embrace subjectivity, and center the healing power of

embodied counter narratives. Some scholars, for example, note synergies between storytelling as Indigenous decolonial method and autoethnography as feminist method, particularly as it relates to strengthened intersubjectivity, interconnection, and respectful dialogue (Drawson, Toombs, and Mushquash 2017; L. T. Smith 2012; McClaurin 2001; Ettore 2017). Autoethnographic storytelling, within feminist and Indigenous traditions, similarly disrupts Eurocentric knowledge claims, as well as human and more-than-human binaries. Finally, autoethnographic storytelling as feminist and Indigenous method has been used to tell more historically layered, emotionally laden, and politically provocative stories of self and culture that collapse Cartesian mind/body dualisms (Drawson, Toombs, and Mushquash 2017; Ettore 2017; McClaurin 2001).

EWAE as Praxis

EWAE, situated within a growing tradition of feminist activist ethnography, uses disruptive, improvisational, and embodied methods and writing practices to nurture intertextuality, mobilize counter storytelling, and interrogate intersectionality. In fact, feminist activist ethnography is “a project committed to documenting vivid experiences as it is impacted by gender, race, class, sexuality, and other aspects of participants’ lives” (Craven and Davis 2013: 1). Black feminist autoethnography furthermore enables “Black female academics to critically narrate the pride and pain of Black womanhood” and “self-reflexively explore everyday experiences as an “outsider within” (Griffin 2012: 138). Feminist activist research methodologies such as EWAE thus embrace experimentation, polyvocality, partial perspectives, and reflexivity to transform affective geographies and inspire social change. In the sections below, I discuss in greater detail the contributions of Black feminist autoethnography, Black feminist standpoints, Black feminism’s minor empiricism, ethnographic refusal, Black girl reliability, and ecowomanist methodology to EWAE as praxis.

Black Feminist Autoethnography

Black feminist autoethnography (BFA) with its focus on literary style and praxis, is equally parts evocative, analytical, oppositional, and performative (McClaurin 2001). BFA thrives on vulnerability, ambiguity, open-endedness, multiplicity, complexity, and politicization. It also reclaims voice and Black feminist representation by centering polyvocality, innovation, and political critique. Black feminist autoethnography similarly embraces the unruliness of embodiment through communal and self-analysis and lends itself to self-validation and anti-oppressive politics as a metric of rigor, dedication, sincerity, and trustworthiness. According to McClaurin (2001), BFA as theoretical frame and reflexive weapon takes seriously the importance of “simultaneous and multiple oppressions” that create the need for “practical activism” and draws heavily upon introspection, dialogue, and cultural mediation. Finally, Black feminist autoethnography utilizes ecomemories, Indigenous knowledge(s), artifacts, diary entries, (micro)blogging, interviews, and metaphors to construct creative and analytical feminist narratives of self and community. “From an environmental justice perspective, autoethnographies similarly aim to foreground authors’ own biases, limitations, and interconnections to better understand environmental injustices and justice” (de Onís and Pezzullo 2017: 232).

Black Feminist Standpoints

Black feminists maintain a long tradition of theorizing the interconnectedness of interlocking systems of oppression, identity politics, positionality, and methodology. For example, Black feminist standpoint theories (Hill Collins 2000) acknowledge that everyone's unique lived experiences shape partial perspectives; in addition, subjective knowledge can be used to create transformative change. Theorization of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) and multiple jeopardy (D. K. King 1988) also concretizes the interrelatedness of all oppression and the transformative potential of politics of solidarity (Lorde 1993). By focusing on the lived intersecting experiences of Blackness and womanhood, Black feminist standpoints likewise provide a counternarrative to the positivism, quantification, and datafication within mainstream social science. Black feminist standpoints set the stage for Black feminist anthropology and privilege embodied knowledge, indiscernibility, performance, and improvisation within a Black radical tradition (Andrews 2015).

Black Feminism's Minor Empiricism

In the spirit of Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Dunham, and other Black feminist progenitors, I use EWAE to play with the "spyglass of anthropology" and push back at the narrative and methodological conventions of positivist research. I likewise value what Lindsey Andrews (2015) describes as Black feminism's minor empiricism. According to Andrews (2015: 5), Black feminism's minor empiricism, grounded in the avant-garde anthropological scholarship of literary great Zora Neale Hurston and the intellectual tradition and unapologetic activism of the Combahee River Collective, rejects positivist and disinterested objectivity while embracing opacity, illegibility, and "experience as epistemological, as itself a form of empiricist thought." Black feminism's minor empiricism further functions as a counter practice to "dominant white and masculinist scientific and social scientific epistemologies of the mid-twentieth century" and instead focuses on the embodiment of sensation and performance of experience as a source of knowledge, resistance, and creativity (Andrews 2015: 3). Finally, Black feminism's minor empiricism cultivates alternative values such as improvisation, indiscernibility, and subjectivity through Black vernacular English and Black women's literary style to disrupt the consumptive violence of scientific racism. Black feminism's minor empiricism strategically refuses meaning making and the datafication of experience that continue to codify questionable scientific facts.

Ethnographic Refusal and Black Girl Reliability

Black, Indigenous, feminist, and queer methodologists finally theorize ethnographic refusal i.e. the right to refuse representation and disclosure of pain narratives by inverting settler-colonial logics, as well as the researcher's ethical choice to exclude sensitive, private, or controversial information from ethnographic manuscripts (Shange 2019; Simpson 2007; Tuck and Yang 2014). Ethnographic refusal as methodology acknowledges the limits of research to bring about liberation and sovereignty, tendency for research to cause harm and inflict violence, and opportunity for research to cultivate desire and other generative possibilities (Tuck and Yang 2014). Furthermore, Shange (2019: 4) makes the case for "Black girl methodology, an ethical mode of refusal both within and beyond the academy." Dominique C. Hill (2018) also discusses black girl reliability, an ethical and methodological orientation to better relations between Black feminist researchers and the women and girls in our communities. Black girl reliability requires that Black feminist researchers embrace evolving self-identities, join women of color collectives,

and practice ethnographic refusal as an ethic of care (Hill 2018). Black girl reliability also enables ethnographers to gift stories that “centers women’s bodily knowledge for its potential to carry layered stories that can be reworked and remixed ad infinitum to create new insights for analysis and liberation” (Roberts-Gregory 2020).

Ecowomanist Methodology

To further develop EWAE, I uniquely employed an autoethnographic lens to Harris’ (2017) ecowomanist “spiral” methodology. Spiral methodology, created specifically by and for Black women and other women of color, centers our solutions for ecological justice, sustainability, and climate change (Harris 2017). Spiral methodology’s seven interchangeable steps include:

1. Honoring Experience and Recovering Ecomemory
2. Critical Reflection on Experience and Ecomemory
3. Womanist Intersectional Analysis
4. Critical Examination of History, Spirituality, and Tradition
5. Engaging Transformation
6. Sharing Interfaith and Interdisciplinary Dialogue
7. Taking Action for Earth Justice: Teaching Ecowomanism

For more details on each step, see Appendix 2.

Operationalizing EWAE

EWAE is a feminist activist approach to multi-sited, multi-method, multi-register, multi-species, and multi-scalar community-based environmental research. As a liberatory and pedagogical approach within critical environmental, climate, and energy justice studies, EWAE draws upon Indigenous, queer, and femme wisdom to plan for seven generations, extend kin relations to all of creation, disrupt binaries, and finally promote social action, social transformation, and cyborg futures. Utilizing an iterative, spiral method and pedagogical praxis, EWAE likewise employs multi-generational ecomemories, embodied knowledge, and reflexive digital storytelling to increase critical landscape literacy, support political conscientization, and critique longstanding epistemic injustice within BIPOC communities.

Employed by unapologetically radical BIPOC researchers and allies, EWAE is likewise expansive, improvisational, visionary, and experimental, valuing methodological innovation, promiscuity, and bricolage over methodological purity and rigidity (Childers 2014). Since EWAE aims to address unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched, it encourages feminist, participatory, and Indigenous approaches to story recovery, counter narrative analysis, and science communication. It also centers the voices and environmental solutions of women, youth, and frontline communities on the margins of epistemic authority, and strives to reduce the gendered, classed, and racialized violence produced by reductionist, linear, masculinist, positivist, and colonial environmental research. EWAE is honest about the messiness of activist research and creates opportunity for promiscuous data analysis. In fact, promiscuous feminist analysis allows practitioners of EWAE to experiment with “an unruly approach to thinking about and engaging with empirical materials that is less interested in doing

it “right” and more interested in flexing, breaking, and blurring theoretical and analytic boundaries as needed to respond to the field” (Childers 2014: 819).

Autoethnographic Case Study

I am a Black feminist political ecologist, ecowomanist ethnographer, and feminist climate activist. I also describe myself as a survivor of academic, gendered, and sexual violence and as an interdisciplinary social scientist. Finally, I describe myself as a former positivist environmental scientist who is increasingly involved in climate policy through the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal Coalition (Roberts-Gregory 2021). Most importantly, I am the first in my family to graduate with a doctoral degree in Environmental Science, Policy, & Management from the University of California, Berkeley. The following autoethnographic narrative describes in greater analytical and methodological detail my own journey to Black girl reliability (Hill 2018) and the importance of EWAE as embodied feminist praxis. I likewise embrace the stance espoused by many Black feminist anthropologists that it is only through channeling one’s voice (i.e. talking back), and placing experiential knowledge at the center of one’s research praxis, that the process of decolonizing and healing knowledges can proceed (Griffin 2012; Hill Collins 2000; hooks 1989).

Opportunities for Disruption

From 2017-2021, I was the only Black woman (to my knowledge) conducting autoethnographic feminist activist research on environmental, climate, and energy justice in Gulf Coast Louisiana (Roberts-Gregory 2020b). I ultimately chose autoethnography as praxis to frame my feminist research endeavor because I wanted to disrupt the epistemological and methodological violence associated with masculinist, Eurocentric, extractive, and positivist environmental science methods. I also felt it was important to center my multifaceted positionality as an insider/outsider ethnographer since I am both a southern Black feminist environmental justice scholar-activist and a transplant to Louisiana. Finally, I did not want to contribute to problematic representations of Gulf Coast Indigenous communities and communities of color through methodologies and writing strategies that support helicopter research and superficial engagement with frontline communities (Roberts-Gregory 2020b). I desired to invert the ethnographic gaze inward as feminist intervention and methodological innovation. I eventually developed EWAE over the course of my fieldwork season by centering an embodied ecowomanist standpoint and making space for affect, partial perspective, ethnographic refusal, and reflexivity.

EWAE in Action

During my fieldwork season, I conducted participant observation as an ecowomanist educator in New Orleans and as a transnational feminist climate activist (Roberts-Gregory 2021). For example, I served as the project manager and curriculum developer for the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice Gulf Equity Water Corps Project to engage Louisiana and Texas youth around street flooding, sea level rise, and stormwater management. I also served as a resource developer and workshop facilitator for the C40 and City of New Orleans Women4Climate Mentorship Program and taught civic engagement, service learning, and feminist climate justice courses at Bard Early College New Orleans, Tulane University, and the University for Peace in Costa Rica. I likewise shadowed environmental activists involved in local environmental

struggles and conducted participant observation at the UNFCCC COP25 in Madrid as a steering committee member of the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal (Roberts-Gregory 2021). I finally conducted 50+ semi-structured, conversational-style interviews with Black and Indigenous women from Gulf Coast Louisiana who navigate contradictory relationships with energy & petrochemical industries, resist environmental racism, and imagine solutions for climate justice. Many of the women I interviewed were recruited from my own personal contacts working as an environmental educator and climate activist, and from referrals from other women of color and allies. Most interviews lasted anywhere from one to five hours and I offered \$25 to every individual I interviewed to thank them for sharing their time and knowledge with me. If any interlocuter declined the \$25 gift, I offered to donate the money to a charity or activist organization of their choosing (Roberts-Gregory 2021; 2020b). Incomplete interviews were also included in my analysis to make space for ethnographic refusal on the part of over-researched, fatigued, and oppositional research participants. Five interviews were finally conducted with men of color who work directly and intimately with women of color in the environmental sector.

Cultivating Black Girl Reliability

I committed myself to local struggles by a) joining activist listservs, b) participating in community meetings, protests, rallies, workshops, webinars, and marches, and c) amplifying the message of local struggles during interviews, social media campaigns, and at national and international conferences. Some of the local groups, initiatives, and organizations I shadowed and supported included Justice and Beyond, the Coalition Against Death Alley (CADA), the Cayenne Coalition, 350 New Orleans, the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, the New Orleans's People's Assembly, Rise. St James, the Concerned Citizens of St. John, the Residents of Gordon Plaza, Sunrise Movement New Orleans, Water Wise Gulf South, the Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans, the Bvlbancha Collective, Another Gulf is Possible, the Fossil Free Fest, and the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal Coalition. I also intentionally engaged in community based political work through my public scholarship. For example, I used accessible language to write magazine articles on transportation justice in the south, feminist fieldwork ethics, everyday environmental activism, and Black women in green infrastructure in New Orleans (Roberts-Gregory 2020b; 2020c; 2019). I also purchased zines and t-shirts at local activist fundraisers, facilitated workshops, participated in community panels, and moderated community discussions when asked by local organizers. I finally signed petitions, provided listening therapy to frustrated local activists, and shared copies of completed interview transcripts with interlocutors for their own uses and for community fact checking (Roberts-Gregory 2021; 2020b). I maintained and nurtured many of my research relationships using social media and by participating in informal sistah circles and mutual aid networks before and during the global COVID-19 pandemic. I lastly advocated for feminist climate policy solutions, and the integration of care and climate, through the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal Coalition.

Final Thoughts

EWAE, with its focus on transformation of the self and community through climate action and feminist praxis, allowed me to develop Black girl reliability (Hill 2018) and decolonize positivist methodologies in ESS. EWAE furthermore brought refreshing feminist insight, radicality, and creativity to my feminist activist research project. EWAE finally allowed me to embrace the

unique, intersectional lens I bring to academic discourse on race, place-making, and environmental justice because of my ever evolving personal and professional identities. Meditating on my embodied knowledge (including salsa dancing with petroleum engineers) similarly led me to take new emotional and intellectual risks (Roberts-Gregory 2020c). These risks included completely reframing my research questions to focus on contradictions in women's interpersonal lives as they navigate relationships with energy and petrochemical industries, and taking a new feminist activist approach to participant observation, interview techniques, and promiscuous data analysis (Childers 2014). My feminist pedagogical and methodological praxis likewise evolved once I recognized environmental education as a mode of feminist climate activism. Most importantly, EWAE gave me the confidence to employ polyvocality, feminist partial perspective, and bricolage as creative techniques of analysis. EWAE allowed me to center "subjugated knowledges" and disrupt research as extraction as I managed my imposter syndrome and took up intentional space as a reliable Black girl within various scientific, academic, policy, and grassroots organizing spaces (Griffin 2012; Hill Collins 2000; McClaurin 2001).

Curatives: Research as Healing

Researchers should endeavor to prepare for the rigors of data gathering by making a plan for self-care throughout the research process, even if it slows down progress. Fieldwork and interviewing can be exhausting, stressful, and even dangerous."

- Laura L. Ellingson (2017), *Embodiment in Qualitative Research*, p. 50

Unlike methodological approaches that prioritize the myth of objectivity, value-neutrality, and detached, disinterested pursuit of universal truths, EWAE centers the feminist understanding that *the personal is political, and the political is personal*. Although positivist research practices often fail to acknowledge or seriously consider the methodological importance of research as healing, EWAE innovatively embraces a feminist political ecology of healing framework (Middleton 2010) and healing justice praxis (HiveFund 2020). In fact, EWAE is guided by embodied ecowomanist principles that affirm self-care as earth care (Roberts-Gregory 2021). Within an Indigenous research agenda, healing research similarly promotes long term efforts towards decolonization, transformation, and mobilization, which ultimately contributes to localized strategies of survival, recovery, development, and lastly, self-determination (L. T. Smith 2012). This is increasingly important when we consider that many environmentalists function as the "working wounded" and are particularly susceptible to burnout, eco-anxiety, activist fatigue, disenfranchised grief, PTSD, and other symptoms of traumatic stress (Pihkala 2020; Head and Harada 2017; Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017).

In fact, environmental researchers predisposed to empathy, survivors of chronic trauma, folk prone to maladaptive coping strategies, and overworked caretakers are more susceptible to traumatic stress. Environmental researchers are similarly at risk for passing their stress on to others and/or hurting the people closest to them through maladaptive coping strategies including emotional withdrawal, workaholism, and chronic unavailability (Pihkala 2020). According to Head and Harada (2017), environmental and climate scientists moreover engage in (gendered)

emotional labor and manage a wide range of environmental and climate emotions in their personal and professional lives. These emotions include anxiety, fear, anger, frustration, helplessness, humorous amusement, solastalgia¹⁶, sadness, horror, confusion, desire, joy, and climate grief. Yet, “painful or troubling emotions receive little attention in the western cultural context of the practice of science, which is dominated by the importance of scientific rationality” (Head and Harada 2017: 35). In fact, many environmental scientists routinely suppress, deny, and detach from everyday negative emotions, and engage in the labor of optimism, to avoid pessimism and promote self and community care.

Conversely, feminists have long advocated for a greater analytical attention to emotions in scientific research and teaching, and emphasized the rational work of emotion management and strategies to heal trauma to promote liberatory realities (Head and Harada 2017; Ellingson 2017; Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017). Environmental and feminist activist researchers moreover stress how identity and intersectionality matter during fieldwork and identify strategies to address researcher burnout and vicarious and primary traumatization during grassroots struggles for ecological justice (Roberts-Gregory 2020b; 2021; Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017; Craven and Davis 2013). Throughout my own fieldwork season, for example, roller skating, micro-blogging, gardening, walking, flower photography, and dancing climate justice created opportunities for post-traumatic growth before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. I also welcomed an emotional support animal, a three-legged grey cat, into my home and heart to overcome my fear of uncertainty and better my relationship with nonhuman animals. My feline companion ultimately helped me fortify my nerves and cope with the intense loneliness I felt during fieldwork, teaching, and writing as a single Black woman. Cat cuddles embodied spiritual medicine for me during the scariest months of the pandemic lockdown.

I moreover experienced periodic cycles of violent nightmares, chronic hives, and debilitating anxiety during my fieldwork season due to imposter syndrome, PTSD from academic violence, and my ongoing terror of being rejected for my methodological choices as a feminist activist researcher (Roberts-Gregory 2021; 2020b). I was equally traumatized after visiting frontline communities within Death Alley (i.e., Cancer Alley), conducting participant observation with activist environmental groups, and interviewing, transcribing, and coding hours of heartbreaking testimonies and ecomemories from 50+ frontline Black and Indigenous women who resist ecological violence. Finally, I was traumatized after I experienced harassment and bullying from students threatened by my innovative and interdisciplinary methodological and pedagogical approaches to feminist climate justice curriculum. Fortunately, reframing *research as healing* (and desire!) gradually encouraged me to reaffirm my worthiness and value as a professional and credentialed Black feminist environmentalist and refuse violence from unreliable folk who were not invested in my success. It also enabled me to soothe emotional wounds through intentional practices of gentleness, cognitive restructuring, and meditation.

EWAE, guided by a feminist self-care ethic (Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017), thus gave me permission to periodically step away emotionally, physically, and intellectually from my

¹⁶ Solastalgia, according to Glenn Albrecht (2007), is a type of environmental melancholia and homesickness created by a rapidly changing or disappearing environment.

research findings, resist toxic caretaking and mothering expectations from anxious students, and demand greater work/life balance as I later grieved the loss of various generations of my family to COVID-19 (Roberts-Gregory 2021). EWAE also provided the methodological and spiritual support I needed to identify, clapback, and recover from digital harassment, “know-your-place-aggression”, and presumed incompetence I endured from jealous yet misguided students, parents, former committee members, and fellow researchers (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012; Mitchell 2018). I eventually recognized that the violence I experienced in and outside of the classroom could be attributed to the intersections of my identity and the illegibility of my Black body in a position of authority; such violence was moreover evidence of my personal and professional battles with environmental racism and sexism. In fact, “Activists can become targets of violence in response to their activism....Marginalized-identity activists are targeted at higher rates than privileged-identity activists” (Gorski 2019: 671).

Finally, EWAE created space for performance and creative movement as decolonial healing modalities. According to Leseho and Maxwell (2010:17), “dance/creative movement supports women during difficult life struggles such as trauma from abuse, relationship breakups, community violence and loss of self, and acts as a connection to the sacred.” Creative movement also allows women to revalue embodied knowledge, trust gut and instinctual wisdom, and reinhabit bodies after alienation and trauma (Leseho and Maxwell 2010). EWAE thus gave me permission to express paradoxical emotions and dance through rage, grief, frustration, and pain when a former professor was murdered during fieldwork, when I yearned for human connection during lockdown, and when I felt rejected by nasty students and/or self-righteous community organizers. My prayers-in-motion and moving meditations likewise created opportunity for multi-sensorial experience and autoethnographic storytelling as I reclaimed my body and practiced embodied liberation. Dancing inspired my analysis and saved my life! For these reasons and more, I believe EWAE holds the potential to facilitate self and community care, support cognitive reframing, and combat epistemic, affective, and ecological violence through survivor knowledge (Pihkala 2020). EWAE as an abolitionist healing modality further creates opportunities to embrace ambiguity, address researcher burnout, and ensure the sustainability of earth care as gendered and racialized self-care.

Ethical Meditations

Not everyone agrees that engaged, activist, and feminist approaches to environmental research are needed or beneficial. Scholars debate the extent to which anthropologists, for example, should participate in struggles for freedom and justice, especially since universal calls for justice lack specificity and can flatten nuance and contextual claims (Craven and Davis 2013; McClaurin 2001). The extent to which researchers should strive for objectivity and neutrality as opposed to humanism and personal connection is also hotly contested (Low and Merry 2010). At the same time, applied and engaged researchers critique the ethics of positivist work that fails to intervene in human rights abuses and ecological violence (Loperena 2016). They also question the myth of the detached, disinterested scientist and critique jargon filled academic prose that is inaccessible to the public and lacks opportunities for dialogue or polyvocality (Craven and Davis 2013; Lloro-Bidart and Finewood 2018; L. T. Smith 2012). Nevertheless, accessible public

scholarship and creative writing is often discouraged and silenced by conservative, neoliberal universities. Activist practices of engaged scholars are furthermore not always valued by hiring, tenure, and promotion committees, professional societies, and philanthropic/granting agencies (Craven and Davis 2013). It is thus important for tenure track activist researchers to balance public writing with peer reviewed publications (Low and Merry 2010).

It is likewise not required that every engaged or feminist activist research project include all the defining characteristics of EWAE. Autoethnographic and feminist activist research must be contextualized and designed to fit the needs and values of uniquely situated communities, as well as the capacity, time, funding, and self-care needs and constraints of differentially positioned researchers (Craven and Davis 2013). Since most communities lack homogeneity, it is also often difficult to engage all members of a community equally. The presence of an applied researcher can likewise amplify existing social inequalities, encourage unsustainable dependency on outside resources, and create tensions and jealousies between different political interests seeking to advance their agenda and causes. Furthermore, applied researchers risk co-optation from community elites to the detriment of minority perspectives (Long et al. 2015; Nygreen 2009; Loperena 2016). Ethnographic refusal and self-silencing are thus potential tools to assist practitioners with ethical concerns when working with communities that are characterized by conflict, face surveillance or retribution from the state, and/or hold values that differ drastically from the researcher's own values (Tuck and Yang 2014; Shange 2019; Simpson 2007). Finally, feminist activist researchers must take care to manage expectations of what can be reasonably and realistically accomplished during a fieldwork season and take care to not reinscribe colonial relations between themselves and collaborators through extractive and positivist research practices (Low and Merry 2010).

Since harmful representations and writing for multiple audiences remain an ongoing challenge for ethnographic researchers, it is important for practitioners of EWAE to think critically about how to protect confidentiality and address privacy concerns during collaboration, co-authored writing, and autoethnographic memory work (McClaurin 2001; Craven and Davis 2013). Feminist activist researchers must similarly take proactive steps to ethically navigate friendship and friendliness in the field since feminist conversations, feminist interviews, and feminists acts of solidarity and care often offer therapeutic release, blur lines of rapport, and create spaces of heightened affection (Gesa E. Kirsch 2005). Engaged researchers can also suffer when they experience vicarious traumatization as a result of shared empathy, face financial, social, and physical retribution for publishing controversial research findings, and/or compromise their personal safety to work in ecologically compromised or dangerous environments (Roberts-Gregory 2020b; Loperena 2016; Pihkala 2020). Safety and security are of special concern for feminist environmentalists since many Indigenous water protectors and female environmental defenders face criminalization from the state, gender-based violence and sexual trafficking, and assassination attempts and murder from corporate polluters (Tran et al. 2020). During my fieldwork season, I was also challenged by the uncertainty of hurricane season, street flooding, power outages, boil water advisories, and potential exposure to carcinogens when living, researching, and interviewing community members in Death Alley (i.e., Cancer Alley) (Roberts-Gregory 2020b).

Finally, practitioners of EWAE must decide whether they want to employ research assistants and other types of paid/voluntary help to manage large qualitative datasets, perform miscellaneous research duties, and support the overall research endeavor (Nyantakyi-Frimpong 2021). For example, undergraduate interns are often eager to join graduate and postdoctoral research projects and gain research experience for little to no pay. However, I turned down many such requests during my fieldwork season because I did not have unlimited funding to support research assistants and did not want to exploit free undergraduate labor as a feminist methodologist. On the other hand, research support can also look like paid help to keep home/office space clean and support other domestic needs including cooking, washing clothes, grocery shopping, maintenance of beauty and hair regimens, and other miscellaneous errands required for the social reproduction of healthy and confident feminist researchers. No matter the shape research support takes, it is important for feminist activist researchers to honestly appraise, acknowledge, and address power differentials between themselves, research assistants, and paid/voluntary help, and disclose any conflict that arises between themselves and folk working for or with them (Nyantakyi-Frimpong 2021).

Despite these challenges, autoethnographic researchers can enhance the trustworthiness, care, and accountability of feminist activist research projects through sustained reflexivity, reciprocity, and (when appropriate) financial compensation (Craven and Davis 2013; McClaurin 2001). For example, it is important, yet very difficult, to determine an appropriate level of financial compensation for long, conversational style interviews that are emotionally and intellectually taxing for both the interviewer and the interviewed (Nygren 2009). It is similarly important to triangulate sources and types of information to identify deception in dialogue, address gaps in understanding, and facilitate holistic, rich interpretations. Lastly, scholar-activists are often forced to move at the whim of the academic job market or travel to regional or international conferences for professionalization and the opportunity to share research findings with larger audiences. Constant travel can make it very difficult to sustain long-term relationships with under-resourced communities unless researchers take care to commit a considerable chunk of time to writing grants and locating other types of financial support from academic and philanthropic institutions (Roberts-Gregory 2020b). Consequently, public writing, grant writing, feedback from community and interlocutors, and use of dialogue and polyvocality should be used to offset research challenges, and increase the accessibility and trustworthiness of feminist activist research (Craven and Davis 2013).

Conclusion

I ultimately hope that my journey into better relations with my research sites and interlocutors as the (only) Black feminist political ecologist in Gulf Coast Louisiana from 2017-2021 inspires future generations of critical environmental, climate, and energy justice researchers to seriously consider a more diverse array of action-oriented methodological choices (Roberts-Gregory 2020b). Such intellectual risks hold the potential to radically alter the material and emotional conditions of oppressed peoples searching for justice within petrocolonial temporalities and toxic geographies. EWAE further centers counterhegemonic methodologies and methods to address research fatigue within frontline communities of color while creating healing space for burnout

and vicariously traumatized BIPOC researchers (Pihkala 2020). Most importantly, EWAE creates opportunities to highlight alternative visions of womanhood that push back at controlling images of BIPOC femininity and gender stereotypes (hooks 1989; Hill Collins 2000). By developing counternarratives and counter-representations of BIPOC femininities, queerness, and womanhood, ecowomanist ethnographers unapologetically contribute to the transformative ambitions and interventionists aims of critical environmental justice (McClaurin 2001; Gaard 2018; Pellow 2016).

Feminist activist and autoethnographic approaches further challenge the status quo of epistemic injustice between the researcher and researched, lack of credit and financial compensation given to local interlocutors, and lackluster material support for community-based struggles against environmental racism and premature death, disease, and disposability (Craven and Davis 2013). They also create opportunity to refashion toxic geographies as abolition ecologies, thus liberating our homes through radical placemaking, environmental action, and feminist solidarity (Heynen and Ybarra 2021). In the spirit of Indigenous, Queer, and Afrofuturism(s), I thus champion EWAE as a visionary, holistic, and fugitive methodological approach that amplifies grassroots solutions for community resiliency, sustainability, love, pleasure, and healing. EWAE as feminist activist intervention promises to revolutionize, decolonize, and radicalize ESS research and contribute to Black and Indigenous women's historiography by rendering "the invisible" labor of grassroots women of color more visible (Farmer 2018). Therein lies the hope for interconnected struggles for liberation, negotiated survivance, and post-apocalyptic ecological pleasure. In the words of civil rights leader and environmental pioneer Fannie Lou Hamer, "Nobody's free until everybody is free."

Despite a call for greater inclusion of autoethnographic and feminist approaches in environmental justice research, it is uncertain whether ecowomanist (auto)ethnography will transform the methodological preferences of environmental scientists trained to revere objectivity and blindly apply the scientific method regardless of political or emotional context. It is furthermore likely that Black feminist and Indigenous autoethnographic approaches, associated with nonlinear, messy, postmodern, inductive, phenomenological, avant garde, and decolonial analytical methods, will continue to be stigmatized as unprofessional and unscholarly within environmental departments that prefer masculinist, white supremacist, and positivist approaches. Fortunately, I write for fellow radical methodological fugitives and a new generation of critical ESS scholars. We dare to disrupt problematic binaries that pit self against community, natural science against social science, analytic against affect, and disinterested intellectualism against engaged community activism.

Finally, research situated on the *margins of the margins* of ESS ultimately provides opportunities for creative experimentation, radical improvisation, and visionary social action for underrepresented, underestimated, and tokenized scholar-activists. The choice to refuse the violence of political neutrality and to live unencumbered by rigid methodological purity also heals the wounds of "know-your-place aggression", imposter syndrome, and violent attempts to discipline and police the organic intellectual (Mitchell 2018; Roberts-Gregory 2021). It also allows feminist methodologists to center embodied knowledge and embrace counter memories to

tell new stories about the audacity to survive, thrive, and reimagine during crisis and uncertainty. Moving forward, EWAE can and should be employed by activist researchers to consider how women of color and BIPOC communities center hope, practice self/community care, manage eco-anxiety, and embrace digital activism in post-apocalyptic abolition ecologies. EWAE can also help assess power, ideology, stereotype, and representation using feminist principles and politics.

I lastly hope that EWAE encourages future generations of ESS researchers to openly critique the fetishization of quantitative and positivist approaches to environmental research. Instead, we should advocate for better funding for participatory, qualitative, action-oriented, pedagogical, autoethnographic, and mixed methods approaches. Although time-consuming, feminist activist and autoethnographic approaches to environmental research arguably result in research outcomes that are more thoroughly fact-checked by community, are more accessible, and make space for ethnographic refusal (Craven and Davis 2013; Tuck and Yang 2014). Moreover, such approaches tend to negotiate expectations of accountability, benevolence, and reciprocity more ethically, as well as acknowledge the care involved in maintaining long term relationships with multiple individuals across time, space, and scale. Most importantly, EWAE reminds us that spirituality and desire are “just as relevant to lived experience and social justice as logic and rationality” (Manning 2018: 1390).

Chapter 2

Ecowomanist Pedagogy: The Promises and Perils of Feminist Scholar-Educator-Activism

Frances Roberts-Gregory

Abstract

Environmental educators and feminist scholars debate the extent to which increasing literacies of sociopolitical and scientific issues such as climate change and environmental racism inherently promotes civic engagement, critical conscientization, and youth activism. Climate education alliances and environmental nonprofits simultaneously demand greater inclusion of climate, energy, and environmental justice frameworks in K-12 and college curriculum to combat climate change ambivalence and denial. Even the United Nations promotes climate education and training to encourage behavioral change, inspire global climate action, and transform society. Despite these critical conversations and timely interventions, the links between ecofeminist/ecowomanist teaching, climate action, and youth engagement require greater elucidation and theorization. To unpack the intrinsic interdependence between feminist scholar-activism and critical environmental pedagogies, I reflexively examine autoethnographic fieldnotes, participant observation data, teaching log excerpts, student curated digital media content, and anonymized teaching assessments from time spent unlearning, co-learning, and re-learning with ethnically and geographically diverse youth. I consequently argue that ecowomanist approaches to intergenerational learning disrupt normative processes of neoliberal schooling, move beyond manipulative and tokenistic youth engagement, and encourage the public to embrace care-centered earth ethics guided by climate communication. Such abolitionist and interdisciplinary approaches similarly encourage environmental educators of color to challenge students' implicit biases, address cyberviolence in the spirit of feminist accountability, and nurture individual and community opportunities for emotional resiliency and critical landscape literacy. Ecowomanist pedagogy thus offers practical and innovative strategies for self-preservation and collective healing while encouraging feminist scholar-educator-activists to inspire, mentor, and activate youth environmental leaders and future climate activists.

Introduction

The next time you want to “educate” communities of color about climate change, remember that they have even more to teach you about building movements, about courage, about survival.¹⁷

- Mary Annaïse Heglar, Climate Justice Writer & Podcast Host

Environmental, queer, and feminist educators within and outside the United States currently call for a greater inclusion of environmental, energy, and climate justice within K-12 and university curriculum to promote global climate action (Kwauk 2021; Scaramuzzo 2020; Stapleton 2019; Jorgenson, Stephens, and White 2019). Viewing climate change as one of many existential threats to species survival and social equity, they strive to critically engage youth and the public around the science of rising greenhouse gas emissions as well as the gendered and racialized impacts of unnatural disasters on current and future generations (Heglar 2019; Kirkland and Poppleton 2021; Svarstad 2021). Organizations and initiatives such as the North American

¹⁷ “Climate Change Isn’t the First Existential Threat” (2019)

Association for Environmental Education, the Alliance for Climate Education, the Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project, An Existential Toolkit for Climate Justice Educators, the Ripple Effect New Orleans Water Literacy Project, K12 Climate Action, CLEAN Network, Schools for Climate Action, the Teach Climate Network, the Summer Institute for Climate Change Education, and lastly Rethinking Schools, Teaching for Change, and the Zinn Education Project, currently develop and/or amplify curricular resources¹⁸ for environmental educators to promote critical climate education (Bower 2021). Even the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) uses curricular tools and trainings to increase global climate action and foster social transformation and behavior change. UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Programme similarly underscores the interconnection between environment, equity, and economy while advocating for the integration of climate literacy, sustainable development, and community empowerment through the Global Education 2030 Agenda (UNESCO 2020).

Climate action groups including the youth-led Sunrise Movement, the Climate Reality Project, and 350.org likewise argue that improved climate change literacy can combat climate denial, support progressive climate policies, and encourage sustainable lifestyle changes. In fact, the Climate Reality Project's "Climate Science Belongs in the Classroom" fact sheet advocates for comprehensive, standards-based climate science education to engage and inspire youth around climate change (ClimateRealityProject 2018). U.S. governmental entities and academic research institutions such as the USDA Forest Service, NASA, NOAA, the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, and the National Science Foundation (NSF) moreover develop resources and fund research on climate education (Bower 2021). Finally, the U.S. EPA National Environmental Justice Advisory Council hosted a "Youth Perspectives on Climate Change" work group in 2015 and authored a "Youth Perspectives on Climate Change: Best Practices for Youth Engagement and Addressing the Health Impact of Climate Change" report in 2018. This report innovatively advocates for mentorship and training of youth leaders, engagement of youth in decision-making and storytelling, capacity building through allocation of funds for youth development and paid internships, and implementation of principles for engaging youth on climate justice (National Environmental Justice Advisory Council 2018).

Regional environmental justice organizations likewise facilitate learning opportunities that connect youth mentorship with community empowerment. The NAACP¹⁹ Environmental and Climate Justice Program, for example, authored an organizing toolkit for youth and college students to engage their communities through voter registration drives, divestment campaigns, solar and energy efficiency demonstration projects, environmental education and disaster preparedness workshops, community art, climate action plans, and social media (NAACP 2018). The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) similarly developed a "communiversity" model to nurture respect, mutually beneficial relationships, and collaborative problem-solving between communities and universities within and beyond the Gulf Coast (DSCEJ 2021). Finally, WE ACT for Environmental Justice has facilitated decades of environmental education programming and curricula for youth and adults (WE ACT 2021).

¹⁸ Some of these curricular resources include the "Our Climate Our Future" videos, youth advocacy trainings, storytelling webinars, climate justice lesson plans, and youth action fellowships.

¹⁹ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

These initiatives, often led by BIPOC²⁰ women and allies, unapologetically push back at pervasive deficit discourses that assume communities of color and youth of color do not care about environmental issues (Nxumalo and ross 2019). They instead provide tools and resources for intergenerational movement building and grassroots organizing.

Despite these exciting initiatives, many environmental and/or ecofeminist curricular resources are haphazardly and/or rarely used by present day educators in K-12 and university settings (Denham et al. 2021; Kwauk 2020; Gough, Russell, and Whitehouse 2017). In fact, many underpaid and overworked instructors within neoliberal and privatized school systems lack exposure to quality environmental information in their training programs, lack professional development opportunities, and lack support for culturally relevant or interdisciplinary pedagogy. They also require more robust support when integrating environmental themes into siloed disciplines and struggle to balance competing curricular demands, and/or manage pressure to adhere to state testing requirements and science-based education standards (Kirkland and Poppleton 2021; Kwauk 2020). Moreover, many environmental curricular frameworks overemphasize the importance of personal responsibility and individual behavioral change (i.e., recycling and turning off the lights), uncritically promote technofixes (i.e., geoengineering and carbon capture and storage), lack a structural analysis of environmental violence (i.e., problematic mandates to reduce individual carbon footprints), and exclude feminist perspectives and solutions for environmental, energy, and climate justice (i.e. feminist care economies and feminist foreign policy) (Kwauk 2020; Roberts-Gregory 2021; Jorgenson, Stephens, and White 2019; Ferreira 2019). Finally, “value-neutral” and “nature-centric” climate curriculum, as opposed to justice-based climate curriculum, insufficiently promotes critical conscientization, civic engagement, and increased political mobilization (Kwauk 2020; Stapleton 2019). Many environmental educators have yet to develop best practices for youth to navigate eco-anxiety, process intergenerational trauma, and mourn solastalgia²¹ when presented with overwhelming environmental degradation and violence (Kirkland and Poppleton 2021; Albrecht et al. 2007).

Despite these challenges, the following article illuminates the use of ecowomanist pedagogies, guided by community geography frameworks²² (Shannon et al. 2020; Rees et al. 2020), to increase critical landscape literacy²³ (Whiston Spirn 2005), disrupt normative processes of

²⁰ Black, Indigenous, People of Color

²¹ Solastalgia, according to Albrecht et al. (2007) refers to the ecological distress of on-going environmental violence and loss experienced by individuals and communities with strong place attachment.

²² According to Shannon et al. (2020:2-3), community geography is a “praxis rooted in collaboration... resulting in mutually beneficial and co-produced knowledge”, “often makes use of participatory research approaches”, supports “integration of research and action, one that explicitly values excluded and marginalized perspectives and fosters just and sustainable communities”, nurtures “alternative models of scholarship that explicitly value community-engaged research and teaching”, and has a “commitment to address pressing social, economic, and environmental problems and work toward systematic change”. Community geography frameworks and pedagogies are also place-based, value diverse identities, pursue reciprocal partnerships, employ flexible epistemologies and methodologies, produce accessible knowledge for the public, encourage community-university partnerships and service-learning, has roots in pragmatism and both Black and feminist geographies, and centers reciprocity and reflection (Shannon et al. 2020; Rees et al. 2020).

²³ According to Whiston Spirn (2005: 395), “landscape literacy is a means for recognizing and redressing those injustices through urban planning and design and community development, just as verbal literacy was a cornerstone of the American Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s”. Critical landscape literacy, in turn, centers

neoliberal schooling (Gough, Russell, and Whitehouse 2017; Nxumalo and ross 2019), and catalyze Gulf South and Global South youth for climate action during and beyond the triple crisis of climate, care, and COVID (Roberts-Gregory 2021). I furthermore suggest how feminist environmental educators should remix care-centered climate communication through un-learning, co-learning, and re-learning to inspire future BIPOC environmental leaders and move beyond manipulative and tokenistic youth engagement to consultative and collaborative youth engagement (National Environmental Justice Advisory Council 2018; Kwiatkowski 2017). I finally draw upon my own ecomemories working as a university environmental educator, youth climate activist, and project manager for the DSCEJ Gulf Equity Water Corps Project to provide practical suggestions on how to create collective opportunities for healing and emotional resiliency, reclaim loving accountability as a climate justice heuristic, and clapback at students' implicit biases and cyberviolence. Most importantly, I encourage BIPOC environmental scholar-educator-activists and youth climate activists to unapologetically articulate the intrinsic and necessary interdependence between feminist resistance and critical environmental pedagogies, as well as promote the critical role of environmental educators as visionary frontline architects who hold the power to catalyze ecofeminist and abolitionist futures.

Literature Review

A Brief History of Environmental and Climate Education

Starting in the late 1800s to mid-1900s, US environmental educators advocated for nature-centric, science-based, and outdoors education to promote conservation and preservation (Marouli 2002; Carter and Simmons 2010). The environmental education movement furthermore gained momentum during the 1970s, as evidenced by the first Earth Day in 1970, the 1977 UNESCO Tbilisi Declaration²⁴, passage of the 1970 National Environmental Education Act (and its' 1990 successor), and the later establishment of the EPA Office of Environmental Education (Gough and Whitehouse 2019; L. Harvester and Blenkinsop 2010; Gough 1999). Focused on hands-on immersive experiences and place-based learning, environmental education nevertheless reified binaries between urban and rural environments, problematically conflated connection to wilderness as connection to nature, and often stereotyped communities of color as nature-deficit. The 1990s and 2000s was fortunately characterized by a shift to more anti-oppressive, environmental justice, and multicultural environmental education, as well as educator activism around climate literacy (Marouli 2002). In 2016, for example, a diverse coalition of educator-scholar-activists, parents, and policymakers (including Bill Bigelow and Tim Swinehart, authors of the Rethinking Schools curriculum) influenced the passage of resolution 5272 in Portland, Oregon. Hailed as the first comprehensive literacy policy in the US, resolution 5272 legally mandated climate literacy in Portland public school curriculum (Stapleton 2019). While many countries have similarly legislated environmental literacy, Italy, New Zealand, and Mexico were some of the first countries to require or integrate climate literacy in national curriculum from 2019-2021 (Kwauk and Winthrop 2021).

ecofeminist and ecowomanist perspectives, as well as digital mapping technologies, in the pursuit of reading and shaping landscapes.

²⁴ Concomitant with sustainable development rhetoric during the 1970s and 80s, the UN hosted the first intergovernmental conference on environmental education and developed the 1977 Tbilisi Declaration to encourage behavioral change to protect the environment and promote consciousness around the interdependence between rural and urban environmental issues.

Climate change education (CCE) was moreover born from synergistic connections between environmental education, nature conservation education, earth science education, STEM education, and education for sustainable development during the 1980s and 1990s (Stapleton 2019; Marouli 2002). CCE, like its' predecessor, historically prioritized climate science and nature-centric framings (i.e., polar bears and glaciers) over social justice, human-centric, and post-humanist framings (i.e., migration, pollution, and interspecies justice). In fact, early climate education initiatives emphasized the importance of objectivity and value neutrality while discouraging critical social and political analysis. According to Stapleton (2019), environmental educators and climate communicators eventually realized that a simple understanding of the science of climate change did not sufficiently propel social action or spark solutions for mitigation and adaptation. New narrative models and communicative frameworks including storytelling and the use of social media were thus developed that borrowed techniques from environmental and climate justice communication (Stapleton 2019).

Climate Educators, Environmental Attitudes, and Youth Activism

Although most American adults support climate literacy in elementary and secondary schools (77%), American attitudes towards climate change education are quite heterogenous. Women, people of color, urban dwellers, liberals, less religious folk, and younger adults are more likely to rate teaching about climate change as important compared to their less diverse counterparts (Pizmony-Levy and Pallas 2019). A 2019 NPR/Ipsos poll furthermore revealed that although 86% of U.S. educators think climate literacy should be taught in curriculum, only 42% teach climate change in their classrooms due to the siloed nature of U.S. education, lack of familiarity with climate content, and fear over parental backlash (C. Jackson 2019). According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, approximately half of Americans support climate activism (mostly Democrats), yet only 3% are actively engaged in political campaigns to influence governmental officials to take climate action (Leiserowitz et al. 2019). The National Center for Science Education also found that 25% of science educators in public schools teach climate skepticism alongside global warming (Archote 2021). These statistic are particularly alarming if we consider that nearly 100% of research scientists agree that climate change is real and caused by anthropogenic fossil fuel extraction and burning (Powell 2019). The 2021 IPCC²⁵ report moreover concludes “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land” (Root 2021). Fortunately, activated youth have taken to the streets to demand climate action and bring awareness to the urgent need for domestic and international climate policies that center the leadership of women, LGBTQIA+ folk, BIPOC communities, and frontline geographies (Stapleton 2019; Fisher 2016; Meunier 2021; Roberts-Gregory 2021).

Many youth-led environmental organizations and youth activists associated with SustainUs, 350.org, and the UNFCCC YOUNGO²⁶ constituency, for example, advocate for climate action, fossil fuel divestment, and justice and science-oriented environmental education within official UN spaces (i.e., UN Youth Climate Summit and COPs²⁷) (Fisher 2016; Meunier 2021). Other youth are heavily involved in school strikes for climate. In 2019, for example, millions of students around the world initiated a worldwide movement of school strikes and marches (i.e.,

²⁵ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

²⁶ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Youth Non-Governmental Organizations (YOUNGO)

²⁷ Conference of the Parties (COPs) are annual United Nations spaces for international climate negotiations.

#FridaysforFuture and the U.S. Youth Climate Strike campaigns) in anticipation of the 2019 NYC UN Climate Action Summit (Meunier 2021). Youth involved in Zero Hour, Earth Uprising, Youth vs. Apocalypse, Extinction Rebellion, and Uprose NYC likewise organized youth and adults around climate action and climate justice. Other youth have partnered with legal aid and youth empowerment organizations such as Earth Guardians, Friends of the Earth, and Our Children's Trust to sue state and federal governments (i.e., *Juliana v. United States* included 21 youth plaintiffs).

US youth involved in the progressive Sunrise Movement, as well as the conservative American Conservation Coalition, furthermore endorse climate-forward political candidates and organize local support for emerging climate policy initiatives such as the US's return to the Paris Agreement, the US Green New Deal, and the Biden-Harris administration's Build Back Better Agenda (Meunier 2021). Scholarship on the important role of schools and environmental educators in facilitating environmentally friendly and action oriented youth cultures, as well as youth's everyday climate activism, is likewise emerging (Skovdal and Benwell 2021). Finally, youth climate activists have historically been supported and mentored through collaborations and partnerships with grassroots and climate action coalitions such as the Climate Justice Alliance, Indigenous Environmental Network, the Hip Hop Caucus, Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project, the Power Shift Network, the Climate Reality Project, 350.org, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, and the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program (Elsen and Ord 2021).

Scholar-Educator-Activism

According to Picower (2012:562), "Teacher activism can be defined as educators who work for social justice both inside and outside of their classrooms." Under such a definition, scholar-educator-activists distinguish *learning* from *formal education* (i.e., *schooling*). They also recognize that institutions of schooling within settler-colonial societies, whether operated by the state, a local school board, or charter corporations, create opportunities for social mobility and professionalization while inflicting trauma and disciplining bodies into racialized, classed, and gendered hierarchies. In other words, schools, colleges, universities, and other K-12 institutions function as both sites of liberation and oppression for students; youth are routinely surveilled by heteronormative, patriarchal, imperialist, and white supremacist school systems. Scholar-educator-activists, when confronted with this reality, strive to develop relationships of care and reciprocity, practice pedagogies of hope, discomfort, and love, and resist the banking system of education (Freire 1970; hooks 1994; Picower 2012; Luguetti and McLachlan 2021).

Instead of depositing information in students viewed as "blank slates", scholar-educator-activists use pedagogical tools such as culturally relevant lesson plans and connect personal biographies to larger societal and scientific issues in hopes of increasing the critical consciousness of students and democratizing classroom spaces (Kirkland and Poppleton 2021; Luguetti and McLachlan 2021). Scholar-educator-activists likewise work in policy spaces to improve educational outcomes and influence social change; many have joined teacher activist groups across the US (i.e., Teachers 4 Social Justice) that work to formalize social justice in STEM education (Kokka 2018; Niesz 2018). Scholar-educator-activists also contend with the neoliberalization of education in privatized, charter, and public-school systems. For example, many students today are "educated primarily to acquire rote learning, memorization, and high-stake testing, producing

an atmosphere of student passivity and teacher routinization” (Luguetti and McLachlan 2021: 2). Consequently, scholar-educator-activists negotiate power with learners from diverse life experiences and resist the market-driven designation of students as customers and consumer citizens through justice-oriented pedagogies.

Ecofeminist and Feminist Environmental Justice Pedagogies

Intersectional and gendered perspectives and methodologies within environmental education, particularly from women of color, were historically undertheorized and underutilized (Gough and Whitehouse 2019; Rizzo 2018). Nevertheless, ecofeminist and environmental justice pedagogies, guided by praxis, are uniquely situated to explore the logic of domination by questioning speciesism, anthropocentrism, androcentrism, mind/body dualisms, and nature/culture dualisms (L. Harvester and Blenkinsop 2010). More recently, ecofeminist scholars encourage environmental educators to embrace spirituality to combat positivism within environmental science & studies, unpack problematic binaries between science and religion, and resist unchecked technocratic rationality that obscures the political nature of wicked environmental problems (Fry 2000). Ecofeminist educators moreover utilize Freirean critical pedagogies and community geography frameworks to challenge hierarchies within classrooms and end of course assessments; we specifically center student voices, promote multidirectional and interspecies dialogue through collaboration and project-based learning, and encourage place-based, experiential, active, service learning, and community-based education (L. Harvester and Blenkinsop 2010; Kishimoto and Mwangi 2009; Rizzo 2018; Larson 2005; Svarstad 2021; Freire 1970; Shannon et al. 2020; Rees et al. 2020).

Ecofeminist and ecowomanist pedagogies similarly address pervasive amnesia of feminist and social justice movements within higher education and advance counter narratives through feminist tools including reflexivity, situated knowledges, partial perspectives, consciousness raising, embodiment, intersectional analysis, reciprocity, power negotiation, strategic essentialism, affective learning, and care ethics (Rizzo 2018; Berila 2006b; Harris 2017; Roberts-Gregory 2021; Berila 2006a; Harris 2013). Harris (2013), for example, encourages the use of rituals, poetry, litanies, reflection on earth covenants, intersectional perspectives, and environmental racism case studies within ecowomanist classrooms. Feminist activist pedagogies also use guest speakers, field trips, and assignments that ask students to interview local activists to critically interrogate who counts as a scientific expert or legitimate authority, as well as democratize knowledge and center marginal voices (Berila 2006b; L. J. Harvester 2009; Hernandez, Kent, and Martell 2015; Craven and Davis 2013). Finally, Hernandez et al. (2015) encourages ecofeminist educators to employ pedagogical self-disclosure and strategic reframing to help defend against disrespect and violence inside and outside of feminist classrooms. For example, environmental educators can choose to omit the word “ecofeminism” from elective course titles and course descriptions, and instead integrate feminist perspectives throughout course curriculums. Environmental educators can also ask students to disclose stereotypes about feminists or environmentalists at the beginning of each semester and use class discussions to trace the political origins of such typecasting (Hernandez, Kent, and Martell 2015).

As change agents and political catalysts, feminist educators also use creative assignments, healing justice, self-care strategies, and trauma informed/transgressive pedagogies to encourage students to decolonize their imaginations and dream up alternative futures (Kokka 2018; L. J.

Harvester 2009; Hernandez, Kent, and Martell 2015; Kirkland and Poppleton 2021; hooks 1994; Freire 1970; Neal and Dunn 2020; HiveFund 2020). We also provide a much-needed critical lens to the idea that classrooms are safe spaces for feminist activist educators; feminist classrooms, by design, disrupt normative understandings and thus trigger discomfort, angst, and other unsettling emotions (Kishimoto and Mwangi 2009). Feminist environmental must consequently anticipate and defend against exploitative mothering expectations and student-initiated violence (Lloro-Bidart 2018; Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017). Nevertheless, “the experience of one’s whole self, engaged in both cognitive and affective learning, is what differentiates feminist classrooms.... the goal of feminist pedagogy is to bring about personal transformation that inspires and compels individuals to take action—regardless of their gender—in response to what they have learned, and critically, as part of a group that has a collective understanding of oppression” (Larson 2005: 138). Finally, as a Black ecowomanist scholar-educator-activist, I uphold a prestigious legacy of southern Black womanist educators who served as activist teachers, spiritual change agents, othermothers²⁸, and abolitionists committed to community survival, care, and upliftment (Pierre 2010; Dixson 2003; Neal and Dunn 2020; Giles 2006; Edwards and Thompson 2016; Loder-Jackson 2012; 2011).

Feminist scholar-educator-activists and STEM teacher-activists ultimately provide what students need for transformative learning experiences (vs. what students want for training in *schooling* experiences) while negotiating neoliberal tensions in the pursuit of more democratic pedagogies, climate action, gender justice, and freedom. Despite these critical conversations and interventions, the links between BIPOC ecofeminist pedagogies, climate action, and youth engagement require greater elucidation and theorization. The following article will therefore explore the power and perils of feminist environmental-scholar-educator-activism in greater detail using ecowomanist methodology and pedagogy.

Methodology + Pedagogy

A feminist activist praxis (theory + action) and Black feminist political ecology lens undergirds my approach to ecowomanist methodology and pedagogy (Craven and Davis 2013; Roberts-Gregory 2021; McClaurin 2001). Ecowomanist methodology, with its’ political commitment to intersectional, disruptive, and multi-scalar feminist politics, provides epistemic tools such as partial perspectives, feminist care ethics, reflexivity, ethnographic refusal, polyvocality, improvisation, autoethnography, and embodiment to explore how environmental scholar-educator-activists of color engage youth, women, queer folk, and BIPOC communities around environmental justice and global energy and climate action (Roberts-Gregory 2021; Haraway 1988; Harris 2017). Ecowomanist pedagogy likewise requires that I specifically act for earth justice through teaching, mentoring, and feminist conscious-raising within and outside of formal academic classrooms (Harris 2017; 2013).

For the purposes of this analysis, I reflexively examine autoethnographic fieldnotes, teaching log excerpts, participant observation data, anonymized student curated digital media and blog content, and anonymized teaching assessments. Some Instagram and blog entries were lightly edited for grammar and clarity. I also excavate unpleasant and painful ecomemories of

²⁸ According to Patricia Hill Collins and other Black feminists, othermothers are community women who care for non-biological children and extended kin through teaching, community activism, and other everyday care strategies. Othermothers support family infrastructure in the pursuit of community wellness, wholeness, and survival.

cyberbullying, harassment, and digital violence I endured as a Black feminist scholar-educator-activist who directly engages youth in uncomfortable and unsettling conversations. I finally conclude my analysis with a reflection with how environmental educators can use strategies of unlearning, co-learning, and re-learning to promote climate action and engage students in critical discussions around climate, petro-colonialism, injustice, privilege, and power.

Methodology

Throughout the course of my fieldwork, I taught five feminist activist and civic engagement seminars for ethnically and geographically diverse early college, undergraduate, and graduate students (see Table 1). I taught mostly Black and Brown high school/early college students from New Orleans and Louisiana at Bard Early College New Orleans (BECNO) and mostly White (and some Black) undergraduate local and transplant students at Tulane University. I virtually taught ethnically and linguistically diverse students at the University for Peace (UPeace) in Costa Rica. Graduate students enrolled in my UPeace seminar hailed from various countries including Japan, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Myanmar, Cameroon, Iceland, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Italy, and Egypt. Most of my students identified as women, and some identified as queer. I also facilitated guest speakers and organized field trips, conferences, and service-learning opportunities to supplement and expand theoretical texts with real life examples (see Table 2).

Name of Course	Year	Institution	Department	Course Type	Course Level	Location	Approx. # Of Students
Environmental Justice	2021	University for Peace in Costa Rica	Environment and Development	Feminist Activist Elective	M.A. in Responsible Management and Sustainable Economic Development	Costa Rica (Virtual)	17
Climate Justice, Digital Activism, and Gender in Louisiana	2018-2019	Tulane University	Communication and cross-listed in Environmental Studies	(2) Feminist Activist & Civic Engagement Electives	Higher Level Undergraduate Seminars	New Orleans	12
Climate Justice, Digital Media, and Civic Engagement	2019	Bard Early College New Orleans	Environmental Science & Studies	Civic Engagement Elective	High School/Early College Seminar	New Orleans	14
Environmental Racism Matters	2018	Bard Early College New Orleans	Environmental Science & Studies	Feminist Activist Elective	High School/Early College Seminar	New Orleans	20

Table 1. Feminist Activist and Civic Engagement Elective Seminars Taught from 2018-2021

Guest Speakers	Field Trips	Service-Learning Opportunities	Conferences
New Orleans Public Library (i.e., a research librarian)	Jackson State University Department of Chemistry, Physics, & Atmospheric Science; Atmospheric	Okra, eggplant, and lavender seed planting at Groundwork New Orleans Earth Lab	DSCEJ HBCU Climate Change Conference

	Science/Meteorology Program		
Environmental journalists and feminist science scholars (i.e., the Pulitzer Center and a UC Berkeley academic)	Grow Dat Youth Farm		Tulane University and New Orleans Center for the Gulf South Indigenous Symposium
BIPOC scientists and analysts (i.e., atmospheric scientists, energy justice scholars, microbiologists, a psychiatrist, environmental engineers, environmental scientists, an airplane mechanics, a former Shell employee, etc.)	Louisiana State Museum + Presbytère’s “Living with Hurricanes: Katrina and Beyond”, “Mardi Gras: It’s Carnival Time in Louisiana”, and “Mapping the Crescent” exhibits		Tulane University Climate Action Week
Horticultural therapist	Bayou Bienvenue Wetland Triangle and the Lower 9 th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development Environmental Learning & Research Center		
Environmental nonprofits and eco-businesses (i.e., the Thirst Project, Healthy Gulf, REMIXEcology, and the Lower 9 th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development)	Cancer Alley Toxic Bus Tour		
Grassroots organizers and energy/climate activists (i.e., 350 New Orleans, Extinction Rebellion New Orleans, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, the Alliance for Affordable Energy, Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Bvlbanca Collective, Another Gulf is Possible, Philadelphia youth urban farmers, New Orleans People’s Assembly, and the US Climate Action Network)			
Digital media strategists and filmmakers (i.e., Brown Girl Green, New Orleans Video Access Center (NOVAC), and Red Cypress Consulting)			
Global water policy & blue-green infrastructure (i.e., the Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans and the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission)			

Table 2. Guest Speakers, Field Trips, Service-Learning Opportunities, and Conferences

In 2019, I also co-managed the DSCEJ Gulf Equity Water Corps Project²⁹ to develop Louisiana and Texas youth of color's leadership capacity and raise community consciousness around street flooding, sea level rise, water asset mapping, and urban stormwater management (DSCEJ 2019). Louisiana and Texas students were supported directly by community-based organization (CBO) partners including the Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED) in Louisiana, New Harmony High School³⁰ in New Orleans, and Achieving Community Tasks Successfully (ACTS) in Texas. Other partners included BECNO, Dillard University, and Texas Southern University. Two HBCU interns and sixteen high school students were selected from local communities in New Orleans and Pleasantville-Houston to pilot the project via a water asset mapping and curriculum training, student-led "Students Rising Above Sea Level Rise" webinar, "train the trainer" activity, and "Stormwater Management Community Forum" at the Lower 9th Ward Global Green Community Center & Climate Action Center. The "train the trainer" activity allowed the Gulf Equity Water Corps leaders to train their peers (over 40 students) on the importance of catch basins as well as the causes and consequences of sea level rise via Kahoot! and Jeopardy! games. Select students were also offered the opportunity to present at the 2019 DSCEJ HBCU Climate Change Conference in New Orleans, where I likewise facilitated climate justice workshops for Black and Brown youth. I lastly developed academic resources and led a workshop on women and agriculture for the 2020-2021 C40 and City of New Orleans Women4Climate Mentorship Program.

Pedagogy

I emphasized political education, civic engagement, and conscientization as an ecowomanist educator and community geographer. My curriculum and workshops conceptually centered values such as interdisciplinarity, flexibility, experimentation, critical perspectives, interconnectedness, collaboration, the "sociological imagination" (seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary), queerness (i.e., fluidity and tolerance for difference), intersectional feminism, emotional resiliency, Sankofa (i.e. using the past, including understanding of cultural identity and intergenerational trauma, to plan for the future), and the necessity of imperfection and contradiction. I also nurtured critical landscape literacy (Whiston Spirn 2005) amongst my students through service-learning opportunities, field trips, and digital media analysis. Students in my high school/early college and undergraduate seminars, for example, were required to post weekly photos on Instagram and weekly reflective blogs on Blogger that connected class readings to larger conceptual issues and (in)justices in the built/natural environment. This Instagram photovoice assignment³¹ (See Figure 1) encouraged students to reflexively examine how environmental injustice manifests in their daily lives and how to best communicate the complexity of environmental themes such as gentrification in a short blurb and photo. Students were later encouraged to interact with their peers' revelations and frustrations through social media commentary, current event presentations, and class discussions. Our class curated Instagram pages were titled @environmentalracismmatters and @climatejusticespr19.

²⁹ The Gulf Equity Water Corps Project was funded by a Students Rebuild Ocean Challenge Grant, a program of the Bezos Family Foundation.

³⁰ New Harmony High School is an environmentally themed public, charter school in New Orleans focused on student-centered and problem-based learning to support coastal preservation and restoration.

³¹ My Instagram photovoice assignment was inspired by urban planner Dr. Toni L. Griffin's Instagram assignment during our 2014 *Design for the Just City* graduate seminar at the University of California, Berkeley.

High school/early college, undergraduate, and graduate students were also required to research and construct environmental autoethnographies and an accompanying digital media final project (See Figure 2). The environmental autoethnographic report encouraged students to reflexively examine personal/communal (i.e., family) biographies, excavate ecomemories, and connect the personal to the political through creative, scientific, and experimental writing (Harris 2017).

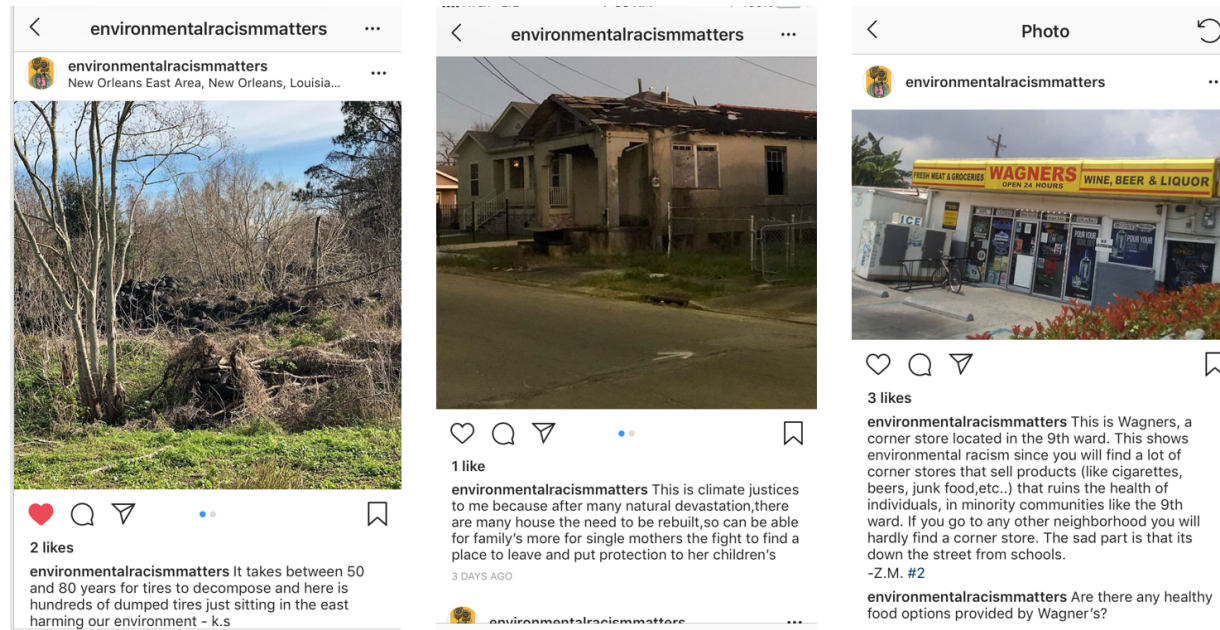


Figure 1. Sample Instagram Photovoice Posts

Autoethnographic Report

The autoethnographic report allows individuals to explore environmental autobiographies in relation to class themes (i.e. “the personal is political and the political is personal”). (Auto) refers to self and (ethnography) refers to the systematic study of culture and daily lived experience through cycles of observation, participation, reflection and writing. So, autoethnography encourages you to use self- reflection and subjective experiential knowledge to a) study and comment on culture, society and politics and b) produce an ethnography. Ethnography is a method/type of writing commonly used by anthropologists and other social scientists. The environmental autoethnography is a creative writing exercise that centers your own voice and perspective as you explore eco-memories (memories associated with environmental themes). You should answer the following questions as you explore your family’s, an environmental organization’s, your peers’, and your eco-memories:

1. What memories do you associate with the terms “environment” or “nature”?
2. How would you describe your connection to nature? To sustainable development?
3. Recall a story from childhood or life when you experienced a connection to nature or sustainable development.
4. When did you first recognize the importance of environmental issues?
5. Why are you interested in feminist approaches to environmental, energy, and climate justice?
6. What is your family’s connection to nature, environmentalism, justice, and human rights issues (parents, grandparents, extended kin, etc.)?
7. Choose an activist organization that you admire. What is their connection to sustainable development?
8. Are you interested in environmental, feminist, or sustainable development careers? Why or why not?
9. What does it mean to be an environmentalist or peace builder from your country, region, or city?
10. Are you interested in getting involved in environmental policy or activism? Why or why not?
11. What are your suggestions for centering hope and love when thinking about environmental injustice and disaster?
12. What are your strategies for emotional resiliency to combat eco-anxiety?
13. How might you imagine a society/world that values a just and equitable COVID recovery?

Figure 2. 2021 Environmental Autoethnographic Report Assignment

Lastly, I used additional pedagogical tools to inspire and activate students around climate action including scientific reports on carcinogens, op-eds and letters to editors on local environmental issues, group research projects, environmental documentary film analyses, reading reflections, annotated bibliographies, student-developed exam study guides, and open note reading quizzes (See Figure 3). Students also analyzed print and digital media content including environmental comics produced by the United Nations, digital cartoons, GIS maps, print atlases, environmental music videos, environmental song lyrics, drama and dance performances, feminist and science fiction short stories, web series, memes, photography, digital zines, climate action plans, and city planning documents. I furthermore required students to compare international environmental justice case studies using the Global EJ Atlas³², collaboratively create environmental policy timelines and just city indicators, write environmental justice poems, draw environmental superheroes and feminist cities, present current events from local newspapers, analyze the principles of environmental and climate justice³³, and listen to environmental justice podcasts (i.e., the Hip Hop Caucus Think 100% podcast, the Another Gulf is Possible podcast, and the Breaking Green Ceilings podcast). Finally, students were encouraged to create their own just city manifestos in breakout groups, identify their preferred communication mediums for science communication, research the environmental histories of their names, create short skits, and reflect on strategies of resistance, pleasure, gratitude, and humor for emotional resiliency.

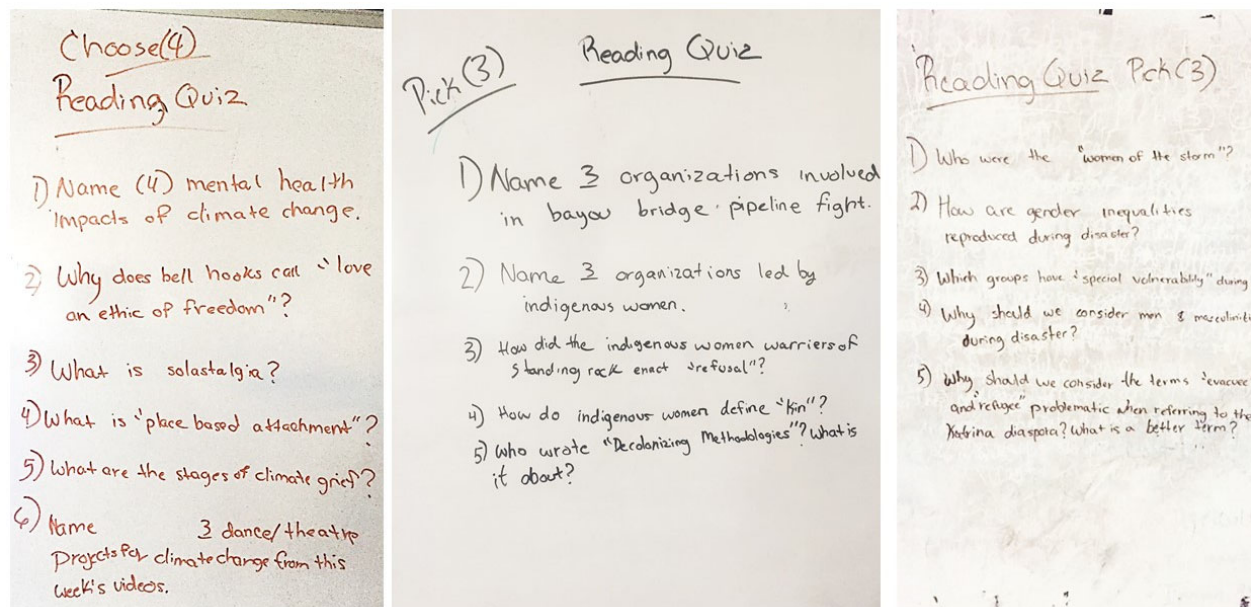


Figure 3. Sample Reading Quizzes

³² The Global EJ Atlas (<https://ejatlas.org/>) is an online mapping tool and database that identifies environmental conflicts, collects activist stories, and documents environmental justice case studies around the world.

³³ The 17 Principles of Environmental Justice (<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>) were developed at the First National People of Color Environmental Justice Summit in 1991. The Bali Principles of Climate Justice (<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/bali.pdf>) were inspired by the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice and developed by the International Climate Justice Network in 2002.

Findings and Analysis

The following vignettes and excavated ecomemories problematize thematic codes developed from embodied, experiential knowledge (i.e., participant observation), autoethnographic fieldnotes, teaching logs, digital and social media content produced by students, and anonymized teaching evaluations. I identify four thematic codes that contribute to my overall intellectual argument. Ecowomanist pedagogy enables feminist environmental educators to 1) resist intersectional oppressions through critical landscape literacy, 2) disrupt normative processes of neoliberal schooling and move beyond tokenistic youth engagement, 3) inspire youth to consider environmental careers and pursue climate action and, lastly, 4) nurture emotional resiliency and interrogate implicit biases through feminist accountability.

1. Resisting Intersectional Oppressions through Critical Landscape Literacy

The Instagram photovoice assignment and reflective blog assignment encouraged my early college and undergraduate students to develop their critical landscape literacy, identify intersectional oppressions, and reflect upon their roles as digital citizens. For example, many BECNO and Tulane students were able visualize and critique community problems including illegal tire dumping, lack of supermarkets in comparison to corner stores and fast-food restaurants in BIPOC communities, street flooding, and invasive species in wetlands through weekly Instagram posts. For example, one male student-athlete confided in me that before taking my course and viewing his peers' photos, he never noticed injustice in the built-natural environment; after taking my course, however, he could not un-see injustices such as potholes, cracked and broken sidewalks, and blighted and abandoned housing.

Students also posted photos of gentrified historic Black businesses and spaces (i.e., St. Roch Market, Circle Food Store, and blue bikes), neglected, disinvested, and abandoned neighborhoods (i.e., dilapidated homes, unwanted graffiti, homelessness, worn-down and under-resourced schools, petrochemical corridors, and highways and bridges that dissect Black communities), and local environmental degradation (i.e., catch basins clogged with Mardi Gras beads, plastic litter, and trash in canals). They were then able to connect these concerning visual images to larger structural inequalities and reflect on the interconnections between racial health disparities, transportation racism and air pollution, lack of access to healthy food options, species extinction, electronic waste, community displacement, petrocolonial landscapes and global warming (i.e., Cancer Alley), immigrant labor exploitation, hurricanes and disaster capitalism, stormwater management, gendered and racialized incarceration, and White and male-dominated planning and policy spaces.

Many students were also able to visualize, experience, embody, and imagine solutions for local environmental issues through field trips, museum visits, conferences, guest speakers, and service-learning opportunities. Their Instagram posts visualized solutions included rain barrels, blue-green infrastructure, youth led-farms and urban gardening, herbal medicines, tree plantings, recycling programs, greenspaces, farmers markets, environmental policy, eco-friendly and BIPOC businesses, interdisciplinary collaborations, beekeeping, car-sharing, green cleaning and beauty products, energy efficient appliances and solar panels, elevated homes, wildlife habitats, environmental art, social ties and other strategies for emotional resiliency, and culturally competent trainings for environmental do-gooders. Their solutions also included museum exhibits to increase public awareness of the intersection of race, gender, inequality, and

environmental justice. For example, some of my undergraduate students visited an exhibit on incarcerated women's resistance strategies at the Tulane University Newcomb Art Museum. One female student reflected,

This exhibit at the Newcomb Art Museum is about women's incarceration in Louisiana and the development of private for-profit prisons who benefit from the free labor of incarcerated individuals. These women are some of the most vulnerable to climate change. The exhibit displayed the story of the women who were left to die in prison during Katrina.

Another female student continues,

One thing they gave out at the exhibit was seeds to plant flowers. Incarcerated women track the planting and progress of [the seeds] via submitted social media posts of the flowers.

After attending the "Mapping the Crescent" exhibit at the Cabildo and Louisiana State Museum, a queer male student also reflected on the connection between epidemics, masculinist environmental engineering decisions, and wetland loss in Louisiana.

This map stood out to me. This map shows the yellow fever outbreak which people believed to be spread by mosquitos. This also resulted in the drainage of the swamp which we [now] understand was a bad idea.

A different queer male student connected the visual of housing injustice in New Orleans to gendered caretaking burdens for mothers and the disruption of family units.

[Abandoned houses] is climate justice to me because after many natural disasters, there are many houses that need to get rebuilt for families and single mothers. Single mothers have to fight to find a place to live so they can protect their children.

A working-class female undergraduate student likewise reflected on the intersections of gender, childhood, loss, and fossil fuel hegemony through her own personal ecomemories.

Rachel Hariss' piece "Gender Aspects of Climate Change in the US Gulf Region" really hit home for me how real environmental justice is. I remember the BP oil spill, I spent half of my life in Pensacola. I remember playing in oily sand as a child and thinking nothing of it only for my mom to yell when she saw my siblings and I covered in oil. I still have a hatred towards BP to this day because of the harm they did to our beaches.

Finally, in-class mapping activities augmented early college students' critical landscape literacy and helped them visualize and critically interpret state-corporate welfare via Louisiana land loss and its' connection to poor educational incomes and industrial tax invasion (i.e., the Louisiana Industrial Tax Exemption Program (ITEP)). According to one teaching log entry,

Today students debated about what to do about Louisiana's "working coast" and the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan. Most students think we should fine or sue industry to force them to do the right thing, but one student did not think that industry should make

money by switching over to new ways to restore the coast. I always emphasize how industry does not pay its' fair share of property taxes and the impacts that has on Louisiana schools. At the end of class, I taught students how to navigate online GIS maps of the coast, and they thought that was cool. Students later laughed at me when I taught them how to read and use a paper map. Some students had never used a foldable map or atlas during a road trip, so I emphasized the necessity of knowing how to use a paper map when technologies do not work in time of disaster. They could not fathom that they could lack access to Google Maps during a power outage or disaster.

2. Disrupting Neoliberal Schooling and Tokenistic Youth Engagement

As a university environmental educator and co-manager of the Gulf Equity Water Corps Project, I was tasked with both exposing youth to BIPOC, feminist, and queer voices in the environmental movement and including youth in critical climate conversations that moved beyond simplistic understandings of the science of greenhouse gases to interrogate the racialized, classed, and gendered impacts of privatization of public resources and neoliberal environmental governance on changing ecosystems. I consequently utilized multivocality, interdisciplinarity, environmental autoethnographies, and feminist partial perspectives to transform my classrooms and workshops from sites of schooling to sites of unlearning, co-learning, and relearning.

On Tuesday, we discussed Indigenous women water protectors and their fights against the Bayou Bridge and Dakota Access pipelines. Students appreciated the inclusion of Indigenous voices. One student remarked that she had never learned about Indigenous issues in any of her other undergraduate courses. Another student replied that said she appreciated learning about the resistance of non-African American groups.

Nevertheless, many early college, undergraduate and graduate students complained about the workload and rigor of a feminist activist elective seminar that challenged the pedagogical normativity of lectures and multiple-choice tests to which they were accustomed within neoliberal school systems. Many students also felt ill-prepared to manage demanding course loads with non-academic responsibilities and work obligations.

I understand that this is a college course, but I feel that the workload is a lot because we are still in high school, and we have other work, activities, and responsibilities. I personally don't have enough time to do all the assignments.

I likewise created space for students to critique the theoretical frameworks and definitions we explored in class, as well as my own ideological commitments.

Today, I had my graduate students debate natural vs. unnatural disasters after one student challenged me on the conceptual base of unnatural disasters in critical disaster sociology and decided to drop my course. Students were surprised that I made space for candid dialogue and debate, and they overwhelmingly choose to accept unnatural disasters as a conceptual framework. I want our virtual seminar to enable intellectual growth, so I informed students that it was ok to challenge themselves, be challenged by their peers, and to challenge me.

Finally, the Gulf Equity Water Corps students I trained and mentored participated in webinars, workshops, and community conversations outside of formal sites of schooling to devise solutions for stormwater management and flooding. Many of the Louisiana Gulf Equity Water Corps participants were my former BECNO students or were New Harmony High School students I trained at the DSCEJ HBCU Climate Change Conference. I was ultimately surprised by how much knowledge the youth absorbed from our trainings and their interest in civic engagement and climate activism. I was proud when many youth participants, for example, discussed the pros and cons of the Louisiana Coastal Master Plan and passionately advocated for tighter regulations to prevent clogged catch basins and street flooding at our community presentation at the Lower 9th Ward Global Green Community & Climate Action Center. It was thus apparent that the Gulf Equity Water Corps youth participants felt empowered and took collective ownership over the knowledge they nurtured during our curricular and water asset mapping trainings.

My work with the DSCEJ nevertheless forced me to reflect on documented paternalism and ageism in climate justice youth engagement projects (National Environmental Justice Advisory Council 2018; Kwiatkowski 2017). Although the Gulf Equity Water Corps Project was successful in increasing youth knowledge of sea level rise, flooding, and catch basins, many of the project initiatives were driven by the grant as opposed to led by students. And although the “train the trainer” exercise was mostly self-directed and allowed students to decide how they would educate their peers, the impact of the activity was lessened by the lack of time available to implement the activity. The prep work required for the activity also arguably placed a burden on students who did not have access to internet and computers at home and were still learning how to manage all their responsibilities and obligations as high school and early college students. Finally, it was difficult to sustain long term, meaningful engagement with students due to scheduling conflicts and differing levels of student buy-in. Some students were able to grasp concepts more easily than others, and there was limited time and resources to engage students that needed more individual attention. Thus, the Gulf Equity Water Corps Project was successful in mentoring and training youth leaders, providing financial resources for youth development, and implementing some principles for engaging youth around climate justice such as “letting youth speak for themselves”, “meeting youth and communities where they are” and “uplifting intergenerational collaboration” (National Environmental Justice Advisory Council 2018: 10). The project could be improved in the future by engaging youth more meaningfully in environmental decision-making, including youth more formally in the development of climate change curricula, and allocating greater resources and adequate compensation for transportation, multilingual content, and youth stipends.

It is also important to conceptualize youth engagement around climate justice in relation to differing levels of possible participation. Hart (1992) developed the “Ladder of Children’s Participation” based off of the Arnstein (1969) eight-rung “Ladder of Citizen Participation” for political involvement. According to this power and inclusion schematic, the Gulf Equity Water Corps Project would arguably promote consulted and informed (placation) youth participation with elements of partnership and delegated power via the “train the trainer” exercise. This could also be described as medium participation that is more meaningful than manipulation or decoration, but less meaningful than youth-initiated projects and student control (Kwiatkowski 2017; Arnstein 1969; Hart 1992). My courses and workshops on environmental racism and climate justice would also represent consultation placation with elements of partnership and

delegated power as represented by final group projects, the Instagram Photovoice assignment, and environmental autoethnographies. Nevertheless, the question remains: if student empowerment is defined as student control where youth initiate and share decision-making with adults, how do we implement that reality in future youth engagement projects considering the constraints set by schools, grantmaking institutions, and paternalistic adult cultures? How do we make space and time for student led initiatives when there is an urgent need for more trainings and curriculum development? In other words, how can we most effectively facilitate youth led systems change considering budget, time, and logistical constraints?

3. Inspiring Environmental Careers and Climate Action

My feminist activist/civic engagement seminars, climate justice workshops at the HBCU Climate Change Conference, and the youth activist project I co-managed with the DSCEJ not only raised youth awareness of environmental and climate justice issues, but also provided students with opportunities to engage in critical dialogue with community-based organizations around how to advance climate action, communicate sound science to the public, and address pervasive environmental inequality. Students enrolled in my civic engagement seminars were likewise able to learn more about environmental and STEM careers, undergraduate internship opportunities, and gendered environmental activism.

I could barely name Vandana Shiva at the beginning of the semester. I have learned so much in this course! I definitely hope to do more activist work now. It has always been in my mind, but I view environmentalism as a whole differently now and I want to ensure all environmentalism I do and support also focuses on social justice. I loved having our guest speakers come in to class and discuss their work. It's opened my eyes to new careers and forms of activism, and it is meaningful to see and meet people beyond readings.

This course and this project of autoethnography really taught me a lot. It actually has made me apply for internships in seaweed farming!

My early college students also appreciated exposure to accessible, culturally relevant professional conferences and opportunities to network with college students studying environmental and related fields. I was also able to facilitate professional development and service-learning opportunities for youth enrolled in my climate justice, gender, and digital activism seminars. In fact, one of my students became a videographer and content developer for a Tulane University Newcomb Art Museum exhibit titled "The American Dream Denied: The New Orleans Residents of Godon Plaza Seek Relocation". Another student was offered an internship with the Alliance for Affordable Energy, and another became a digital organizer for the Sunrise Movement. Other former early college students chose environmental science as college majors and participated in marches against Death Alley (i.e., Cancer Alley), New Orleans People's Assembly rallies, toxic tours, and a townhall sponsored by the Sunrise Movement and the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy to formulate a "Green New Deal for the Gulf Coast." In fact, two of my Tulane students made the local news after attending a rally in support of the Women of Gordon Plaza.

Finally, I began to recognize feminist teaching as a type of environmental activism. As a feminist environmental educator, I communicated environmental information and scientific data to students that often transformed their worldviews. My early college students, for example, commented that they felt “woke” after taking my class and appreciated our class discussions. Other professors would also comment that my students constantly discussed the information they learned in my seminars in other courses. Since my curriculum focused on social justice, civic engagement, and contemporary environmental struggles, my students likewise became conversant in how Black, Brown, and Indigenous bodies and communities were often intentionally targeted for toxic extractive industries and sacrifice zones. Some of my Tulane students even revealed that my course encouraged them to pursue environmental activism and environmental communication as career paths. Most gratifying were the emails and notes from former students who successfully completed my courses, appreciated feminist epistemologies and methodologies, and became directly involved in youth climate activism.

Reflecting on my time as a student, I realize how profound of an impact your course had on me as both a person and a student. Though I took the course at a time in my life where I was often incapable of being mentally or emotionally present—and I apologize for that; the lessons learned in your course refocused my interests and passions on a personal, academic, and professional level. In the past year, I have become very active within the Sunrise Movement. This activism has been incredibly challenging, fulfilling and empowering for me; it is also a direct result of the curriculum, lectures, and themes of your teaching. I also conducted a field research project with the goal of providing a voice for Kaqchikel Maya corn farmers in Guatemalan and global climate change discourse spaces. While that project is still ongoing, the praxis of partial perspectives and just ethnographic research that you introduced in our course were crucial in helping to determine my research methods and goals. I cannot stress enough how much the intentionality, power, and completeness of your course redefined how I conceptualize and understand our world; I am incredibly grateful to you for being such an incredible professor. I aspire for a life of teaching children and doing activism.

4. Nurturing Emotional Resiliency and Feminist Accountability

To nurture emotional resiliency and feminist accountability in my classroom, I used icebreakers and closing activities that asked students to reflect on gratitude, pleasure, activism, and their agency as environmental communicators. I also encouraged students to imagine and collectively draw environmental superheroes and feminist cities during breakout groups. Finally, students used the Instagram Photovoice assignment to reflect on gendered strategies of self-care, love, reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing.

Keeping house plants is one way to counteract the damage in the air done by fossil fuels and harsh chemical products in your home. For example, aloe vera is a succulent which helps filter out dangerous chemicals like benzene and formaldehyde.

I saw this red quote [When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.] on a car yesterday. In class, we discussed how an individual or group cannot truly be engaging in feminist climate activism if they are not basing their actions in love and liberation. Also, the quote from Margaret Atwood [Men are afraid that women will laugh at

them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.] made me think of why climate policies need to take gender into account. People of different genders face different obstacles and these need to be accounted for in order to create effective, just climate policies.

The articles this week talked about how reconciliation and forgiveness is key, and there is no better example of that than the complicated narrative Audubon Zoo has with the oil industry. They take money from Shell to have a wildlife stage but also sit there and talk about the pollution of our waters and climate change.

My role as an othermother also led me to care for my students and fellow youth as they grappled with violence in their personal and professional lives. For example, when a mostly absentee female student disclosed horrific stories of campus rape and sexual assault to me during my office hours, I developed a feminist plan of accountability for her to turn in her assignments, adjusted my/our expectations for academic success, and encouraged her to seek professional counseling. Other students formally came out to me (and themselves) as queer during office hours and casual conversations and expressed gratitude for feminist curriculum that catalyzed deeper reflection on the intersections of their gendered identities, privilege, and commitment to climate action. I furthermore provided emotional support, extended grace, altered deadlines, and reframed academic failure as self-preservation for students who chose to withdraw from my courses due to mental health issues, homelessness, parental and family deaths, lack of internet access, COVID uncertainty, and a Myanmar political coup d'etat. Finally, I encouraged all my students to let go of perfectionism, make mistakes, and embrace failure and vulnerability.

Unfortunately, I also dealt with digital harassment, gendered and racialized disrespect, and cyberbullying from students and parents (See *Challenges and Lessons Learned*). These unpleasant experiences, coupled with my exhaustion as an inexperienced environmental educator, influenced my later decision to take a break from teaching. The following fieldnote entry illustrates my exhaustion, disappointment, and anger.

I felt disappointed in myself because I did not make it to 3-4 research opportunities this week because I was so tired and emotionally exhausted after teaching. Teaching takes all my energy because it is my first-time teaching many of the texts, I am learning to do a lot from scratch, and lesson planning is overwhelming. Especially when the students do not make it easy. Silvia, Angela, and Ruby are still very disrespectful. I don't feel safe in my own classroom, and I almost feel like I am being bullied. I don't have as deep a connection with my students this semester compared to last semester. I had a dream last night I got in a fight with a woman. Honestly, I am over it. I need a vacation!

I also endured a graduate student's belligerent challenge to my authority in front of her peers during class time, as well as her inappropriate labor requests via email to rename, condense, and reorganize PDF files of class readings in a format that suited her tastes. This student routinely contradicted me during class lectures, confronted me about semantics during and outside of class sessions, asked overly jargony questions to a grassroots Indigenous climate activist and guest speaker, and talked over me during our final class presentations (i.e., she admonished me to stop talking during a recorded presentation). She also turned many students against me, demanded less rigorous work, complained about deadlines, accused me of not meeting the needs of diverse,

international students, and, after earning an A in my class, reported me to the university's Ombuds office for discrimination. She likewise influenced the university to get rid of Friday classes and refused to call me by my preferred title as a Black academic (i.e., professor). Fortunately, I maintained a detailed paper trail of her transgressions and was able to access support from allied White ecofeminist educators and Ombuds personnel that did not find any validity to her claims. Armed with my accumulated evidence and eyewitnesses, they were surprised that I did not report her to the Ombuds office for discrimination and emotional distress.

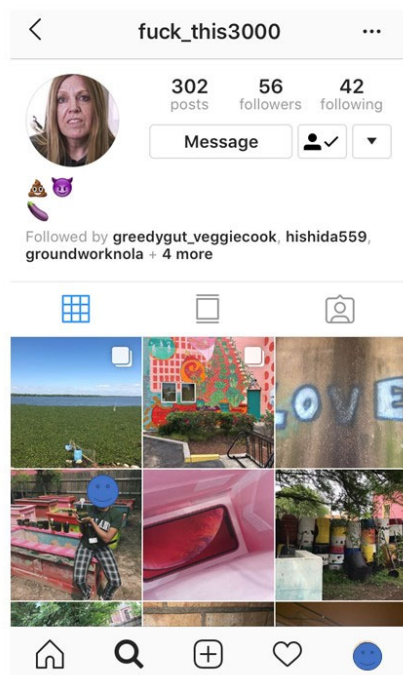
So, I kept extending grace to Samantha, a European student impacted by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, UNTIL she started emailing me about not knowing the difference between a film review and a film analysis. I eventually replied that 1) I was not sure why she was confused, 2) she could follow the provided rubric, 3) the words were often used interchangeably in the USA, and 4) she should ask her peers for support because they all seemed to understand and successfully complete the assignment. Well, my response must have upset Samantha because during our final class presentations, she told me to stop talking in the public chat box. She then proceeded to interrupt me multiple of times during my instructions to proclaim that I should stop talking so that she could finish watching the assigned videos. Although I maintained my composure, I instructed her to use a different speed setting on her video and calmly mandated that she refrain from interrupting me anymore as it was disrespectful. Raquel, a Caribbean student, messaged me privately and excitedly proclaimed "bad ass professor! She is annoying and challenges all the professors. But she is *worst in your class*, and you are *the first to stand up to her*." This information immediately validated my decision to set a much-needed boundary and annoyed me. I was annoyed because I think other professors should have checked her behavior a long time ago so that she did not feel entitled to interrupt and disrupt my class. They were partially responsible for her violence towards me for condoning her bad behavior and conceding to her entitled demands. Nevertheless, it felt good to FINALLY stand up for myself, reclaim my space, time, and dignity, and set a good feminist example for other youth while maintaining my professionalism. At the end of the day, I am not her secretary, I am not her mammy, and I am not her emotional punching bag.

Although I mistakenly thought that a feminist care ethic required me to endure this student's abuse and always carry myself in a "professional" manner, I allowed her emotional violence to fester by not "calling out" her disrespect until the end of the course. I ultimately decided to set appropriate boundaries with this student and "clap back" at her disrespect at the end of the course by shutting down all communication, alerting university administrators of her inappropriate behavior, and sharing academic research articles with her on being a "Karen", white mediocrity, and "know your place" aggression (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012; Negra and Leyda 2021; Mitchell 2018). These examples thus illustrate the perils and promises of BIPOC feminist scholar-educator-activism for femme environmental educators like me whose body, intellect, and position of authority are often seen as threatening to students with implicit biases. It also demonstrates the gendered and racialized emotional labor I endure in order stay professional, extend grace, and code switch. Despite these efforts, I was still seen as a stereotypical "angry Black woman" to some non-Black youth as evidenced by hostile teaching evaluations that without justification accused me of unprofessional communication, lack of hospitality, and a "harsh" tone.

Challenges, Even More Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Many challenges for youth engagement with feminist activist pedagogies remain. For example, is it appropriate and ethical for ecowomanist educators to encourage early college and undergraduate students to attend rallies and protests that promote direct action and require them to miss instructional time in other classes? How do I make space for student trauma when some students intentionally inflict trauma on me? Who will care for me when I experience vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and activist fatigue as a professionalized and highly credentialed youth climate activist? These are questions that still require answers.

I also noticed that some of my early college, undergraduate, and graduate students struggled with eco-anxiety, climate grief, and later COVID anxiety; they, at times, chose to disengage with class material for self-care and mental health reasons. For example, I dealt with an unwarranted parental accusation that my course content and rigor caused a high achieving and perfectionist student to experience panic attacks. The same student went on to digitally harass me, curse me out, refuse to take the final exam that conflicted with her prom preparations (although the principle required that she attend class and I offered to pay for her an uber to and from class out of my personal funds), and hack our collective Instagram account (i.e., she changed the account password, photo, byline, and account name to fuck_this3000) (See Figure 4). After this incident, and a lack of meaningful discipline or accountability measures on the part of the administration, the same parent threatened to sue me for “weaponizing her daughter’s medical history against her” when I suggested on her report card that the student was high achieving but would benefit from mental health resources to maximize her success during her future undergraduate studies (Contrary to her claims, I did not have access to any students’ medical histories and encouraged all my students and mentees to seek counseling and spiritual community throughout their undergraduate and graduate studies).



Professor Francis Roberts Gregory is an inconsiderate asshole that expects high school students to act like they are in college while she treats them like they are still kids! She is a sick an asshole that thinks she can wave her tittle around and acts like she wants to push away white oppression yet she strives to act just like one of them and ask for their white people money. After a month or two of telling her that my prom was May 3rd the same day as a presentation she scheduled decided last minute that it was “impossible” or to far fetched for me to reschedule my presentation. Additionally, she expects me to work on a project single-handedly after my partners decided not to do it and is it a bibliography to write a three page paper or try to at least assist in the

animation. She still however expects me to turn in the animation and a paper that I have worked on completely by myself yet my partners in this group project grades and attitudes seem to be unaffected. This asshole honestly doesn't seem to get that I refuse to work on this project any further and still Expects me to turn it in how funny of her! 🖐️ this class, 🖐️ the people that don't do shit in this class, 🖐️ this work, 🖐️ this project, 🖐️ this grade, 🖐️ Professor Francis Roberts Gregory, 🖐️ y'all period, 🖐️ this program, 🖐️ Y'all again, and 🖐️ Everybody in this office and that works for 🖐️ 🖐️ 🖐️ All around !

Figure 4. Hacked Instagram Account and Nonfactual/Illogical Student Rant

Although the entire situation was extremely hurtful and I was disappointed that the student chose to a) skip her final exam under the influence of her mother, b) refused to collaboratively complete her final project with her group members, and c) wrote me multiple nasty emails when I tried to provide alternative final exam options, I nevertheless learned an important lesson from this conflict. I now recognize that it is unrealistic to expect youth impacted by layered, cumulative, and intergenerational trauma to always make the best decisions and behave in rational or logical ways when they do not get their way. Instead, it is important to intentionally build up students' emotional intelligence and design opportunities for students to develop emotional resilience in and outside of the classroom so that class discussions, environmental autoethnographies, and other reflexive exercises do not inadvertently trigger trauma responses. It is also important to practice feminist accountability, set age-appropriate boundaries, and correct bad behavior as an othermother and feminist climate activist.

Teaching in “Post-Katrina” New Orleans charter schools also brought a host of additional challenges due to my inexperience as an instructor, student misunderstandings of plagiarism, and school system-wide disorganization. For example, when I caught two early college students plagiarizing their written papers, I could have failed them in accordance with neoliberal disciplinary norms. However, I chose not to fail them in the spirit of care and feminist accountability. Despite their denial, resistance, embarrassment, and anger, I required that they redo the assignments and seek support from writing tutors. I also spoke with one mother to explain they would be required to redo the assignment. In addition, I later cultivated plagiarism resources and an exhaustive list of writing tips for my other students because I recognized that we did not have universal definitions of plagiarism, we did not all learn the same writing and grammatical rules in elementary school, and I did not want to contribute the criminalization of Black and Brown students. During my teaching tenure, Orleans Parish finally lacked a master calendar. As a result, many of my early college students routinely missed instructional time, final presentations, and field trips due to scheduling conflicts at their home schools, band and sport obligations, and state testing requirements. This is evidenced by the following fieldnote entry.

The Livingston students came late to class today due to state testing. This normalized, yet dysfunctional, occurrence made me really reflect on how the students lose out on learning opportunities without a city-wide master calendar and a troublesome focus on market-based testing. When Jo-Anne arrived, she didn't even have the mental fortitude and bandwidth to contribute to her group's presentation. That would never fly in a regular college classroom, but I believed her when she said her brain was too scrambled to contribute anything to the conversation. My students are trying to manage a lot.

There was also a lack of funding for transportation, so we could not devote significant time to service-learning and field trips. Fortunately, I was able to apply for a small transportation grant for one of my civic engagement courses so students could leave the school building. However, my periodic fieldtrips put an additional strain on administrators and staff since field trips often require additional chaperones and someone to track down student permission slips. Many institutions lack infrastructure and personnel to pull off large scale civic engagement courses that require deep, meaningful engagement with communities. It was also difficult to meet community

needs within the constraints of a semester and encourage students to take the initiative to reach out to community partners.

Even More Challenges

Although I often referred students to mental health support resources, accepted late work, and repeatedly encouraged students to turn in missing assignments and attend class, some students defiantly refused to communicate with me or engage class material.

Only one student did not pass my course this semester. The administration requested that I allow her to turn in assignments later in the summer due to mental health issues. I told them no because I lacked time, capacity, and financial compensation as a visiting adjunct professor to review her work later. She will instead enroll in a different course for similar credit. To be honest, I noticed something was wrong when she didn't turn in any assignments. I emailed her repeatedly, but she refused to respond to any of my emails. She also wanted to present last during the final exam period because she wasn't prepared. Now that I have time to reflect, I do not feel equipped or institutionally supported to address my own mental health needs and support students' anxiety. That's an area of improvement I would like to work on. What does emotional resiliency even mean at this point?

It was nevertheless difficult for me to "fail" early college, undergraduate, and graduate students who lacked the emotional skills and bandwidth to successfully complete my courses and navigated mental health challenges with limited psychosocial support. During one of my early college seminars, for example,

I asked students to raise their hands if they knew people who get upset when it rains, and experiences eco-anxiety when they think about climate change. Almost everyone raised their hands. We then discussed what love looks like and doesn't look like. We concluded that when you love someone, you don't let them do whatever they want to do. You instead hold them accountable. We then discussed cultures of addiction and consumption and why some people during hurricanes choose not to leave a place because it symbolizes home, identity, and memories.

After class, I talked to one of the administrators about my concerns that some students were being set up to fail and they didn't have the emotional bandwidth to academically succeed in my class and needed space to build life skills and then return to the "traditional" classroom. In frustration I said, "I know we can't address structural issues in the classroom, but I want my students to succeed." And the administrator explained that many of the schools did not have the resources to address behavioral issues unless it was mandated by an individual education plan (IEP). I admitted that I didn't have the formal qualifications to diagnose students but could easily identify trauma responses.

Finally, I struggled with the push to set high expectations and build student confidence, while holding students accountable to mediocre performance. As a feminist educator, I do not think we should be reluctant to have real conversations with students about the social, cultural, and intellectual capital required to succeed in elite academic spaces. We should

be honest about areas of improvement students might need, in addition to their assets and strengths. I also think we should be prepared for students to complain and resist when we challenge them to step outside their emotional, social, and intellectual comfort zones.

It was similarly challenging to convince some students to try out unfamiliar feminist academic practices like arranging their chairs in a circle as opposed to facing the instructor, letting go of perfectionism through critical skimming of texts, forming study groups instead of instructor-created slides, and moving away from lecture styles of instruction. Some students were also resistant to syllabi that evolved over time (i.e., to make space for their collective interests and individual positionalities) and seminar-style approaches in virtual learning environments for multilingual students. Angry students were not open to rewatching recorded lectures for deeper understandings or open to recognizing that underpaid adjunct elective instructors like me could not provide the learning infrastructure (to which they felt entitled) during intense, two-week courses. According to one UPeace teaching evaluation,

Provide some slides - it is difficult for people to reach a deep understanding only by listening when English is not their first language and the theories that are being used are new. Ideally, this class should not be taught online.

Other international students refused to critically interrogate the erasures created by the Global North/Global South binary (i.e., the Global South exists in the Global North via BIPOC toxic geographies. In addition, some transnational Taiwanese corporations specifically target Black communities in Louisiana for billion-dollar chemical manufacturing plants) or acknowledge the global character of sacrifice zones. Despite my intentional efforts to ensure that my UPeace curriculum was interdisciplinary, diasporic, and multivocal, some students rallied around a classroom bully using dog whistle politics³⁴. By routinely utilizing phrases such as “quality over quantity” and “American centric” (despite my positionality as a Black working-class woman living in the Caribbean Gulf South and presentation of international case studies), upset students dismissed and rejected the care I provided in and outside of the classroom, as well as engaged in anti-Black and antifeminist rhetoric. Despite evidence to the contrary³⁵, one angry student erroneously claimed,

The course content was very, super American centric. The professor should understand that UPEACE is a diverse community of students and not everybody has a basic understanding of the history of Black Americans and their social conditions, and FEMINISM!

³⁴ Dog whistle politics refers to coded hateful language designed to provoke and organize a particular audience by tapping into their fear, anxieties, and deeply held values.

³⁵ During my UPeace environmental justice seminar, I regularly 1) included regionally and topically diverse case studies on my syllabi, 2) privately emailed every student environmental justice case studies from their country of origin or primary residence for supplemental instruction, 3) invited and paid ethnically diverse and international environmental professionals and activists to speak to students using my personal funds, 4) provided evidence to support the transnational scope of environmental justice activism (i.e. although the environmental justice principles were developed by BIPOC communities in the USA, they were translated into multiple languages and endorsed by Global South communities at the historic UN 1992 Rio Summit), and 5) required that students research and present case studies using the Global EJ Atlas during class time.

Finally, I unexpectedly had to create alternative assignments for students experiencing a Myanmar coup d'état. Students based in Myanmar were ultimately unable to complete my UPeace course due to political instability and informed me of their collective decision to withdraw from our graduate course.

We regret to inform you about the withdrawal of the EJ course (2 credits) due to many incapable conditions including emotional burdens. Although we were encouraged to keep up this course, we could not make it happen at final. Our emotional breakdown, current circumstances of our learning environment and access to the internet (very low bandwidth and unstable) and electricity (often blackout) lead us to make a decision of the course withdrawal. Under these circumstances, we will not be able to complete this course.

Nevertheless, the Myanmar students and I communicated very positively via email (when possible), and I assured them that they would be successful in their future academic endeavors. I also encouraged them to take time to focus on the immediate political climate without guilt, fear, or shame. In the spirit of care, I finally disclosed to them that over the course of my academic career, I too had withdrawn from many courses due to mental health and other extenuating circumstances, yet still managed to pursue a doctoral degree. I also disclosed the power outages and Wi-Fi issues I experienced as a Gulf Coast resident. Nonetheless, these and other experiences troubled my spirit and highlighted the limits and contradictions of transnational solidarity in practice, especially when educational institutions lack care infrastructure for feminist scholar-educator-activists and youth.

Lessons Learned

Most importantly, my metamorphosis from an insecure feminist graduate researcher into a confident ecowomanist educator and feminist climate activist inspired me to reconceptualize environmental education from a schooling experience to a political activist opportunity. In fact, I learned just as much from my students about sustainable development as they learned from me about feminist approaches to environmental, energy, and climate justice. Developing environmental curriculum for the DSCEJ furthermore opened my eyes to my own family's vulnerability to unnatural climate disaster. For example,

While celebrating my birthday and attending my great-grandmother's funeral in North Carolina, I worked on my curriculum for the DSCEJ Gulf Equity Water Corps Project. I learned so much about sea level rise by developing the curriculum. The Union for Concerned Scientists claims that the US East Coast and US Gulf Coast have the highest rates of sea level rise in the country, and listed Louisiana, Maryland, Miami, and Savannah as localities that will be severely impacted. Their scientific resources also identify New York and northern New Jersey as hotspots on their vulnerability and adversely impacted maps. This new information surprised me because I am from Newark, NJ and I have never previously thought about how my hometown could be negatively impacted by climate change.

I eventually began to appreciate the role I played in my students' lives, even when select students did not complete their assignments or reciprocate the care I provided as an othermother. I know that representation matters, and at the end of the day, I served an important mentoring and peer mentoring role for diverse youth and young adults interested in environmental justice, sustainable development, and climate action. My classroom management also improved as I built

genuine relationships with my students and adjusted my curriculum to be more regionally relevant and accessible to different literacies and skill levels. By the end of each semester, I also knew that many students would seriously consider environmental careers. For example, it felt good to influence students interested in business to also pursue wildlife biology, environmental science, environmental law, city planning, and public health. When asked about environmentalists of color they could name during my end of course evaluations, many of my students identified me as their favorite environmentalist. If my students could confidently identify me as an impactful environmentalist, I reasoned that I should more confidently embrace my emerging professional ecowomanist identity.

I also recognized over time that the content and critical perspectives that shaped my courses, workshops, and training modules were directly influenced by my environmental activism as a STEMInist³⁶, professional internship experiences, and previous undergraduate/graduate campus organizing experiences as former president of the Spelman College Environmental Task Force and former president of the UC Berkeley Black Graduate Student Association. For example, I began to connect the dots between feminist climate activism and youth engagement after protesting the tenure denial of feminist geographer Carolyn Finney within the UC Berkeley College of Natural Resources, interning with the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA) in NYC, and attending the 2017 Uprose Youth Climate Justice Summit as an EGA Environmental Fellow with Dr. Dorceta Taylor. I also subscribed to international climate and energy listservs, joined feminist climate justice Facebook and WhatsApp groups, co-facilitated and organized two workshops to encourage women of color to identify as scientists more confidently at the 31st Annual UC Berkeley Empowering Women of Color Conference (EWOCC), and gave a speech on holding science accountable to environmental justice and human rights at the 2017 Berkeley March for Science. My experience participating in Black Lives Matter, women's rights, People's Climate Movement, Poor People's Campaign, and Cancer Alley protests and marches in Oakland, Washington D.C., Baton Rouge, and the New Orleans metropolitan region further influenced my ideas around civil disobedience, civic engagement, and the generative role of youth in social movements.

Finally, it is extremely important that we make space for self-care and healing justice for feminist environmental educators who navigate microaggressions, presumed incompetence, "know your place" aggression, and cyber-harassment from students who resist critical pedagogies and feminist ethics of accountability (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012; Mitchell 2018; HiveFund 2020; Hernandez, Kent, and Martell 2015). Although some students expressed gratitude for all the care I provided (and even bought me flowers), other students consistently challenged my boundaries, resisted my authority, and disrespected my credentials. From my own teaching experiences, I thus recognize that misogynoir manifests as students who constantly challenge your competency, send harassing or inappropriate emails, and bully you on teaching evaluations and social media platforms using very hostile language.

These experiences were so emotionally and spiritually draining, that I eventually decided to take a break from teaching as activism. To enact refusal to the neoliberal university, practice slow

³⁶ A STEMInist is a feminist scientist who advocates for greater representation of women, girls, queer folk, and other underrepresented bodies in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

scholarship, and embody feminist resistance, I dared to dream and plan for a season of rest, recovery, and recuperation through an anticipated healing justice sabbatical.

I don't want to teach anymore. All the administrators said they will miss me if I leave, but I honestly am not that interested in teaching at this institution anymore. One of my introspective students reflected that my class was not as challenging this year as it was last year, and that he missed the intense writing assignments. I told him that I simply got tired of hearing people complain. He replied that students did not appreciate me like they should. He also promised to stop by my classroom and say hello in the future.

For these reasons and more, I echo scholarly calls for an ethic of care for ecofeminist educators (Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017). According to Lloro-Bidart and Semenko (2017:20) , “teachers face emotional exhaustion and burnout due to the nurturing requirements of their profession” and “caring is a political act”. Consequently, a feminist ethic of care for environmental educators “acknowledges that women disproportionately bear the emotional costs of teaching” and “challenges neoliberal temporalities by creating structural supports of time and space for the expression of emotion as part of truth-telling” (Lloro-Bidart and Semenko 2017: 22). In other words, a feminist ethic of care for environmental educators forces me to name my political and intellectual work as feminist activist work, and demand that such work be valued, supported, and adequately compensated. Fortunately, I joined and presented a lecture for a burgeoning teacher activist support group, An Existential Toolkit for Climate Justice Educators, to 1) help process the violence I experienced as a result of my political and pedagogical commitments, and 2) challenge conservative pushback against the teaching of critical theories of race that also threaten feminist pedagogies, climate literacy, and youth activism (ExistentialToolkit 2021; Waite 2021).

Conclusion

Feminist scholar-educator-activism and ecowomanist pedagogies thus hold the potential to incite personal transformation, promote justice-centered science communication, and inspire climate action in the Gulf Coast and Global South. Feminist climate justice pedagogies, moreover, facilitate opportunities for hope, grief, discomfort, accountability, and meditations on freedom. The use of a multitude of spatial and digital mapping tools to visualize justice and injustice in the built-natural environment, including the Instagram photovoice assignment and community asset mapping, similarly promote critical landscape literacy and inspire youth climate activism (Whiston Spirn 2005). I also demonstrate that ecowomanist pedagogies, guided by feminist praxis and community geography frameworks, strengthen learning outcomes for youth, interrogate intersectional understandings of power and privilege, as well as contribute to a sense of collective ownership over knowledge production (Roberts-Gregory 2021; Harris 2017; Rees et al. 2020; Shannon et al. 2020) .

I moreover contextualize my feminist activist teaching and curricular choices as part of the “unlearning” process and healing journey required for decolonial, feminist, and abolitionist environmental education. Consequently, I appreciate the various students who expressed gratitude for my innovative, yet pragmatic, pedagogical approaches. The cathartic impact of environmental autoethnographies and other reflexive and critical tools should not be understated. For example, one undergraduate student reflects,

This class has challenged me to think about my positionality and solidified my interdisciplinary future. Our conversations on science and post-truth realities have made me much more critical of the biases and funding of information. Our discussions on Haraway and feminist philosophy of science deeply reconfigured how I think about knowledge. Thank you so much. This has been my favorite class at Tulane.

Another UPeace student professes,

Your words, perfectionism is over-rated, have done so much good to me. I am healing a long time wound.

Moving forward, I am thus excited to further tweak and improve my own ecowomanist approach to environmental education to minimize student-initiated violence and compassion fatigue and enable more opportunities for service-learning and reciprocal partnerships. For example, I would like to include more ritual and mindfulness within my feminist classrooms and workshops. I would also like to find sustainable funding sources to provide food and drink for my students during every learning session (I formerly used my own personal funds) and financially compensate youth interns more adequately. Future research should also identify and historicize herstories of BIWOC³⁷ abolitionist environmental educators, as well as their use of radical pedagogies to promote critical conscientization and freedom in and outside of formal learning spaces. I would also like to link BIPOC scholar-educator-activism more intentionally to a legacy of southern and Global South civil rights, human rights, environmental justice, and abolitionist social movements. Lastly, future research should more critically and meaningfully integrate queer theorists, queer pedagogical approaches, queer ecologies, and perspective of LGBTQIA+ communities within ecowomanist and feminist activist pedagogies.

Finally, I would like to experiment with new course titles and descriptions of my future courses to attract more male bodied students and students who are repelled and threatened by feminist ideas. When teaching in virtual and international environments, I would like to use messaging apps like WhatsApp to facilitate popular education courses (Walters and Kotze 2021) and address Wi-Fi and bandwidth issues, as well as work with university staff and administrators to provide the multilingual support and robust learning infrastructure that international students desire and deserve. Lastly, I am eager to better negotiate meeting students' needs (i.e., creating lecture slides for intense seminar courses) with challenging students to experiment with unfamiliar, at times uncomfortable, feminist pedagogical strategies (i.e., study groups, critical skimming, and non-hierarchical learning).

Although this article does not advance the somewhat controversial position that all learning counts as activism (or does it?), it does suggest that ecowomanist approaches to environmental, energy, and climate justice offer more meaningful opportunities for youth and educators to engage in multi-directional dialog and expand notions of gendered everyday climate activism. As evidenced throughout this article, critical pedagogies, experiential learning, digital media, mapping technologies, and art-based and justice-centered science communication are all

³⁷ Black, Indigenous, Women of Color (BIWOC)

important vehicles to usher in greater political conscientization amongst youth and adults. For these reasons and more, I urge more environmental educators to lean into teaching climate justice as feminist activism and embrace innovative opportunities for intergenerational learning. We are all allies in the fight against landscape illiteracy, gendered and sexual violence, and climate inaction. As such, we must courageously demand alternative futures based on feminist economies of care and degrowth, a just transition to fossil fuel freeish communities, and feminist activist education for environmental, energy, and climate justice.

As an ecowomanist and STEMinist, I unequivocally believe that environmental educators are warriors and othermothers on the frontlines of environmental, energy, and climate justice; in fact, ecowomanist learning experiences provide fertile ground for radical environmental thought and intersectional climate activism. I conclude with a nod to the feminists, ecologists, and geographers who shaped my own womanist trajectory into environmental education and climate activism, and provide the following questions as “food for thought” for scholar-educator-activists committed to mentoring and inspiring wild women, radical change agents, youth climate activists, ecological visionaries, and unapologetic rule-breakers.

Questions for Provocation

- 1) What do feminist abolition ecologies feel, look, smell, taste, and sound like?
- 2) How might feminist environmentalists implement creative and abolitionist pedagogies that challenge students within institutions with limited psychosocial resources?
- 3) How should environmental educators promote post-traumatic growth within and outside of feminist classrooms?
- 4) Since Harris (2017) reminds us that self-care is earth care, what are challenges and opportunities for addressing compassion fatigue and burnout?
- 5) What feminist tools should we develop to promote collective care and healing justice during the triple crisis of care, climate, and COVID?
- 6) Is it time for environmental educators to periodically leave the classroom (and academia) to sustain our work and feminist praxis?
- 7) What do we risk if we do leave our classrooms and traditional modes of teaching, and what is at stake if we do not leave and radically reimagine feminist environmental scholar-educator-activism?

Chapter 3

Everyday Resistance to Louisiana State Corporate Crime: Black and Indigenous Women Visioning Abolitionist Futures and Feminist Ecologies of Anti-Resilience

By Frances Roberts-Gregory

Abstract

Gulf Coast Louisiana has developed into an epicenter of fossil fuel extraction, plastics manufacturing, and petroleum refining. Coupled with industrial tax exemptions, right-to-work laws, and the political influence of multinational corporations, Louisiana's industrial activity also contributes to rising greenhouse gas emissions, impaired environmental quality, and poor public health outcomes. Petrochemical corridors such as Cancer/Death Alley, ecologically devastating oil spills, and riverine and bayou sacrifice zones moreover present textbook case studies of state-corporate crime. Recently activated concerned citizens, grassroots community organizers, and seasoned environmental and social justice activists nevertheless resist racialized and gendered pollution burdens, as well as condemn the erosion of democracy, freedom of speech, and Indigenous and human rights. The following article historicizes political corruption within a Louisianian context, as well as centers the abolitionist dreams of BIPOC women who are often erased from mainstream activist narratives yet maintain inspirational, if undervalued, (her)stories of environmental resistance. I draw upon embodied autoethnographic ecomemories, participant observation data, and feminist activist interviews with over fifty Black and Indigenous women to theorize everyday strategies of BIWOC resistance and concretize the contradictory realities of survivance within petrocolonial landscapes. My analysis illuminates how Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women reject state-corporate politics of expendability and disposability to alternatively nurture an emergent ecowomanist ethic of anti-resilience. (We) also challenge problematic binary representations that pit environment and equity against economy and energy modernization; we reimagine toxic geographies as feminist abolition ecologies, thus fostering a just transition to energy reparations and more fossil fuel *freeish* futures.

Introduction

Louisiana's love affair with extractive industries, including offshore oil and gas, petrochemicals, pipeline networks, refineries, and plastics manufacturing, contributes to rising greenhouse gas emissions, poor public health outcomes (i.e., increased COVID mortality rates), energy poverty, and impaired water, soil, and air bodies (Wilson et al. 2020; Terrell and James 2020; Roberts-Gregory 2021; Luke and Heynen 2020). In fact, Louisiana's Cancer Alley (i.e., Death Alley), catastrophic oil spills, and devastating wetland loss illustrate the ravages of state-corporate crime and plantation fiscal logic via bayou and riverine sacrifice zones (Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018; Luke and Heynen 2020). The state's lax enforcement of environmental policies, generous industrial tax exemptions, right-to-work laws, and horrendous environmental quality ranking likewise illustrate collusion between the state and multinational corporations that routinely target Louisiana for polluting industries (Roberts-Gregory 2020c; B. Wright et al. 2021; Colten 2012). The connivance of state and corporate officials is consequently of continued scholarly interest to critical environmental justice scholars who critique environmental violence in the afterlife of enslavement, subsidized plantation agriculture, petro-racial capitalism, and settler colonialism (McDowell 2013; Luke and Heynen 2020). It also illuminates the genealogy of Louisiana's

particular history of corruption, patronage, and cronyism (Kojola and Pellow 2021; Bradshaw 2014; Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018; Maldonado 2019; Veron 2015; Colten 2012).

Furthermore, “State-corporate crime theory takes seriously the crimes of political, social and economic elites within the context of governmental and corporate institutions” (Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018: 887). The study of global assemblages of state-corporate interests is thus exceedingly important in geographies such as southeast Louisiana where corporate elites own 90% of coastal land (i.e., the industrial “working coast”) as a result of illegal land grabs from Indigenous people(s) and frontline communities of color (Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018). A growing chorus of social scientists fortunately theorize state-corporate crime, public outcries of deviant institutional actions, and chronic victimization of frontline communities in petrocolonial landscapes within and outside the United States (Bradshaw 2014; B. Wright et al. 2021; McDowell 2013). For example, Wright et al. (2021: 3) highlight how frontline Black communities along the Mississippi chemical corridor experience some of the highest rates of cancer; transnational corporations moreover use “site transfer, sister cities, and buyout and build” to maintain petro-hegemony in collusion with Louisiana’s weak regulatory and emission permitting system. Rural sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers moreover connect coastal land loss, health disparities, educational discrimination, political marginalization, and threats to Indigenous sovereignty within Isle de Jean Charles, a frontline Louisiana bayou community, to oil and gas exploration and lack of federal recognition. Tax laws and policies that favor fossil fuel extraction and the use of toxic chemical dispersants during the 2010 BP oil spill likewise create conditions for state-corporate crime (Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018; Maldonado 2019; Liddell, McKinley, and Lilly 2021). In fact, “lack of recognition has exacerbated both historic land loss, when many tribal members lost their land to unscrupulous oil companies, and contemporary land loss, where individuals lose land to rising water and misinformation about land ownership and taxes” (Liddell, McKinley, and Lilly 2021: 15). According to Luke and Heynen (2020: 605), “taxation further subsidized extractive industries while reducing funds available for education, social services, public works, and other collective infrastructures.”

In response to governmental and corporate neglect, abandonment, and demonstrated criminal action, critical researchers and scholar-activists fortunately call for greater attention to multiracial organizing and feminist activism along the Gulf Coast after unnatural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill. They also document ongoing everyday resistance to urban/coastal displacement, gentrification, and energy inequities (Harriford and Thompson 2008; Maldonado 2019; Luke and Heynen 2020). For example, grassroots and women’s organizations such as Women of the Storm, Women with a Vision, the New Orleans Survivor Council, INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and other community-based organizations spearheaded post-disaster community restoration efforts and intergenerational fights for housing and gender justice. Indigenous, Honduran, Vietnamese, Korean, Caribbean, White, and immigrant women similarly struggled to rebuild after disaster and recoup damages (David and Enarson 2012; David 2008; McTighe and Haywood 2018), while multi-racial environmental justice coalitions including the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ), the Alliance for Affordable Energy, 350 New Orleans, Justice & Beyond, the Sierra Club, the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance, and VAYLA New Orleans organized for community

solar programs and renewable portfolio standards in New Orleans³⁸ (Luke and Heynen 2020). Musicians, muralists, visual artists, storytellers, and other cultural bearers in the Gulf Coast region (i.e., Black Masking Indians, Baby Dolls, and second line crews) also resisted environmental racism, classism, and sexism when they refused to accept discriminatory parading regulations and noise ordinances (i.e., cultural sanitation, silencing, and genocide) and collectively preserve cultural ecomemories (David 2008; Batlan 2008; McTighe and Haywood 2018). Their everyday acts of embodied resistance and refusal challenge everyday politics of expendability³⁹, disposability, and dehumanization (Kojola and Pellow 2021; Pellow 2016; Giroux 2007).

State-corporate crime in Gulf Coast Louisiana is thus a political and spatial reality that disproportionately restricts access to resources and nurtures (her)stories of survivance⁴⁰ within frontline Black, Native American, Hispanic, and Asian communities (Hemmerling, DeMyers, and Parfait 2021; Vizenor 2008). Everyday resistance furthermore takes many forms. Within environmental justice movement spaces, for example, BIWOC⁴¹ scholar-educator-activists such as Dr. Beverly Wright with the DSCEJ resist both epistemic injustice and the intersections of environmental racism and sexism through intentional naming and academic credentialing practices i.e., she demands that her earned title “Doctor” be used in professional spaces (Mohai, Bryant, and Slatin 2020). Critical social scientists also theorize everyday activism outside of formal politics and multi-scalar BIPOC⁴² activism, with a special focus on pipeline protests, alliance building, and advocacy for Indigenous water rights and sovereignty (Norman 2017; Tallbear 2016; Strauss 2018). Other scholars discuss everyday acts of survival such as fishing or gardening, everyday acts of restoration such as connection to youth, nature, place, culture, and spirit through native science and TEK⁴³, and everyday acts of refusal such as language revitalization programs, wellness and self-care, and the cultivation of gendered warrior identities on feminist front porches and the frontlines of pipeline protests (McTighe and Haywood 2018; Lane 2018; Waldron 2018). These abolitionist practices are employed by BIPOC communities to combat settler-colonialism, racial capitalist climate patriarchy, and environmental injustices (Roberts-Gregory 2020b; M. M. White 2018; Reese 2019; Harris 2017; L. T. Smith 2012; Gorecki 2021; Lane 2018). Lastly, women of color’s “resistant capital”⁴⁴ to intergenerational environmental violence and layered unnatural disaster highlights our situational, designated, and

³⁸ The Energy Future New Orleans Coalition and Cayenne Coalition helped expose the 2017 Entergy astroturfing scandal. Entergy, a Fortune 500 energy company, paid actors to support the construction of a new \$210 million gas plant in New Orleans East at New Orleans city council meetings (Luke and Heynen 2020).

³⁹ According to Kojola and Pellow (2021: 2) “state and corporate violence against Indigenous peoples and communities of color manifest themselves in multiple, intersecting forms. This violence includes police brutality, militarization, and other forms of repression, but also includes the violence of environmental injustice.” These politics of expendability lead state and legal systems to view and treat BIPOC communities as “criminal, deficient, threatening, and deserving of violent discipline...thus locating pollution in their communities” (Pellow 2016: 230).

⁴⁰ Survivance, a theoretical concept popularized by Vizenor (2008), refers to Indigenous survival, resistance, and endurance through cultural continuity, creativity, storytelling, vitality, and active presence.

⁴¹ Black, Indigenous, Women of Color (BIWOC)

⁴² Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC)

⁴³ Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

⁴⁴ According to Kohli et al. (2019) and Yosso (2005: 80), resistant capital refers to “knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.”

societally mediated roles as caretakers, othermothers⁴⁵, and agents of social change (Kohli et al. 2019; Yosso 2005; Waldron 2018).

The following article thus historicizes environmental violence within a Louisianian context and theorizes everyday strategies of BIWOC resistance to Gulf Coast state-corporate crime. My work moreover examines gendered resistance to pipeline construction, improper industrial waste disposal, and fossil fuel philanthropy within a reality of local reliance on oil and gas for economic sustenance and funding for conservation and coastal restoration efforts (Roberts-Gregory 2020c). I ultimately argue that Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women reject state-corporate politics (i.e., gendered necropolitics⁴⁶) of expendability and disposability, as well as flawed energy modernization narratives, to instead advocate for energy reparations and a just transition to more fossil fuel freeish futures. By centering the abolitionist visions of Black and Indigenous women who strive to survive, thrive, and flourish within petrocolonial landscapes, feminist activist ethnography uncompromisingly draws parallels between Louisiana's codependent and contradictory relationship with energy and petrochemical industries and our (inter)national dependence on fossil fuels and plastics during the triple crisis of climate, care, and COVID.

Literature Review

Louisiana State-Corporate Crime

Louisiana's long history of plantation enslavement, Jim and Jane Crow, Indigenous dispossession and persecution, and political corruption has often encouraged local governmental officials to turn a blind eye to post WW2 industrial and agricultural pollution of Louisiana's waterways and drinking water (i.e., the Mississippi River). The growth of petrochemical facilities and refineries from the 1940s to 1970s within former plantations along the Mississippi River and creation of oil pipelines and canals along the Louisiana bayous also cemented class hierarchies; an oil oligarchy moreover targeted descendants of formerly enslaved individuals, as well as Indigenous, Creole, Cajun, and later Vietnamese communities for pollution and waste (B. Wright et al. 2021; Hemmerling, DeMyers, and Parfait 2021; Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018; Davies 2018; Frankland and Tucker 2013; Maldonado 2019; D. E. Taylor 2014; Colten 2012). According to Wright et al. (2021: 5), state corporate crime flourished in Louisiana as transnational corporations relocated to the Gulf Coast region to take advantage of "guaranteed low taxes, low wages, a non-union labor force, and lax environmental regulation." Bradshaw (2014) and Veron (2015) similarly document the cover up of environmental crimes in Louisiana through censorship of the media by state and corporate interests.

Although grassroots environmental activism and attention to racialized pollution burdens increased during the 1990s, studies of gendered resistance in Louisiana remain few and far between. Studies of pollution tend to center race and class over gender and other markers of difference. In addition, Wright et al. (2021), Davies (2018), and Taylor (2014) identify uneven

⁴⁵According to feminist and BIPOC scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, othermothers refer to non-biological caretakers and mother figures who support fictive kin and community building through mentorship, support, and resource sharing (Riedman 2021; Collins 1994).

⁴⁶ Critical social scientists deploy Foucault's biopolitics (i.e., the power to control and manage life) and Mbembe's necropolitics (i.e., the power to let die) to contest statist violence which result in premature death (Davies 2018; C. A. Smith 2016; Gilmore 2002).

geographies of pollution and describes the slow violence and epistemic injustice of toxic petrochemical pollution within the Baton Rouge to New Orleans chemical corridor i.e., Cancer or Death Alley⁴⁷. Such scholarship thus identifies the birth and evolution of the environmental justice movement to address 1) the disproportionate siting of polluting industries in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, 2) the unequal enforcement of environmental regulations, and 3) lack of diversity in the mainstream (i.e., Big Green) environmental movement. Finally, critical environmental justice scholars theorize the continual relegation of the Mississippi chemical corridor as an environmental sacrifice zone despite an increase in environmental laws nationally (i.e., the Clean Water and Air Acts during the 1970s) and internationally (i.e., treaties, conventions, and agreements to address ozone, biodiversity, and climate change), thus inspiring further resistance from grassroots Louisiana communities of color and allies from the 1980s to the present day (B. Wright et al. 2021). Environmental offenders and pollution in Louisiana are also rarely, never, and/or leniently prosecuted, punished, or held criminally liable (Lynch 2021).

Green and Ecofeminist Criminology

The study of green criminology and environmental harms developed throughout the 1990s as criminologists developed a greater interest in crimes defined a) legally through policy and laws and b) scientifically through ecology and toxicology (Stretesky, Long, and Lynch 2014)⁴⁸. Environmental justice scholars and green criminologists furthermore focus on a variety of environmental harms and theories of harm that impact communities of color i.e., the spatial distribution of environmental hazards, theories of environmental discrimination and justice, eco-activism, and environmental law & policy and its' relation to corporate environmental violence (Zilney, McGurrian, and Zahran 2006; Hasler, Walters, and White 2020). Green criminologists also theorize social action and differentiate between state-initiated (leading the directive), state-facilitated (failure to regulate), corporate-initiated (coercion of the state), and corporate-facilitated (failure to report) crimes (Bisschop, Strobl, and Viollaz 2018; McDowell 2013). Finally, green criminologists and activist scholars discuss the surveillance, criminalization, infiltration, doxing, intimidation, persecution, incarceration, and assassination of climate activists, water protectors, and environmental defenders (Hasler, Walters, and White 2020; Glazebook and Opoku 2018).

To combat the necropolitics of state-corporate crime in Louisiana and ensure the livability of Louisiana for current and future generations, various assemblages of concerned citizens, grassroots community organizations, policy think tanks, environmental nonprofits, multiracial faith-based coalitions, and lastly, seasoned environmental, human, civil rights, and social justice activists organize across parish lines. Nevertheless, green criminologists have devoted insufficient attention to gendered strategies of resistance in social movement efficacy and sustainability, as well as the role of Louisiana women of color in frontline struggles against fossil fuel extraction. Ecofeminist criminologists, in contrast, illuminate large numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women at the hands of state-corporate interests. Ecofeminist framings of environmental violence similarly draw parallels between the criminal victimization of women

⁴⁷ The New Orleans-Baton Rouge chemical corridor is home to nearly 150 petrochemical plants and 27 refineries (B. Wright et al. 2021).

⁴⁸ Although environmental or green crimes are often narrowly defined by lawyers and policymakers in the legal sphere, green criminologists broadly define green crimes as any harm or action that causes ecological damage.

and the criminal victimization of nature; ecofeminist criminologists thus recast environmental violence as human rights and women's rights issues (Tran et al. 2020; Lynch 2018; Wonders and Danner 2015). Finally, many environmental defenders paradoxically collaborate *with* and *against* the state (i.e. water protectors who work with environmentalist NGOs and regulatory agencies while simultaneously fighting DAPL and other fossil fuel infrastructure) in their pursuit of environmental, energy, and climate justice (Hasler, Walters, and White 2020).

Women's Everyday Environmental Justice Activism

U.S. women's everyday environmental justice activism challenges private/public and everyday/organized dichotomies, as demonstrated by Kurtz's (2007) study of women's community activism in St. James, Louisiana, Camp's (2004) analysis of enslaved women's resistance, and White's (2011; 2018) use of urban agriculture to better conceptualize collective agency and community resilience. Various scholars moreover highlight the power of motherhood narratives (Snyder 2012; Kurtz 2007) and place attachment for women's environmental activism in Appalachia (Bell 2013); the role of othermothers for community survival (Riedman 2021; Collins 1994; Thomas 2018; David and Enarson 2012); geographies of self-reliance and everyday refusals (Reese 2019; M. M. White 2011; 2018); Black and Indigenous women's cartographies of struggle (McKittrick 2006; Waldron 2018), women's disidentification with activist labels (Bell 2013; Frankland and Tucker 2013); gendered faith-based and nonprofit organizing (David and Enarson 2012); environmental pollution and breast cancer activism (Anglin 1998); reproductive justice and women's health networks (U. Y. Taylor 1998; Sasser 2018); and, lastly, the role of Indigenous women in pipeline resistance (Strauss 2018; Lane 2018; Tallbear 2016).

Black and Indigenous women in Louisiana also have a long history of resistance against unnatural disaster, environmental violence, and interlocking systems of gendered, classed, and racialized oppression (Camp 2004; Maldonado 2019; Allured 2013; Rainey and Johnson 2009). Camp (2004), for example, draws a direct connection between the personal and the political by disrupting dichotomies between everyday resistance and organized rebellion. Camp moreover identifies enslaved Louisiana women's everyday cultures of opposition within context of ongoing violence to diasporic people(s) and theorizes more fluid interpretations of Black women's strategies of refusal, self-expression, play, mobility, subversion, bodily autonomy, and fugitivity within plantation landscapes. Allured (2013) similarly outlines the everyday resistance and historical organizing efforts of diverse Louisiana feminists and proto-feminists, including Black civil rights activists, faith-based leaders, social workers, voting rights and peace activists, teachers, women's civic organizations and clubs members, and female faculty at HBCUs like Southern University. According to Rainey and Johnson (2009: 158-159) "Tactics used by women leaders in various grassroots EJ movements have included things like organizing demonstrations, and rallies, educating the public, researching and monitoring toxic sites, preparing and presenting expert testimony to government agencies, reclaiming land through direct action and maintaining and teaching traditional agricultural practices, crafts, and skills."

Everyday Resistance: Embodied and Intersectional Perspectives

The study of everyday peasant resistance (i.e., hidden, disguised, and/or informal oppositional acts to entrenched power) was popularized by *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott 1985). According to Scott's (1985) Marxist and structuralist analysis, everyday forms of resistance for

individuals/communities lacking formal and visible positions of power ranged from physical tactics such as squatting, foot dragging, theft, or desertion to symbolic acts such as gossiping about elites, mythmaking, and rituals of aggression. According to the poststructuralist and Foucauldian analysis of Johansson and Vinthagen (2016: 418), progressive and regressive everyday resistance can alternatively be operationalized as “1) a practice (not a certain consciousness, intent or outcome); 2) historically entangled with (everyday) power (not separated, dichotomous or independent); 3) needs to be understood as intersectional with the powers that it engages with (not one single power relation); and 4) heterogeneous and contingent due to changing contexts and situations (not a universal strategy or coherent form of action).”

Everyday resistance, as a matrix of negotiated relations between actants, targets, and observers, can likewise buttress and contest systems of oppression due to the inherent contradictions, irrationality, and complexity that define oppositional acts (Johansson and Vinthagen 2020). For example, LeQuesne (2019) draws upon Collins’ matrix of domination and theories of intersectionality to theorize Indigenous water protectors’ matrix of resistance (i.e., networks of solidarity, identity-based resistance tactics, and populist activist alliances) against interlocking systems of oppression. Indigenous water protectors enact a matrix of resistance when struggling against fossil fuel infrastructure (i.e., the Dakota Access Pipeline) and extractive industries’ (i.e., Energy Transfer Partners) overall encroachment on native sovereignty. Activist researchers are moreover better able to identify the interconnected, intersectional, and dynamic repertoires (i.e., forms, techniques, tactics, and strategies), actors, sites, and temporalization that characterize everyday acts of individual resistance by focusing on guiding principles of social action as opposed to precise analytical frameworks. Activist researchers likewise document resistance norms produced by “resistance cultures” and “resistance communities” (Johansson and Vinthagen 2016; Kasbari and Vinthagen 2020; Johansson and Vinthagen 2020).

Critical environmental justice and Indigenous scholars lastly highlight the alignment and collusion of state and industry interests within petrocolonial landscapes and the central role of Indigenous women in activist struggles against environmental and climate injustice (LeQuesne 2019; Kyle Powys Whyte 2017; Lane 2018; Waldron 2018). LeQuesne (2019), Lane (2018), and other Indigenous scholars moreover identify an assemblage of fossil fuel interests, dependencies, and coercions (i.e., the petro-state, petro-culture, and petro-capitalism) that facilitate petro-hegemony via state-corporate persecution, repression, and cooptation. Feminist, queer, and other critical social scientists similarly theorize informal, routine, and unorganized oppositional acts which comprise embodied, if undervalued, “repertoires of resistance” within the body, public-private spaces, marginal and third spaces, and cyber spaces (Johansson and Vinthagen 2016; hooks 1990; Soja 1996). Their work, and the work of countless other scholars within the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, lay the theoretical groundwork for the following study of Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women’s everyday resistance to state-corporate crime.

Methodology

Utilizing Black feminist, decolonizing, and ecowomanist methodologies (Roberts-Gregory 2021; Harris 2017; McClaurin 2001; Craven and Davis 2013; L. T. Smith 2012), I interviewed fifty-two self-identifying Black and Indigenous women involved in environmental, energy, and climate justice struggles in Gulf Coast Louisiana. Interviewees were recruited from my personal

contacts via my role as a feminist climate scholar-educator-activist, via referral from other Gulf Coast environmentalists, and via snowball sampling. 63% of interviews were completed in 2019 and 37% of interviews were completed in 2020. 10% of interviews were unfortunately never fully completed due to schedule conflicts, lack of time on the part of the interviewee to commit to the entire interview process, and lackluster interest in the research project.

Structured, semi-structured, and conversational-style interviews were conducted either in person (56%) or over the phone (44%); interviews were also transcribed using Otter.ai voice to text software and coded inductively (i.e., open and axial coding) and deductively (i.e., pre-set codes) using ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis & research software. Interviews were analyzed and coded for direct quotes, thematic codes, theoretical categories, and analytical memos. Transcribed interviews were later returned to research participants to facilitate further fact checking, create opportunities to update shared information, encourage research participants to take ownership over their individual stories, and advance reciprocity and ethical research practices throughout the data analysis procedures.

I also triangulated Gulf Coast women of color's interview responses with an analysis of my own embodied autoethnographic eco-memories, participant observation fieldnote data, occasional public Facebook posts created by research participants, and environmental and climate justice policy documents (i.e., the *Southern Communities for a Green New Deal* report, the *Climate Action for a Resilient New Orleans* report, and *Taking Steps Together on Equity & Climate Change: A Report by and for New Orleanians*). Ethnographic fieldnotes and eco-memory journaling enabled me to methodologically document my evolution into a Gulf Coast feminist climate educator-scholar-activist throughout my 2017-2021 fieldwork season. I likewise joined and helped co-found the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal and conducted participant observation at regional, national, and international climate justice conferences, marches, protests, and events such as the DSCEJ HBCU Climate Change Conference, the Coalition Against Death Alley (CADA) March, the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy (GCCLP) Black and Native Sacred Water Pilgrimage down the Mississippi River, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP25 in Madrid and COP26 in Glasgow. My mixed methods and (auto)ethnographic approach not only encouraged flexibility and creativity but also encouraged dialogical relationships and created space for intersubjectivity via long term immersion in the field.

Interviewee Demographics

Interviews lasted on average 1.84 hours; the shortest interview lasted 23 minutes and the longest interview lasted 4.6 hours. The average age of my interlocutors was 44 years; the youngest interviewee was 23 years old, and the eldest interviewee was 75 years old. 33% of all respondents self-identified as Indigenous, 12% of all respondents self-identified as Creole, and 40% of all respondents self-identified as Indigenous, mixed Indigenous and/or Creole. 71% of all respondents identified as Black or African American, and 6% of all respondents self-identified as Caribbean. Interviewees commonly used the term "Indigenous" to refer to either/both North American, African, and Maroon Indigeneity; a few interviewees used Indigenous in reference to native New Orleanian culture, traditions, and modes of resistance.

All interviewees self-identified as women, and 50% of interviewees were married or partnered.

57% of interviewees identified as mothers with biological or adopted children, and even more respondents described their roles as caretakers (i.e., othermothers) for grandchildren, nieces and nephews, extended kin, and *more-than-human* kin. Most respondents identified as heterosexual (75%), and 13% of respondents identified as bisexual, homosexual, or queer (see Figure 5). 50% of interviewees identified as Democrats and 27% of respondents identified as Independents (see Figure 6). 29% of interviewees earned between \$20,000-\$40,000 annually and 29% of interviewees earned between \$40,000-\$60,000 annually. 9% of interviewees earned less than \$20,000 annually and 10% of interviewees earned over \$80,000 annually (see Figure 7). 40% of respondents identified as Catholic or as Catholic, spiritual, and a follower of Native spiritual traditions, 25% of respondents identified as spiritual, and 15% of respondents identified as protestant Christians (i.e., Baptist or Methodist) (see Figure 8).

Sexual Orientation

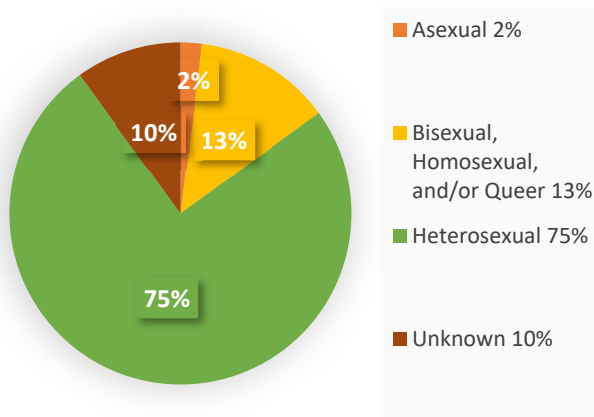


Figure 5. Interviewee Sexual Orientation

Political Affiliation

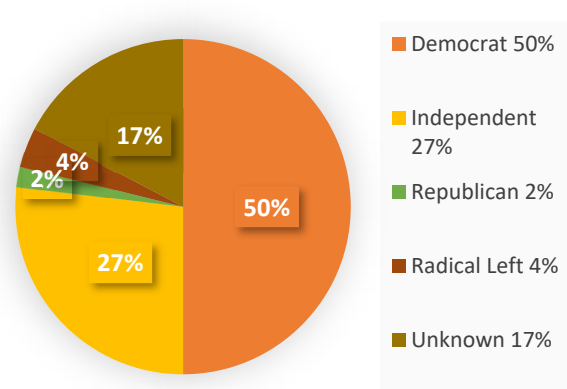


Figure 6. Interviewee Political Affiliation

Reported Annual Income

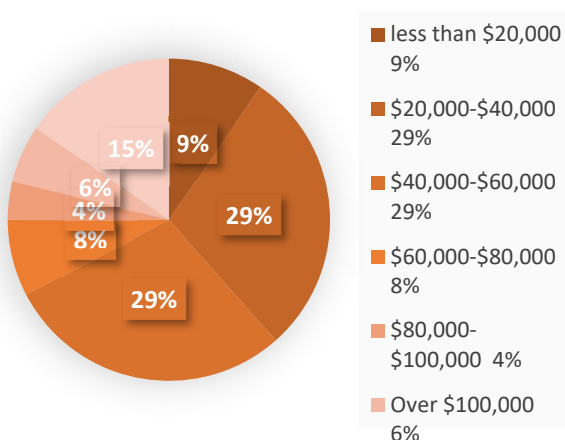


Figure 7. Interviewee Reported Annual Income

Religious and Spiritual Affiliation

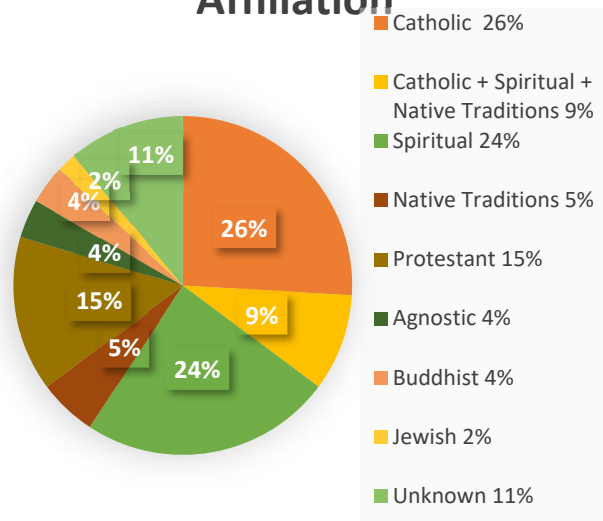


Figure 8. Interviewee Religious/Spiritual Affiliation

While 8% of respondents completed a high school degree, 92% of respondents completed some college education. 33% of respondents earned a master's degree, 27% of respondents earned a bachelor's degree, 16% of respondents earned an associate degree or attended some college, 10% of respondents earned a PhD, and 6% of respondents earned a law degree (see Figure 9). Most respondents majored in social science disciplines including sociology and anthropology, communications and journalism, business, international studies, city planning, design and architecture, disaster management and community development, and education. STEM disciplines included biology, nursing, public health, environmental studies and sciences, and engineering.

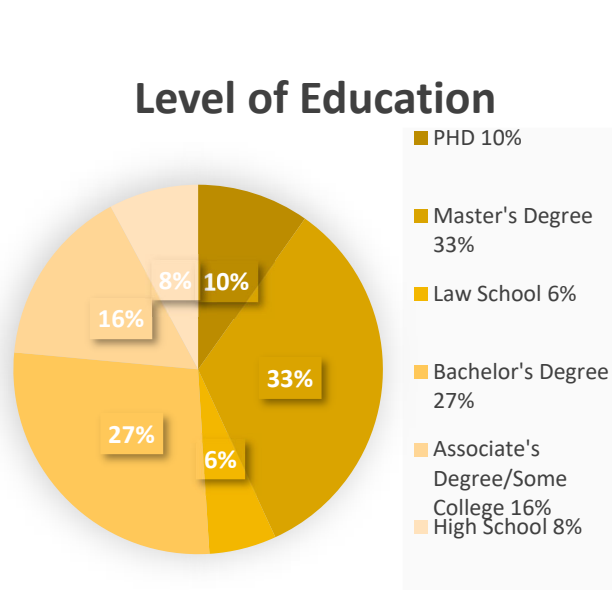


Figure 9. Interviewee Level of Education

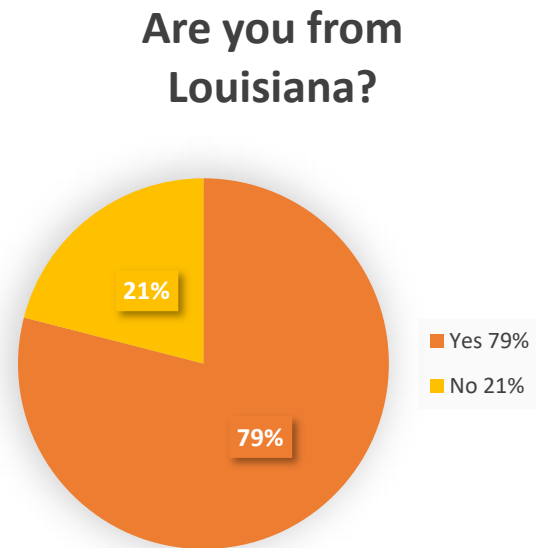


Figure 10. Louisiana Natives

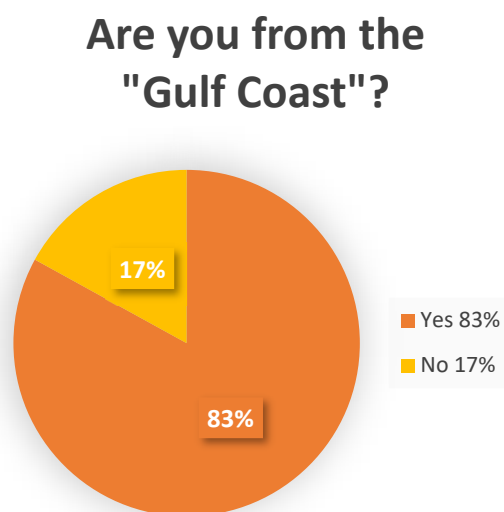


Figure 11. Gulf Coast Natives

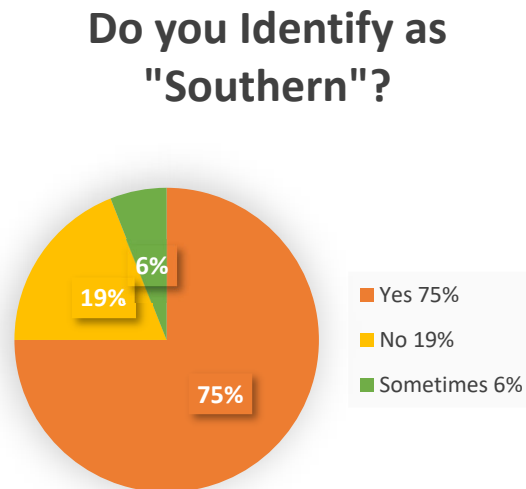


Figure 12. Identification with the South

79% of interviewees identified as Louisiana natives, while 21% of interviewees identified as Louisiana transplants (see Figure 10). 83% of interviewees identified as Gulf Coast (i.e., Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas) natives and 81% of interviewees identified as southern or “kind of southern” (see Figure 11 and 12). Interviewees born and raised in Louisiana who did not identify as “southern” associated the term with colonial constructs and/or more readily identified with Indigenous or French-influenced Creole and Cajun cultures. 67% of interviewees lived, worked, and/or had close ties to New Orleans.



Figure 13. Interviewee Parish Affiliation

Employment Industries

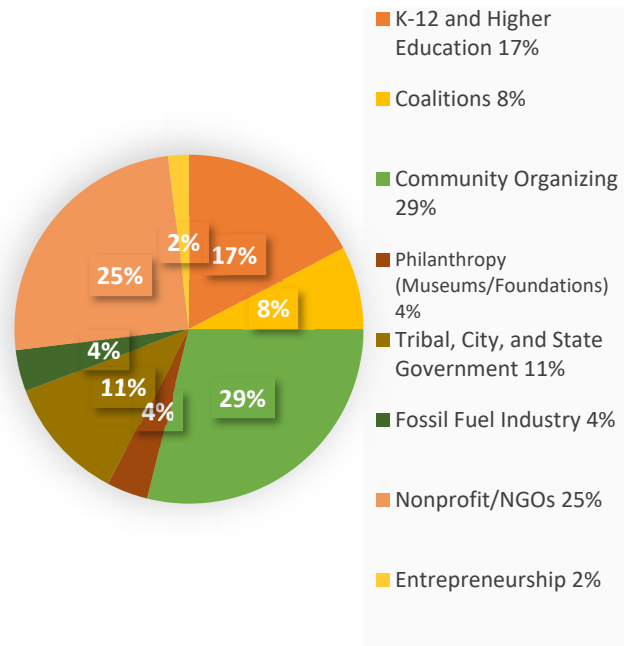


Figure 14. Interviewee Employment Industries

Interviewees also represented 15 Louisiana parishes including St. Bernard, Orleans, Jefferson, Acadia, St. Mary, St. James, St. John, Rapides, East Baton Rouge, Terrebonne, Lafourche, Lafayette, St. Tammany, Caddo, and Ascension (see Figure 13). I also conducted participant observation and recruited Black and Indigenous women at a community event in Plaquemines Parish. Unfortunately, I was not able to secure an interview with anyone from the Zion Travelers Cooperative Center in Plaquemines Parish.

Most interviewees advanced environmental, energy, and climate justice through community organizing, nonprofit/NGO work, and/or involvement in K-12 and higher education (see Figure 14). Most respondents were also affiliated with organizations which focus on civil rights and environmental justice, Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty, policy and governance, water, climate justice, and the arts (see Figure 15).

Environmental Sectors

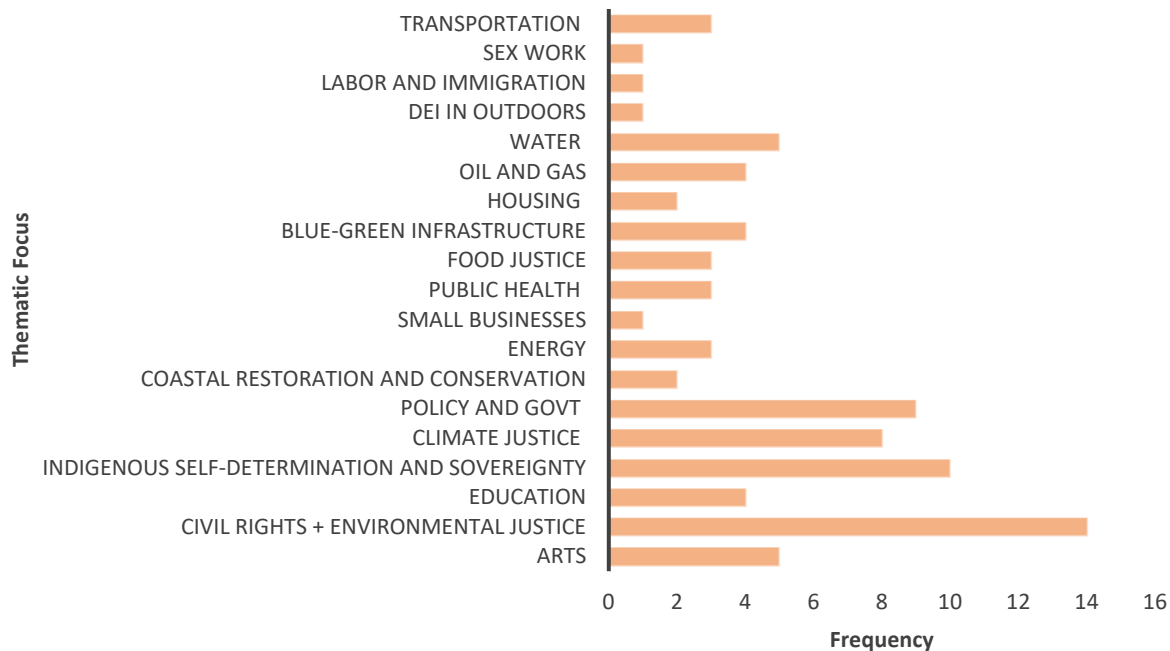


Figure 15. Interviewee Environmental Sectors

Operationalization of Everyday Resistance

Since there is no theoretical consensus on how to best operationalize and characterize everyday resistance or gendered activism in a region dominated by oil, gas, and petrochemicals, I refuse strict bifurcations and overly rigid typologies of everyday resistance. As a feminist activist researcher, I aim to intentionally challenge (and queer) epistemic stability attributed to theoretical constructs such as activism, advocacy, resistance, and the everyday. I consequently utilize varying iterations and configurations of these concepts throughout my analysis. Such fluid and shifting use of language allows me to disrupt problematic binaries between individual/collective, passive/active (i.e., confrontational), public/private, planned/spontaneous, mundane/spectacular, overt/covert, spiritual/secular, embodied/disembodied, and real/virtual acts of resistance. Fluidity in word usage also stories Black and Indigenous women's communities of resistance, emergent social movements, and futuristic abolitionist ecological visions more honestly and holistically. As an ecowomanist (auto)ethnographer, I, instead, focus on embodied potentiality in reference to everyday resistance i.e., I "use these concepts to describe strategies and discourses that directly or indirectly contribute to political or social change" (Roberts-Gregory 2020: 1). I moreover investigate everyday practices, environmental ethics, and narratives within Black and Indigenous women's intimate lives that simultaneously inspire and constrain survival, political conscientization, and feminist activist imaginings.

Findings

Everyday Strategies of Gulf Coast BIWOC Resistance

The following table summarizes everyday strategies of resistance utilized by Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women as they challenge state-corporate crime and reimagine emergent feminist

abolition ecologies. According to Heynen and Ybarra (2021), abolition ecologies refer to both physical spaces where abolitionist dreams are born, as well as the acts of radical place-making that marginalized communities use to promote systems change, dismantle institutions, and design freedom maps. Feminist abolition ecologies likewise center the freedom dreams and visionary intersectional analysis of women, queer folk, and allied feminists who struggle to reclaim toxic geographies and transform them into communities that value gender justice, environmental justice, healing justice, and feminist care ethics (Heynen and Ybarra 2021; Ranganathan and Bratman 2019; Neal and Dunn 2020). Feminist abolition ecologies are thus what McKittrick (2006) theorizes as *demonic* spaces; they embrace uncertainty, improvisation, liminality, and nonlinearity (McKittrick 2006; McTighe and Haywood 2018).

Although the summary of resistance strategies presented below is demonstrative and not exhaustive, it illuminates a vast array of strategies that obscure superficial binaries between the mundane and spectacular. It also documents examples of gendered acts of refusal, recovery, rest, rejection, restoration, and reimagining (R⁶) gathered from interview, participant observation, social media, and autoethnographic data. Finally, the R⁶ examples discussed below are non-mutually exclusive i.e., they demonstrate often overlapping categorical strategies of everyday resistance (see Table 3).

Everyday Strategies of Gulf Coast BIWOC Resistance	Acts of Refusal, Recovery, Rest, Rejection, Restoration, and Reimagining (R⁶)
Learning to Live with Water	stormwater management and blue green infrastructure; NOLA Water Collaborative Water Week and River Festivals; Sankofa Wetlands Park & Nature Trail tree-planting and volunteer days; oyster shell coastal restoration service days; community discussions on drainage fees; rain barrel workshops; Water Wise Gulf South green infrastructure bike tours; catch basin adoption and cleaning events; Healthy Community Services youth green infrastructure workshops; water runoff city council candidate debate
Healing Justice, Forgiveness, and Emotional Resiliency	climate justice art and music; co-counseling programs; healing justice webinars; prayer; friendship and sistah circles; community organizing; embracing contradictions; emotional support animals; yoga; Windcall Institute healing justice retreats; harm reduction webinars; laughter; gratitude and abundance challenges; Indigenous song and dance; GirlTrek national health movement, civil rights organizing podcasts, and radical acts of self-care; naps
Sovereignty, Self-Determination, and Survivance	L'eau Est La Vie Camp and bayou bridge pipeline resistance; urban gardening and rural homesteading; vegetarianism and veganism; wilderness hikes and trainings for BIPOC communities; palmetto harvest and community village builds; community organizing and direct action; firearm safety classes; Rise St. James and Stop Formosa Plastics campaign; cooking classes with native ingredients; cooperative economics; herbalism; Black doulas and midwifery; rematriation of land; critique of resilience, sustainability, and vulnerability narratives
Remembering, Mourning, and Cultural Recognition	Indigenous Peoples Day commemorations; marches for Death Alley (i.e., Cancer Alley); 1811 Slave Rebellion r=Reenactment; The American Dream Denied Gordon Plaza exhibit at the Tulane University Newcomb Museum; Hurricane Katrina commemorations; alter builds for Indigenous children stolen & murdered by church-run boarding schools; toxic tours; fights against industrial desecration of gravesites and cemetery clean ups; float for the Krewe de Mayahuel parade float to honor missing and murdered Indigenous women and children; All Saints Day celebrations; campaigns to take down and replace White supremacist monuments; gun violence vigils

Intersectional and Ecowomanist Analysis	honoring single mothers; excavating ecomemories; embodied standpoints; gendered analysis on reproductive health and abortion access; resisting gaslighting; identifying the devaluation and presumed incompetence of BIWOC voices; feminist mapping projects on displacement and gentrification
Environmental Education and #RepresentationMatters	K-12 AP environmental science and university feminist climate justice curriculums; youth engagement projects; resistance to charter schools and the Louisiana Industrial Tax Exemption Program (ITEP); HBCU Climate Change Consortium; WATER BLOCK Kids; serving on boards of environmentally themed-high schools (i.e., New Harmony High); Grow Dat Youth Farm; DSCEJ Gulf Equity Water Corps Project and communiversity model
Women and Youth's Political Leadership	NOLA Women4Climate Mentorship Program; Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy Gulf South for a Green New Deal; BOLD Louisiana; Extinction Rebellion; Sunrise Movement; running for political office; Our Children's Trust <i>Juliana v. United States</i> lawsuit; divestment campaigns; feminist scholar-activism; climate mayors steering committee and US conference of mayors; voter education and challenging voter suppression
Climate, Energy, Housing, and Transportation Justice	climate justice marches and protests; affordable energy and renewable portfolio standards advocacy; electric vehicles; home weatherization programs; community owned solar initiatives; advocacy for public transit funding; Entergy Gas plant protests; gentrification and displacement forums; biking and using public transportation in communities lacking transportation infrastructure; drying clothes on a clothes line; affordable housing report cards; "put housing first" radio show; efforts to dismantle Claiborne corridor; solar fueled boats and film showings; Louisiana Sunshine Festival to benefit solar initiatives
Inter-racial, Intergenerational, Indigenous, and Queer Friendly Coalitions	Justice & Beyond; the NOLA People's Assembly; Together Louisiana; Coalition Against Death Alley; Another Gulf is Possible; Bvlbancha Collective; Cayenne Coalition; First People's Conservation Council of Louisiana; HBCU-CBO Gulf Equity Consortium; Energy Future New Orleans
Relocation	Isle de Jean Charles relocation; campaign for a fully funded relocation for Gordon Plaza
Waste Reduction	recycling; bans on illegal dumping and plastic bags; campaigns to stop the siting of petrochemical industries in Black communities; refusing to use Styrofoam products in parishes that lack recycling programs
Just Transition	workforce development for opportunity youth; small business opportunities; green jobs for formerly incarcerated populations and fossil fuel workers
Climate Policy and City Planning	UNFCCC climate negotiation participation; Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal; Gulf South for a Green New Deal townhalls; <i>Taking Steps on Equity and Climate Change: A Report by New Orleanians and For New Orleanians</i> ; participation in Louisiana Governor's Climate Task Force; environmental justice legal work
Industrial Accountability	truth and reconciliation brainstorming for oil, gas, & petrochemicals; regulating oil & gas industries that formerly employed you as a petroleum engineer; refusing to exhibit art in museums and art institutes funded by oil & gas; challenging oil & gas sponsorship of music festivals; oil and gas lawsuits; challenging ALEC inspired anti protest laws; Louisiana Democracy Project; climate reparations
Pleasure, Play, and Desire	roller skating; sexual economies; Women of Wakanda Chewbacchus Mardi Gras krewe; second lines; Black masking Indians; NOLA Baby dolls; adornment and regalia; tattooing
Advocating for BIWOC and Environmental Funding	serving on advisory board for HIVE Fund for Climate and Gender Justice; writing social justice grants; challenging misappropriation of environmental science curriculum funds to physics, chemistry, or biology; community impact grants; campaigns to address the gendered pay gap
Disaster Preparedness	evacuateer trainings; planning evacuation routes during hurricane season; preparing hurricane kits; stocking up on supplies; using a kayak or pirogue on

	flooded streets; building relationships with neighbors; home elevation; insurance policies; packing rice and other cultural staples in hurricane evacuation bags; FEMA disaster assistance workshops; environmental hazards health and safety training; COVID-19 and vaccine webinars; built bayou disaster recovery structures
Flexibility and Improvisation	rescheduling and canceling meetings; making space for impromptu connections and unanticipated occurrences; deciding last minute to attend international conferences
Reclaiming Her Time	quitting unfulfilling, underfunded, and exploitative jobs in High Ed, nonprofits, and/or oil & gas; showing up or refusing to show up as tokenized persons of color in white spaces (i.e., resistance through presence); refusing secretarial and inappropriate service requests from colleagues, students, and family members
Growing Plants as Medicine	Bvlbancha Collective; Another Gulf is Possible; Ndn bayou food forest; Hummingbird Springs Farm; Okla Hina Ikhish Holo (People of the Sacred Medicine Trail) femme and nonbinary Indigenous gardening network; Land Memory Bank & Seed Exchange; collaborating with the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) Food Sovereignty Program; pandemic sidewalk and container gardens; Indigenous farming conferences; Hollygrove Community Garden; University of Southern Mississippi Medicine Wheel Garden; Botanica webinars; HCSNOLA Native Plant Academy
Mutual Aid	Mutual Aid Disaster Relief and Another Gulf is Possible Hurricane Ida and Laura relief efforts along river and bayou parishes; COVID-19 pandemic mutual aid; carpooling to marches, protests, and community events; peer mentorship; hurricane recovery supply distribution; food and grocery distribution
International and Black/Brown/Indigenous Solidarity	GCCLP COP26 global reception for Black and African Climate Leaders; GCCLP Black Indigenous Sacred Water Pilgrimage down Mississippi River; UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency; sharing Afro-Indigenous book suggestions on social media; Red, Black and Green New Deal; Black Lives Matter marches; support for asylum seekers and immigration justice; support for NOLA sanitation worker strike
Storytelling and Environmental Communications	Bvlbancha public access and media channel; Indigenous Gulf Stream 24-hour twitch livestream; climate justice documentary filmmaking; environmental film screenings; truth-telling and blogging using social media; environmental photography; feminist climate justice animations; Women of Cancer Alley documentary; community conversations on Black women's experiences in environmental movement; op-eds and book writing; podcasts and radio shows; digital storytelling and activism
Subversion and Fugitivity	gossiping about Sewerage & Water Board; using money earned from entertaining men in oil and gas to support pipeline protests; refusal to complete interviews due to research and translation fatigue; ethnographic refusal
Code-Switching and Professionalization	obtaining degrees and credentials from white and male-dominated science and policy institutions; avoiding politically loaded language to obtain funding and access resources; debating and listening to relatives and loved ones who work in oil, gas, & petrochemicals
Language and Culture Revitalization Programs	speaking multiple Creole/Cajun French, African, and North American languages (in addition to colonial languages) that are vulnerable to loss due to climate change; Houma Language Project; Black and Indigenous braiding, beading, and weaving circles; Powwows; Indigenous youth summer camps
Spiritual Warfare and Ancestral Worship	drumming at Congo Square and down the bayou; No City Hall in Treme Congo Square ceremonies; NOLA Yemaya Parade; Juneteenth Celebrations; Mississippi River ceremonies; personal alters; Orisha veneration; Afrodiasporic spiritualities; Native spiritual traditions; Black Native Sacred Water Pilgrimage; faith-based activism

Futuristic Imaginings	floating cities exhibits; Fossil Free Fest; Welcome to the Afrofuture: Ground Zero exhibit; climate reparations webinars; Black and Indigenous Futurism(s); abolitionist climate justice; BIPOC care economies; Build Back Better; circular economies; cannabis and hemp ventures; environmental sculpture and art; climate justice digital media; (re)imagining social and physical infrastructure; Lincoln Beach restoration; initiatives to bring more Gulf Coast youth to UNFCCC COPs
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Table 3. Louisiana BIWOC Strategies of Everyday Resistance

Identification and (Dis)Identification with Activism

While 48% of interviewees confidently identified as activists, 10% of interviewees did not identify as activists, and 12% of interviewees preferred the term advocate over activist. 4% of interviewees preferred the term water protector, 4% of interviewees preferred the term organizer, 4% of interviewees preferred the term concerned citizen, and 4% of interviewees identified as both activists and advocates. 13% of interviewees reluctantly or sometimes identified as activists (see Figure 16).

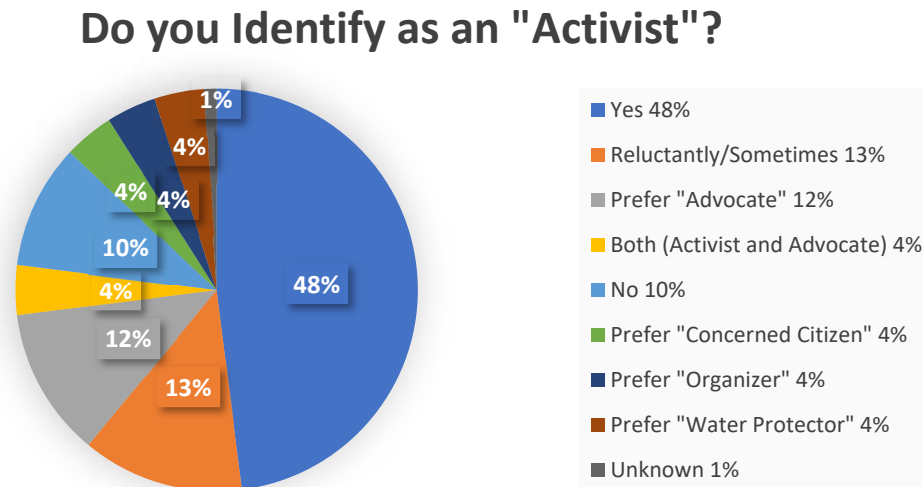


Figure 16. Identification with Activism

The following conceptual identity schematic (CIS) also serves as an alternative model to describe the intersectional, intergenerational, and interdisciplinary work of Gulf Coast women of color who fight for environmental, energy, and climate justice (see Figure 17). The CIS centers four alternative (and overlapping) conceptual categories of activist identification: the *Determined Devotional Demonstrators* (D³), the *Furious Fatigued Frontliners* (F³), the *Conflicted Careful Collaborators* (C³), and the *Intersectional Insecure Influencers* (I³). *Determined Devotional Demonstrators* includes Louisiana natives and transplants, as well as grassroots organizers and healers. The *Furious Fatigued Frontliners* include Louisiana natives, as well as storytellers, mothers, and faith communities. The *Intersectional Insecure Influencers* include Louisiana transplants, folk working in the nonprofit industrial complex, and environmental educators. The *Conflicted Careful Collaborators* include Louisiana natives and transplants who work in policy, grantmaking, & STEM professions.

Furious Fatigued Frontliners (F³), for example, include grandmothers, aunties, and othermothers affiliated with the Coalition against Death Alley (CADA) who are filled with righteous rage, believe their struggles against Formosa Plastics are divinely inspired, and, in the words of civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, are “sick and tired” of being sick, tired....and polluted. *Determined Devotional Demonstrators* (D³) include herbalists affiliated with the Bvlbancha Collective who send medicine to water protectors fighting Line 3 or the Bayou Bridge pipeline; they are also community organizers with the New Orleans People’s Assembly and Another Gulf is Possible who tirelessly advocate for a fully funded relocation for the Residents of Gordon Plaza and organize mutual aid and disaster response & recovery efforts for riverine and bayou parishes in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida and Hurricane Laura. *Conflicted Careful Collaborators* (C³) refer to environmental funders and natural resource managers who must decide whether to accept funding from oil & gas for climate resiliency and coastal restoration initiatives. *Intersectional Insecure Influencers* (I³) refer to teachers who directly engage students in language revitalization and urban gardening as well as nonprofit directors who influence the broader community through blue-green infrastructure demonstrations, yet sometimes worry about whether they are “doing enough” for the environmental and climate justice movement because they are not able to participate in direct action and other spectacular forms of fossil fuel resistance.

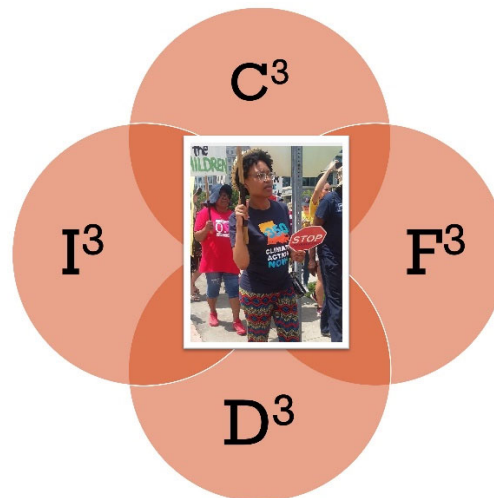


Figure 17. Conceptual Identity Schematic (CIS)

Finally, I place myself at the center of the CIS since my embodied autoethnographic methodology and positionality as a feminist scholar-educator-activist troubles rigid quaternary classification, encourages queer and dynamic interpretations of activist identity, and highlights “reflexivity-in-action”⁴⁹, or contradictions that produce unnerving understandings of the self. The CIS, ideally envisioned as a conceptual or metaphorical tesseract, is shaped by flux, fugitivity, resistance, and improvisation i.e., it allows Gulf Coast women of color to indiscriminately reinvent and (re)name themselves in the pursuit of feminist abolition ecologies.

⁴⁹ “Reflexivity-in-action” is shaped by self-awareness and self-knowledge of inconsistencies, commonly observed by ethnographic researchers engaged in long term and immersive fieldwork (Berliner et al. 2016).

Analysis

Embracing Contradictions and “Reflexivity-in-Action”

My findings demonstrate that everyday strategies of BIWOC resistance to fossil fuel hegemony not only queer rigid binaries between mundane and spectacular resistance, but also create opportunities for Gulf Coast women of color to advance abolitionist and intersectional climate solutions. Black and Indigenous women often advance visionary and creative climate solutions whether or not they officially identify as climate activists or consciously invoke feminist climate justice discourse. Black and Indigenous women thus circumnavigate climate denialism and do the work of climate justice even if they outwardly avoid climate science language. The following interviewee quotes demonstrate this phenomenon.

I am an activist, but as a researcher and a person who receives federal funds, I cannot be.... I always have to say advocate and not activist. I'm a pretty militant activist, by the way, in some ways more militant than young people. This always surprises me. But I cannot and you cannot call yourself an activist in research. With federal funds, you can be an advocate, educator, or trainer, but you can't be an activist. But I would say that I am pretty militant, to tell you the truth, especially when you look at my opinions about how we should move, when we should move, how quickly we should move, and how progressive those actions should be. I'm certainly not a moderate at all. Moderation yields no change for us.

The policy or laws that are written to govern our mission and our work at my current organization do not have any climate change type of words in it. We had to come up with goals and objectives for restoring the Gulf, and as a body, we came up with those objectives without saying climate change. Some of the folks that we've worked with, when we've used the phrase climate change on some of the written documents, have said, “Well, do we have to use that? Can't we just list sea level rise and things of that sort instead of using the phrase?” I know that, politically, some of these folks can't sign off on using the phrase climate change. We can list the symptoms, but we can't tell you that someone has the flu i.e., climate change.

My findings furthermore uncover how cumulative and intergenerational environmental trauma disrupts mythology surrounding the idea of a “unified self” and encourages “multiplicitous consciousness” in alignment with critical partial perspectives (Haraway 1988; Berliner et al. 2016). Critical interrogations of contradictory realities, as well as conceptual play between unified and multiplicitous selves, provides insight into why many interviewees resist self-identification as activists even when they are labeled as activists by their communities, local media, and state-corporate interests.

Yeah, I hate that word [activism]. Because when people hear it, they think of a certain... they try to put you in a certain pocket. But I guess I am [an activist]. I am a mom; I know that much! And I really take that role seriously. I feel like just a mom and a human being trying to do the right thing.

I don't shy away from those words, but I don't necessarily think it's the first thing out of my mouth. I'm an activist. I'm an advocate. I know that the work that I do falls into the

context of community organizer. But I feel like I was doing that work before I knew what that label was or what it meant. The way I think about myself is somebody who, you know, I understand how all the issues that we deal with environmentally and otherwise impact us as human beings and I see that there's a need to be attended to. How can I play a role or impact in helping things to be better? And so, if we call that community organizing, if we call that activism work, so be it. What I do believe is that it is my responsibility to align my actions with those values.

I drive by two major oil refineries and one tiny little gas distribution place every day if I'm going into the city. It's so overwhelming and I can become so numb to driving through that landscape on a daily. But then, my stepfather who helped to financially raised me, worked as an offshore crew boat captain for 35 years. All my cousins are welders that work for oil and gas industry. Then I hear the fisherman, who are my neighbors, talk about how this manipulation of the landscape [big sediment and river diversions] is going to drown them out. And then I'm also hanging out with a lot of environmentalists and researchers and academics who are like, "Oh, no, this other way is the only way to go!" For me it's an advantage to hear both sides. But in my work and my practice, people want me to identify the solutions. But it's not such like a black and white thing. And I think that it is the same with the ideas of "just transition". If you get some solar panels that you can't afford, and you put them on your house, it's not going to solve your problems. There are no silver bullets.

Gulf Coast women of color's adept navigation of mundane, yet contradictory petrocolonial realities finally elucidates agency, adaptive capacity, "reflexivity-in-action", and a heightened sense of survivance (Vizenor 2008; Berliner et al. 2016; Lazrus 2012). Black and Indigenous women's embrace of "reflexivity-in-action" ultimately encourages more honest and candid appraisal of their gendered and racialized positioning within petrocolonial economies, as illustrated by the following quote.

I drive a car. And there definitely is some hypocrisy on my part. I could have a bike. So, I'm an enemy of the petrochemical industry, but at the same time, I'm reliant on the petrochemical industry. And I'm reliant because I can't afford to not use petrochemicals. And it goes right back to the class issue; even though I want to dismantle the system, I also can't afford any of the options that would help me really have my hands free and clear of the petrochemical industry. While I definitely try to minimize the amount of plastics we use and how much I drive, I'm a parent of three children, so convenience helps me out a lot. As I start to get higher up in my career and start to make more money, I will be able to do things like purchase a house that has solar panels and design my life to where I can ride a bike.

The Abolitionist Politics of Ecowomanist Anti-Resilience

According to professor of law, energy justice scholar, and Deputy Director of Energy Justice for the U.S. Department of Energy Shalanda Baker, our current energy system is "characterized by 'sacrifice zones' that place extraordinary environmental burdens on some communities in order to benefit other users within the system. This is a system that should be transformed, rather than made more resilient" (Baker 2019: 5-6). Abolitionist politics of anti-resilience thus encourage

low income and communities of color to reject practices and policies that reify structural inequalities and perpetuate violence on our bodies, psyches, and neighborhoods. Instead, abolitionist anti-resilience advocates for environmental, energy, and climate solutions that explicitly center BIPOC communities and manifest more disruptive, transformative, liberatory, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive futuristic possibilities (Baker 2019). The following quotes illustrate BIWOC approaches to Gulf Coast anti-resilience.

I think climate justice looks like finding ways to be sustainable that are affordable. Something that isn't like a bougie LEED approved building but is something that's really practical and liberating. I think climate justice at its' core is liberation. That practical piece of making it really accessible. There are so many people who live in these little bubbles of being green and live the green dream that comes with so much privilege. I think that is a problem and not a real solution. That's not real justice. It's like, "Oh, I'm good. I'm gonna go put my trash in your backyard." But it's not like trash, it's like freaking oil waste beds! We must connect how one person's pleasure is connected to another person's loss and pain.

I define climate justice overall as a just transition. A movement away from what has what is and has always been extractive. And those extractive industries, those extractive practices, and those extractive ways of relating to one another. And I think, climate justice is being explicit about who has historically been oppressed. So, like in gentrification, migration, and all those things, we have to figure out how to lift up those people to make sure that they are not left out. So [climate justice is] environmental justice for people and a just transition away from extractive economies and justice for the earth as well.

Ecowomanist anti-resilience, by extension, uses explicitly gendered, feminist, queer, and intersectional lens to challenge narratives that pit environment and equity against economy and energy modernization. Ecowomanist anti-resilience likewise advances grassroots approaches to energy democracy, southern solutions for environmental and climate justice, and everyday strategies of gendered resistance that acknowledge and create space for contradictory and spiritual futures. We furthermore reject the politics of expendability in favor of the politics of indispensability by insisting on industrial accountability, multi-racial coalitions, and reparation of harm (Pellow 2016). One Indigenous water protector and sacred athlete beautifully articulates her emergent politics of ecowomanist anti-resilience when she reflects on the importance of gratitude, ceremony, and creative approaches to climate reparations within fossil fuel sexual economies.

During the beginning and middle phases of the bayou bridge pipeline, I made a commitment to myself that a certain percentage of the money I was making from men I was entertaining at my job [who worked in the oil fields], I would donate to the L'eau Est La Vie camp. That was my energetic middle finger to them. I also do my best to be very mindful to walk *in ceremony*. When I do use oil or drive my car, I do my best to maintain a state of gratitude and not overuse it. If I have to use my car, I plot out the route that is the shortest distance. Or if its close by, I'll walk. I do my best not to use my electricity if I don't absolutely have to.

Another Black interviewee uses an intersectional lens to advance ecowomanist anti-resilience.

A climate just future looks like divestment from industry and fossil fuels and extractive economies. It looks like cross regional, statewide, and multi-state coalitions, and collaborations with each other. I think it also looks like worker-owned cooperatives and reproductive health and justice for people who can give birth. It looks like investment in the green economy and green jobs. It looks like the creation of new economies that maybe we don't even know about yet! It looks like working with labor organizers, immigration organizers, and all the people within social justice. I see movements working together towards shared common goals so that we're able to see very clearly all the ways in which our work overlaps with one another.

Unpacking Climate-Resilience Discourse

By innovating everyday strategies of resistance through refusal, recovery, rest, rejection, restoration, and reimagining (R⁶), Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women reject the ubiquity of state-corporate crime and the normality of climate inaction. We moreover critique white supremacist and patriarchal language which further perpetuate gendered and racialized environmental violence. For example, many Gulf Coast Indigenous and Black women maintain contentious relationships with “resilience” and “vulnerability” narratives. One Indigenous interlocuter and artist expresses her frustration with resilience and vulnerability frameworks that offer little protection or hope for her bayou relatives.

[Resilience] makes me twitch a little bit. Being from a coastal community, we are tired of being resilient. And our resilience can only go so far, especially after you keep getting battered down and you see that the “great migration” has begun. People are moving because they're tired and because they don't have the resources to stay.

She further expounds upon her frustration with resilience frameworks with an additional analysis of the related shortcomings of vulnerability frameworks.

Resilience is better than vulnerable. But I still think it's like this weird branding that asks, will they be able to survive? You know, like, it presumes they can take it! They're used to it! And I would say that probably most people down the bayou are like, “Oh, I can do a hurricane.” But I ask, can you do a hurricane? Can you do land loss? Can you do another hurricane? Can you do another BP spill? Can you do a...? I don't know. Like, what's coming next? Can you do no water and have no access to fresh water? You know?

A Black interlocuter working in environmental philanthropy similarly critiques resilience as a colonial and paternalistic construct that obscures systemic inequalities.

To be honest, I really hate that word. I hate it a lot! I've always hated it. Unfortunately, our entire program used to be all about coastal climate resilience. I hate it because it sounds so paternalistic. Like “Oh, you're so resilient. Terrible shit keeps happening to you, and you're still here”. People have always done that to Indigenous, Black, and

Brown people. I think it's like a way to stick a gold star on it, instead of acknowledging atrocities. Instead of naming the actual root of systemic racism as historic patriarchal white supremacist systems that rule our country.

She later indicates her preference for healing justice frameworks and expresses gratitude for Black women's scholar-activism through research-based violence prevention.

You probably know Dr. Denise Shervington who is a psychiatrist in New Orleans. She specializes in post disaster trauma and the trauma of repeated violence, especially in young people. She said something about disliking the term resilience because it implied, if I'm remembering correctly, that the people who are resilient do not have any other choice. I think it is true - you are resilient because you have to be resilient. And it does not feel good for other people to call her, or other oppressed folks, resilient.

As the above quotes illustrate, Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women routinely challenge environmental violence through intentional rejection of problematic and disempowering language. We moreover advocate for care-centered discourses and approaches to healing justice that create space for emotional resiliency and post-traumatic growth. Resistance through semantical critique thus creates opportunities for Gulf Coast women of color to transform the linguistic status quo and reject epistemic politics of disposability, devaluation, and dehumanization.

State-Corporate Crime, Schools, and Youth Engagement

According to the U.S. News and World Report, Louisiana ranks 48th out of 50 states in education, 49th out of 50 states in natural environment, and 50th out of 50 states in pollution (USNews 2021). Many Black and Indigenous women consequently connect Louisiana's Industrial Tax Exemption Policy (ITEP) and disaster capitalism to the privatization of now charter, formerly public schools and the firing of Black female teachers who comprised the backbone of New Orleans's Black middle-class in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They similarly connect industrial cooptation of K-12 curriculum with the siting of refineries and petrochemical facilities next to schools that serve primarily BIPOC populations. Participant observation as a feminist environmental educator coupled with conversational interviews with Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women also revealed a racialized and gendered preoccupation with education policies, environmental literacy, school quality, youth engagement, industrial tax exemptions, and climate action. Black and Indigenous interlocutors express their frustrations with political corruption via state-corporate crime in the following quotes.

Every freaking good charity or college scholarship that's coming out of here is in some way tied to the industry in most cases. I think navigating that is almost next to impossible.

I definitely am an enemy of these industries. Because these industries are making insane amounts of money off the coast of Louisiana. However, the citizens of Louisiana are not reaping the benefits of the fossil fuel industries. The industries will go and set up shop far enough away from the coast of Louisiana where they don't even have to pay taxes. Which is really ridiculous because they are billion dollar companies. The money should be put

into the state to fund education, to help with all kinds of things for children and for poor communities. They are just making profit hand over fist because they know that the government allows it. The government also is aware because the government is awarding them the contracts where they are not going to have to pay taxes to the state.

It is a fact that school systems, in Baton Rouge for example, are beholden in many ways to corporate interests, especially as they get more charters. The school systems had a stake in the whole Exxon thing, you know, of holding them accountable for their property taxes. And they're beholden to property taxes. They're literally at the mercy of so many different stakeholders, including parents that frankly don't believe in public school systems and send their kids to private schools. All those systems have to be addressed to get to kids because parents don't want to talk about climate justice if they're trying to build up petroleum or civil engineers. So many of them are being sold this glamorized STEM. Like everyone loves to talk about, oh, my kids in STEM! STEM! STEM! STEM! But everyone's kind of choosing for kids. And I think it is a challenge to not fall into this habit of picking people's careers or picking young people's lives.

When I moved to Louisiana, I found out that people have been dying for years and nobody's listening to them. And then Louisiana is still not even making those companies like virtually pay any money into the state. And they're wondering why the education is low, why healthcare is low, and why Louisiana is filling the worst three positions in every quality-of-life category? It doesn't take a rocket scientist or climate activist to understand the connection. Other states are making those companies, whether they have them located in their state or not, at least pay into the system. It seems to me like those petrochemical companies are just robbing the system. And the people impacted, they're mostly Black. So yeah, that's the first thought that comes to my mind when I think about Louisiana and climate change.

Louisiana Black and Indigenous women also sat on boards of environmentally themed high schools and taught youth environmental science & studies through AP courses, summer camps, church groups, and community gardens. Other women of color involved students in green infrastructure projects, affordable housing presentations, climate justice workshops, Indigenous cultural activities, and opportunities to attend the UNFCCC climate negotiations. Many interviewees were also particularly concerned with how to increase the public's environmental and climate literacy, as well as how to engage Black, Brown, and Indigenous youth around sea level rise, street flooding, coastal conservation, climate policy, Indigenous foodways, democracy & governance, surveillance avoidance, and sustainable development. The following quotes illustrate their myriad concerns.

We work primarily with young people in Hollygrove. We manage a garden space where we try to teach young people methods of sustainability that include growing, planting, sowing, harvesting, and composting. Our work also helps to support and mobilize young

Black people through political education and community organizing to realize sustainable and equitable communities that are rooted in community control and self-determination. We have a camp and a group of young adults who meet regularly to discuss some of the politics of the city too. We currently have a campaign called Stop Watching Nola. It is an effort to sort of crowdsource data and crowdsource the crime camera locations because the city won't reveal where all the crime cameras are. The crime cameras are used as a surveillance strategy to promote public safety according to the city. We feel like the cameras are 1) an invasion of privacy and 2) are tools to target and further criminalize Black folks and certain behaviors. They've invested millions of dollars in these cameras and these surveillance strategies, and we don't know that they'll take them down. But, at the very least, we can help inform the community about the technology and the capabilities of these cameras.

Our organization has a few projects that allow youth to go out to areas and do prescribed burns, learn about cutting down trees, and picking up litter and things of that sort. A lot of these youth are at risk youth and they are finding employment and taking pride in doing some of these projects across the Gulf Coast. It's also sparking their interest in making some of this environmental work a possible career moving forward. Hearing the young folks who are involved in these projects across the Gulf speak and talk about how being involved with these projects has impacted them is amazing. When I was involved with the EPA, we also would go out to some of the summer camps and teach them about recycling and reusing. I think sometimes when you get the child to do a take home project in a household, the behaviors of everyone in the household change. It's just impactful because they're the next generation. And if we can change their behaviors early on or make them environmentally aware or conscious, then I feel like that will help in the long run.

Finally, some mothers and environmental educators encouraged their children and students to participate in climate action lawsuits, study environmental law and related disciplines within academic institutions, and become civically engaged through the Sunrise Movement or school-based organizations. They understood the power of youth engagement around climate justice and their important role in manifesting abolitionist futures.

One of my coworkers and one of the young adults, one of the college students who was working with us at the time, went to Paris for COP25. And she went with the Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy. They helped us organize that and we did participate there.

My daughter is in law school, so she's really focused on that right now. But she always of course has been involved; she was in the Native Student Alliance at her school and had done a lot of work around changing her school's mascot. She's trying to do it in a way that she can get in there, which we all encourage, because we need more good attorneys on our side. Then two of my other kids have both been pretty involved in the climate movement – Anthony has led trainings on climate and Jennie is doing the court case with

Our Children's Trust. Their suing the government for failure to act upon climate change that they knew about for 50 years.

The way that I've been trying to manifest [the future] literally has been by teaching my students about these topics. When I've brought these topics up in class, I've also talked about the civil rights movement and how it was children their age who made the civil rights movement really take off in a way that older people cannot. My job right now, as I see it, is to educate. Because of the reality of my life as a single mother, I don't have the ability to really go out there and be a voice. But what I can do is teach kids how to be a voice because they are going to go places in a year that I'm not going to be able to go. They will go all over the US and go all over the world. And if I give them the tools, then they can start to have these conversations when they go to college classes or wherever they decide to go. They can start to have these conversations, so people aren't surprised about these topics anymore.

Discussion

Environmental, energy, and climate justice in Louisiana ultimately calls for a more just transition to fossil fuel freeish futures. It also calls for anti-resilience and emergent feminist abolition ecologies using the lenses indispensability, reparative harm, creative design, industrial accountability, political conscientization, and critical environmental education. The following quotes thus illustrate Black and Indigenous women's hopes for Louisiana climate justice.

[A climate just future] would look like decreased dependency or just no dependency on fossil fuel and petrochemical industries. It would look like diversity, in terms of our economy. It would look like institutions, our education system, our criminal justice system, and our communities being equitable and healthy. It is a future where we actually live in a city with newer, greener infrastructure that is intimately and seamlessly woven into the historical fabric of the city and the state.

I'm working with the Another Gulf is Possible collective. I'm currently building this floating laboratory and we're going to start experimenting with how you live on water as we're being inundated with more and more water.

Ecowomanist anti-resilience in Gulf Coast Louisiana also looks like mothers and teachers developing environmental and climate change curriculum that critiques the differential impacts of disaster and prepares youth of color to pursue careers in stormwater management, environmental journalism, and coastal restoration. It looks like grandmothers and aunties (i.e., othermothers) demonstrating outside of schools that are disproportionately impacted by air pollution emitted by local refineries and petrochemical infrastructure and concerned community organizers protesting the privatization of public resources. It is finally a call for meaningful intersectional analysis that integrates grassroots concerns for the built environment with people-centered concerns for public health, public education, and a breakdown of democratic practices in Louisiana. It is a reclaiming of parishes politically coopted by energy and petrochemical

interests.

Optimistically -- the future of green infrastructure in New Orleans should be a part of larger regulatory plans for racial reconciliation and economic development. Part of this means expanding leadership demographics to include Black, Brown, Indigenous people and youth; minimizing the gap between the public and decision makers; creating alongside communities instead of for them; and being willing to challenge traditional ways of doing. This also means examining how policies and initiatives address or perpetuate barriers of access; and exploring ways to be more inclusive about the decisions happening in our environment.

Our work is centered around educating, agitating, and organizing. We feel that the education part is just as important as the organizing part. The education part fuels and strengthens the organizing. Because when you have good information, you can move better, you can maneuver, and you know why you're doing what you're doing. So, it's not about trying to educate people from the perspective of what we think you should do. It's about providing people information and access. And then from there, I believe in the power of the people and the brilliance of the people to be able to figure out what to do when you have information.

In opposition to technocratic, colonial, and paternalistic narratives that promote climate resilience, Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women furthermore champion grassroots and everyday strategies of resistance that affirm the value of Black lives, protect Indigenous sovereignty, and create opportunities to build and sustain deeper relationships with human, nonhuman, and ancestral spirits. By nurturing the politics of ecowomanist anti-resilience, Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women likewise illuminate the entanglement of the “public and private, intimate and professional, emotional and analytical, and personal and political” (Roberts-Gregory 2020: 31). Two Indigenous interlocutors, for example, articulate an emergent ecowomanist and anti-resilient praxis by connecting the personal to the political, centering the relationships between humans and *more-than-human* kin, and facilitating BIPOC sistah circles as healing methodology.

I want to become more self-reliant. I was a vegetarian for a very long time. Now I'm eating meat at this portion of my life, and I've received guidance that the earth and myself will greatly benefit if the only meat I'm consuming is meat I capture myself. Basically, food sovereignty. You know, growing a garden, hunting, fishing, and being more mindful of the resources that I do use. Not overconsuming.

I've been cultivating and propagating this medicinal garden with some other Houma women, other Houma citizens, and other non-Houma and Indigenous peoples. A few years back, we hosted a women's circle of Houma women that was focused on medicine. And that was really great because we were able to come together and share this knowledge with each other. We were able to take home these plants that are endangered because of rising sea levels. So that's like a really small thing, but it also is like the preservation of medicine in times of climate crisis. I also have my own little garden on my grandmother's land and I'm just like super excited about them. The medicine garden

needs some love, but my garden is just kind of going off. My greatest joy lately has been my garden and it feels good to have medicine blooming in the yard.

Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women's futuristic visions do not, however, preclude industry and energy innovation; instead, we envision cyborg futures where green infrastructure increasingly replaces grey infrastructure and where dirty fossil fuel industries are refashioned through energy efficiency, affordability, equity, and democracy. Many interviewees also envision green and climate just futures with greater democratization of environmental decision-making; we desire a future Louisiana where coastal protection and restoration does not incentivize continued oil and gas exploration in perpetuity and where there is emotional and psychological support for care workers and workers who desire to transition away from careers in extractive industries. These challenges will be difficult to surmount, however, without political intervention. The following quotes illustrate Black and Indigenous women's futuristic fears and concerns about gendered environmental violence.

I've been someone who has kind of followed the funding and financing for Louisiana and its' connections to the oil and gas industry. It's a huge concern for me that our Coastal Master Plan is dependent upon the extraction of oil and gas into the infinite future coming out of the deep waters of the Gulf. And they just passed this heartbeat law here outlawing abortion and it feels like we're really sliding back in so many ways. I'm like, what's next? I don't even want to think about it. The policies around the deregulation of the Gulf of Mexico really gets to me. And I feel like all those decisions are made so fast.

When I first moved down here, I was very conflicted about working for an oil company and being an environmentalist. And, also, just trying to find my rhythm in my workplace with my manager. And we did one of those personality tests. And the results from my personality tests were really interesting. I mean, my boss and I were at the opposite ends of the spectrum! One of the pieces of the feedback was that I'm very socially inclined. Even to the point where I would put myself in harm's way or be killed. I have never seen a personality test come back with a result like that! So my fear is that there are women out there that are already facing those challenges of caring so much or fighting so much that they will face injury, self-harm, or be killed.

Finally, Black and Indigenous women in Gulf Coast Louisiana envision climate just futures that center women's issues, as well as create opportunities to address activist fatigue and burnout. Although we agree that intersectional environmental, energy, and climate justice is important, we also know that there is a lot of work to be done to raise community consciousness around the connections between gender and climate change. It is also challenging to dispel myths about BIWOC feminism(s) and our presumed biological roles as nurturers and caretakers. We consequently demand feminist futures which value women's leadership and make space for diverse voices and healing justice in environmental decision-making, environmental philanthropy, and climate policy.

I don't think my community is even thinking about.... they don't even want to talk about climate change, and they surely don't want to talk about gender. Even though they're dealing with life on the frontline of rising seas. It's not something that people talk about.

I want people to be more open to doing transformative healing justice work. Why are we spending so much energy fighting with each other? What's the point of stating how we've been wronged without thinking too much about what we need? People are praised for burning out, for being busy, and for working after five. Like that makes you a better organizer and a better person, or means you're really dedicated to the cause. I think we're generally trying to be better about the need for healing, and I've seen a language shift. But I still think overall that rest and health are not valued.

It is important to ensure that women are in leadership positions- again, not just doing the groundwork or the legwork, but ensuring that women's issues are at the forefront of some of these conversations around climate and environment. And the way to do that is for women to be empowered to be leaders, not just the folks standing behind the man who is talking about climate justice. Not tokenizing women but realizing their very real abilities to lead and letting them do that. And, not telling them how to do that!

Conclusion

It is thus apparent that Louisiana Black and Indigenous women organize around futuristic visions for energy and climate reparations; we also strive to protect our coastal communities as modern-day environmental defenders and southern griots, strategically spinning tales of fugitivity, collaboration, divine inspiration, and tenacity. We are likewise feminist warriors who “educate, agitate, and organize” to improve environmental and political conditions for all throughout the Gulf Coast region. Our collective resistance to resilience, opposition to toxic geographies, and insistence on “renewable and reparative energy systems” lay the groundwork for emergent abolition ecologies (Luke and Heynen 2020); our embodied difference and familiarity with layered and intergenerational environmental trauma uniquely situate us to theorize and challenge environmental violence. We recognize Gulf Coast environmental violence as petrochemical pollution in Death Alley, criminalization of Indigenous water protectors, infrastructural and stormwater mismanagement, petro-pedagogy⁵⁰, the gender pay gap, reproductive injustice, and the intersection of environmental racism, classism, and sexism that routinely manifests as governmental neglect and abandonment during unnatural disaster.

Everyday strategies of resistance through mundane/spectacular acts of refusal, recovery, rest, rejection, restoration, and reimagining (R⁶), in contrast, redefine necropolitics of expendability and disposability as feminist abolition ecologies, healing justice, and climate justice pedagogies. Whether harvesting plant medicine to send to pipeline protests, refusing philanthropic dollars from fossil fuel industries, raising environmental consciousness amongst students and families working in oil & gas, or sharing cleaning supplies and gutting hurricane-damaged homes as acts of mutual aid, Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women successfully manifest a just transition to more fossil fuel freeish futures. Our futurist imaginings and intersectional resistance ultimately promise to transform toxic geographies into feminist ecologies of anti-resilience. Our everyday resistance also threatens the viability and longevity of petrocolonial violence and Louisiana state-corporate crime by planting seeds of hope for long-term systems change.

⁵⁰ Petro-pedagogy refers to teaching practices that encourage fossil fuel claims to innocence, align with oil & gas interests, obscure the role of corporate power, and advance neoliberal and individual solutions for environmental and climate action (Eaton and Day 2020). Petro-pedagogy limits feminist visions and decolonial imaginings.

Nevertheless, more theoretical research is needed to disentangle intention, agency, dependency, outcomes, and both short and long term impacts (i.e. effectiveness) of resistance in highly repressive petrocolonial states (Kasbari and Vinthagen 2020). It is likewise difficult to create rigid typologies of gendered everyday resistance when there is 1) a lack of comparative and systematized data on types, intensity, frequency, scope, effect range, and perceived effectiveness of resistance, 2) the strength of everyday resistance often depends on its obscurity and unintelligibility, and 3) any assessment of these metrics are shaped by an assessor(s) positionality, cultural familiarity, and partial perspectives. Such a systematic and positivist categorization and surveillance of women of color's acts of refusal, recovery, rest, rejection, restoration, and reimagining (R⁶) would potentially run afoul of the values of ethnographic refusal and the ethics of ecowomanist methodology. Future feminist activist research should instead investigate everyday strategies of feminist and queer climate justice across the U.S. Gulf South and Global South, explore diverse types of eco-masculinities, and intentionally contribute to efforts to build and sustain transnational solidarity across global sacrifice zones.

And so, the work of ecowomanist anti-resilience continues! (We) wholeheartedly embrace the idea that it is time for Gulf Coast political leaders to hold industry accountable for environmental harms, restore our coasts, protect our cultural institutions and cultural bearers, demand climate reparations, and learn to live with water. It is also time to decolonize masculinist, positivist, and Eurocentric framings of climate activism that silence and overlook mundane/spectacular strategies of grassroots resistance and ecowomanist approaches to environmental, energy, and climate justice. Since intimate and, at times, contradictory entanglements play a major role in Gulf Coast women of color's navigation of simultaneous dependence and resistance to energy and petrochemical industries, we have an equally important role in ushering in a more fossil fuel *freeish* world. Our love of community, spirit, resistance, joy, and liberatory education will continue to inspire our collective, improvisational, and healing approach to anti-resilient and ecowomanist abolition ecologies.

Conclusion

The work we do is to get people to understand the connections between urban stormwater management, climate change, and sea level rise. We also get residents to understand the importance of growing food. Because when we have those traumatic events like evacuations or hurricanes, we also have to maintain healthy eating habits. I come at this from a public health lens and making sure people are healthy. I connect climate change, food security, and sustainable agriculture.

- Creole Interlocuter

My doctoral research, guided by ecowomanist autoethnography (EWAE) and feminist activist methodologies, ultimately demonstrates the brilliance of Gulf Coast BIWOC voices for environmental, energy, and climate justice. My (auto)ethnographic research, for example, identifies and analyzes gendered and racialized violence experienced by ecofeminist and ecowomanist teachers and consequently situates BIWOC scholar-educator-activists at the frontlines of climate, epistemic, and healing justice. My feminist activist research likewise demonstrates how Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women navigate contradictory, at times codependent, relationships with energy and petrochemical industries to reimagine feminist care infrastructure, nurture decolonial and fossil fuel free^{ish} futures, and demand energy and climate reparations. (Our) everyday resistance to state-corporate crime moreover exemplifies the spirit of critical environmental justice and fourth-wave feminism(s); gendered acts of refusal, recovery, rejection, rest, restoration, and reimagining (R⁶) unapologetically foster politics of indispensability through Afrofuturistic and Indigenous storytelling, interracial, interregional, intergenerational, and international coalitions, and innovative approaches to digital activism and climate communication.

My (auto)ethnographic research further critiques common framings of Gulf Coast communities and bodies as “vulnerable” and “resilient” to the detriment of their own emancipatory aims and struggles for survival; (we) reject disempowering resiliency narratives to instead nurture and improvise anti-resilient and feminist abolition ecologies (Baker 2019; Heynen and Ybarra 2021; Riley 1992; Di Chiro 2021). I moreover contextualize my research and course work as part of the unlearning process required for decolonial environmental education and youth engagement (Gough and Whitehouse 2019; Roberts-Gregory 2021; Kayser 2021). Feminist, critical, and BIPOC-led environmental initiatives arguably serve as fertile ground for radical environmental thought, political conscientization, and intergenerational civic engagement (Gough and Whitehouse 2019). Educator activism moreover enables Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women to plant seeds of hope and mentor current and future generations of youth climate activists without upsetting prevailing gendered norms of civility or incurring violent reprisal or social stigma when participating in direct action.

Contribution to the Literature and Broader Impacts

My scholarship contributes to an evolving environmental anthropology and climate change canon that has more recently investigated climate-caused migration, local perceptions of climate risk, climate adaptation, and the fate of island nation-states (Crate and Nuttall 2016; Lazrus 2012; Maldonado 2014a). I complicate theoretical understandings of the “second disaster” (i.e. sociocultural displacement) that follows the first disaster (physical displacement) with theories of

intersectionality, anti-resilience, and a “third disaster” of emotional displacement (Oliver-Smith 1996; Gorecki 2021; Baker 2019). My project also advances theories of gender mainstreaming in international climate negotiations and policymaking by focusing on how mismatch between self-identification and community perception of activist identities, disempowering resilience frameworks, and everyday strategies of resistance against state-corporate crime shape Gulf Coast Black and Indigenous women’s inequitable participation in local, regional, and international environmental decision-making and policymaking (Gay-Antaki 2020; Flavell 2020). Finally, my project challenges environmental justice scholars to embrace more critical theories of gender, sexuality, and species; as a critical environmental justice scholar-activist, I champion more disruptive, promiscuous, and feminist methodologies such as EWAE (Pellow 2016; Childers 2014; Harris 2017). I also challenge Black feminist scholars to embrace environmental justice themes since “There is no use in womanists advocating liberation politics if the planet cannot support people’s liberated lives” (Riley 1992: 474).

The findings from this research furthermore extend existing anthropological, political ecology, and geographical concerns with environmental governmentality, transnational environmental justice, social movement building, vulnerability and resilience, environmental violence, toxic geographies and embodied toxicity, Black and Indigenous ecologies/geographies, feminist abolition ecologies, citation politics and #citeBlackwomen, extractivist methods and “damage-centered research”, collaborative and desire-centered research, educator activism, sustainable development, and, lastly, race, gender, and environment as mutually constitutive categories (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996; Heynen and Ybarra 2021; Gorecki 2021; Terry 2009; D. E. Taylor 2014; Davies 2019; Foster 2017; Mollett and Faria 2013; Gutierrez, Powell, and Pendergrast 2021; Theriault and Kang 2021; Di Chiro 2021; Carlyn 2020; C. A. Smith et al. 2021; Frazier 2019; Ducre 2018; Murphy, Weddington, and Rio-Glick 2021; Atapattu, Gonzalez, and Seck 2021; Kayser 2021). My findings are therefore applicable to a wide range of social science disciplines and should guide best practices for community outreach and collaboration with Black and Indigenous communities underrepresented in climate action plans, coastal resilience, and sustainable adaptation planning. The insights from my dissertation research will also potentially strengthen regional environmental justice and feminist coalitions and help sustain partnerships between underrepresented community groups, NGOs, industry, governmental agencies, policymakers, and research institutions. Finally, my research innovates feminist mixed methods and historicizes BIWOC solutions for “wicked” planning problems (Rittel and Webber 1973).

The Scholar-Educator-Activist Learning Journey

Louisiana currently boasts the highest rate of COVID-19 infection, and everyone is blaming Mardi Gras. But I don’t think it’s fair to blame Mardi Gras. Let’s instead focus on how crazy it is that we live in a country with no safety net. Mutual aid networks have sprung up to help folk, but I still feel like Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities haven’t received the support they need. My mom also asked the other day if [government/industry] were trying to kill us all. I told her she could do her part by teaching her students important environmental information and by planting seeds of resistance, both literally and figuratively. I also want to start growing healing plants on my sidewalk. A container garden would surely help me process all this death,

fear, and uncertainty. And grief. I miss my cousin, aunt, and uncle who died from COVID so much....It's time to heal from this pandemic. I have to trust my intuition more.

- 2020 Fieldnote Entry

My almost nine-year learning journey as an ecowomanist methodologist, climate storyteller, and feminist scholar-educator-activist transformed my academic understanding of contemporary environmental politics and honed my professional practices of community engagement; my feminist activist and ethnographic research moreover forced me to embrace “adulthood”, community organizing, and climate activism in unimaginable ways. When I was accepted into a UC Berkeley PhD program in Society & Environment in the fall of 2013, I had no idea, for example, that I would 1) lose my former advisor, Carolyn Finney, to tenure denial, 2) experience alienation, mental health issues, emotional trauma, and severe imposter syndrome as a tokenized Black face in White environmental spaces (i.e., my university department), and c) become involved in building Black community as president of the UC Berkeley Black Graduate Student Association during the height of the national #BlackLivesMatter movement. I later worked with a U.C. Berkeley Cooperative Extension specialist to mentor undergraduate students enrolled in an urban ethnobotany internship and I enrolled in coursework focused on democratization and feminist philosophy of science, sustainable communities, race, difference, & the environment, landscape geography, and design for the just city. Over time, these mentorship and curricular experiences encouraged me to center my own ecowomanist positionality and feminist activist politics in my doctoral research. After speaking at the 2017 Berkeley March for Science, protesting the tenure denial of women of color faculty at UC Berkeley, and attending the 2017 People’s Climate March in Washington D.C., I discovered that my voice, and the voices of countless other Black and Indigenous women, held unparalleled power to transform society and transform the way we do scientific research.

The seeds of my ecowomanist doctoral project were thus birthed in the midst of multi-layered grief and trauma, righteous rage, and the need to escape California to heal emotionally and spiritually from racial capitalist patriarchy and tenure denial (Roberts-Gregory 2020a; Gorecki 2021). I consequently choose embodied and feminist activist methodologies to critique the positivist epistemologies that devalued me and my former advisor’s knowledge, BIPOC scientific practices, and decolonial approaches to feminist care economies. Thus far, the learning journey has been wild, but extremely instructive! For example, my dissertation enabled me to strengthen relationships with former Louisiana and Georgia research mentors, support the capacity of under-resourced community-based organizations and nonprofits, and more meaningfully follow under-explored lines of anthropological inquiry from an undergraduate research poster titled “ the Gendered Climate Gap”. My research likewise created opportunities for me to partner with environmental organizations such as the DSCEJ and NAACP to engage Louisiana and Texas youth around sea level rise, street flooding, and catch basin mapping, as well as interview women’s organizations on best practices to integrate gender justice and climate justice.

Nevertheless, feminist activist fieldwork and (auto)ethnographic research proved challenging and, at times, dangerous. For example, I conducted much of my participant observation research via carpooling because I did not own a car. I still cannot afford a car as a working-class Black

woman and graduate student (Roberts-Gregory 2019). I was also periodically exposed to air toxins and floodwaters after instructing students in New Orleans and after interviewing women along Cancer Alley (i.e., Death Alley) (Roberts-Gregory 2020b). I later managed violence from students unaccustomed to feminist pedagogies and from students who resented Black American women in positions of authority. My developing ideas and messy feminist methodologies were moreover disparaged and stigmatized by more positivist former mentors; it was likewise difficult to hone my (auto)ethnographic writing voice and make sense of my lived experience as an interdisciplinary scholar-activist. Finally, I was forced to quarantine alone during the COVID-19 pandemic and had to decide whether to evacuate New Orleans during multiple hurricane seasons. The following fieldnote entry illustrates some of my emotional and mental health challenges during the pandemic and hurricane season in greater detail.

Guarding your sanity is important, but I haven't been doing the best job with my sanity. I'm just watching trashy Netflix shows like *Love is Blind* and *Tiger King*. I've also been sharing articles about how air pollution is related to COVID-19 and how women perform more care work during the pandemic. It hurts to know that people are dying and losing their jobs to COVID-19 every day. People with underlying diseases like diabetes are dying more. My own family members died. Three generations gone in a week... People say 2020 is canceled, but I recognize that my destiny is bigger than 2020. Since my ancestors survived, I can also survive. Post-traumatic growth and anti-resilience are a part of my heritage.

In addition, I recognize that feminist activist researchers must take care to find sustainable sources of funding for long-term ethnographic research and hone our grant-writing skills; we must resist paternalistic savior complexes when supporting and collaborating with frontline communities. Feminist activist researchers must also cultivate healing justice practices to manage burnout and activist fatigue, intentionally manage and prioritize our time, and be honest about the limits of our physical and emotional capacity when performing care as educators and interviewers. Finally, feminist activist researchers must recognize that (auto)ethnography is process, not product oriented. Introspection, reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty, and methodological messiness is strenuous, time-consuming work that requires boldness, creativity, innovation, and spontaneity; we must take risks, even if we lose credibility, respect, or value in the academy. My dissertation has consequently taught me that good feminist work, like good art, is not meant to be legible, consumable, or digestible to narrow minds and conservative politics; we intellectually thrive on the epistemic margins, even when we are scorned, abused, and misunderstood.

Research as Praxis: Future Steps

Future research should further explore emergent Gulf Coast mutual aid kinship ecologies and Black and Indigenous led COVID-19 disaster relief and hurricane recovery efforts. I am also interested in identifying the epistemic contours of emergent Gulf Coast climate culture(s) and emotional culture(s) in the wake of unnatural disaster. Future research should likewise investigate feminist care economies and policy platforms created by constituent members of the Feminist Agenda for the Green New Deal. I also plan to analyze barriers and opportunities for Gulf Coast communities to advance environmental justice and feminist priorities over carbon capture and geoengineering within the Louisiana Governor's Climate Initiatives Task Force. I

am super excited to use my feminist activist research and influence as a co-founding member of the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal and advisory board member of the HIVE Fund for Climate & Gender Justice to build international solidarity, promote healing modalities, and manifest community-controlled climate solutions and energy democracy.

Future research should also employ digital ethnographies and other types of flexible research designs when investigating BIWOC and youth-led climate justice movements during global pandemics. I also hope to support the emerging 1) Red, Black, and Green New Deal and 2) the Gulf South for a Green New Deal Policy platforms through consulting and philanthropic work. The integration of these synergistic policy platforms will enable Gulf Coast women of color and their families to lead and participate in coastal restoration, blue-green infrastructure, and climate and energy policy more equitably. I also look forward to participating in the 2021 WEA and Sierra Club Grassroots Accelerator for Women Environmental Leaders cohort to collaboratively devise an ecofeminist healing justice manifesto, strengthen relationships between southern environmental organizations, and plan a healing justice workshop for the 2022 Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal coalition retreat. Lastly, I plan to recruit more grassroots Louisiana women and queer folk into the Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal coalition and increase BIWOC representation in science policy and climate spaces. I will continue to support the DSCEJ HBCU Climate Consortium and increase the representation of youth of color in environmental careers through mentorship and internship opportunities.

Final Thoughts

Five years after arriving in New Orleans, I am extremely grateful for all the relationships I built and nurtured with frontline Black and Indigenous women, grassroots communities, and multiracial coalitions. I am also appreciative of all the methodological, ethical, and spiritual lessons I learned; I now know that feminist activist environmental research is more of a commitment to radical and abolitionist praxis than an approach to qualitative and mixed methods research. I also recognize that the rigor of my work should not be measured by the quantity of interviews I conduct or the number of meetings I attend but should instead be measured by the quality of my relationships, the militancy of the lessons and syllabi I prepare, and my embeddedness in resistance against petrocolonial hegemony. In other words, I know my research is impactful and meaningful because I have inspired youth to join the environmental and climate movement and I have been personally and professionally transformed by my research. I formerly identified as a graduate student; I now identify as a feminist climate activist.

Lastly, I'm still learning how to unapologetically embrace my radical political values, manifest an abundance of delightful living, and align my professional identity with my feminine and queer divinity. I also strive to be more kind to myself, release people pleasing, and embrace strategic fugitivity as a methodological avant-garde. Most importantly, I'm reclaiming my time and reframing my intellectual and emotional contributions to academia in ways that promote holistic health and wellness, wildness, and play. My life's work will continue to challenge extractive industries and corporate polluters and combat environmental discourses that erase the visionary solutions of BIPOC, youth, queer folk, and women. The "post" COVID world is undergoing transition, and so am I. These various transitions are evidenced by my final fieldnote entry.

It's almost unbelievable that I experienced so many transitions in such a short period of time while concluding my dissertation research in 2021. New Orleans issued a vaccine mandate during hurricane season and a Category 4 hurricane later hit Louisiana near the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Ida destroyed and devastated frontline communities along the river and bayou parishes, impacting many of my friends and colleagues. My postdoc ended a few days after Hurricane Ida landed, and I ended up requesting a filing fee extension for my dissertation. I was also forced to apply for FEMA assistance, unemployment, and Medicaid for the first time in my life. I later dealt with digital harassment from a past lover and was heartbroken to learn that a close childhood friend suffered from mental health issues during my evacuation journey.

Three close friends also left Louisiana right before the hurricane hit. While waiting sixteen days for Entergy to restore power to the city of New Orleans, (and even longer for the city to pick up storm debris and maggot-covered garbage), I became hurricane bonded with a former acquaintance who rescued me and my cat from my shotgun house the day before the storm landed. My marine officer love and I searched for cat-friendly accommodation in his Jeep across multiple Gulf Coast states (i.e., Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida). I eventually relied upon my Facebook community and long-term friendships for mutual aid assistance, housing accommodation, and disaster donations. Once it was safe to return home to New Orleans, I began to plot a new career and apply for academic and nonacademic positions. After receiving last minute research funds from a Wenner Gren Collaborative Ecologies workshop, I traveled to Glasgow to attend COP26. While in Scotland, I spoke at a Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal press conference to articulate the radical role of feminist educators in engaging youth around climate justice, advancing feminist priorities (as opposed to false solutions and technofixes) for climate justice, and building international solidarity between frontline communities in the Global North, the Global South, and the Gulf Coast.

It is thus apparent that there is no separation between my personal life, my professional aspirations, and my (auto)ethnographic research. I wholeheartedly embrace the feminist principle that the personal is political, and the political is personal. Nonetheless, the sun sets so the moon and shadows may rise. It is thus (our) time to use the tools of feminist research, science communication, and community organizing to manifest a just transition to fossil fuel *freeish* futures. It is also time for me to step into my greatness; my ecowomanist and (auto)ethnographic doctoral learning journey has beautifully evolved into a new chapter of feminist climate activism, philanthropic initiatives, environmental education, and energy consulting. I am now ready to call myself by a new name and publicly (re)commit to feminist climate justice.

My name is Dr. Frances Roberts-Gregory.
I am a bad-ass ecowomanist scholar-educator-activist.
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Appendix 1 Interview Guide

Positionality

1. How would you describe yourself or your identity to a friend?
2. To what extent does your identity inspire and/or complicate the work that you do?
 - a. cultural or ethnic identity
 - b. gender identity
 - c. motherhood
 - d. spiritual/religious
3. How would you describe your community?
4. To what extent does your community inspire and/or complicate the work you do?
5. Do you consider yourself to be an activist? Why or why not?

Issues and Organizational Affiliation

1. Can you tell me a bit about the issues you care about? What inspires you to care about these issues?
 - a. Environmental and social justice issues
 - b. Local, regional, federal, and international issues
2. How did you get involved in (*insert issues discussed above*)?
 - a. climate justice or environmental justice movement?
3. When you think of environmental issues in your city or region, what memories or images come to mind?
4. Are you involved in any organizations or institutions that address these issues? Please explain what your organization is doing to address these issues and why you chose this organization.
 - a. Activism, research, policy analysis, advocacy, analysis, community organizing, community planning, etc.
5. Are there any organizations that address these issues that you are not involved in? Why have you chosen to not participate in these organizations?
6. Do you collaborate with anyone or any other organizations to address the issues you care about?
 - a. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for collaboration?

Tensions and Challenges

1. What are some of the challenges that exist in the (environmental) work that you do?
2. Have you experienced tension in relation to the work you do? Please explain.
3. Have you felt uncomfortable in relation to the work that you do? Please explain.
4. When have you experienced your greatest disappointment in relation to your work?
5. When have you experienced your greatest joy in relation to your work?
6. Do you ever feel frustrated or overwhelmed? Please explain.
 - a. How do you guard your sanity?

Relationships to Industry

1. How would you describe your relationship to oil, energy, or petrochemical industries in Louisiana?
 - a. Corporate entities?
2. Have you witnessed or experienced contradictions in relation to your relationship to these industries? Please explain.
 - a. How do you navigate/cope with these contradictions?
3. When you imagine the future of Louisiana, what role does industry play?

Youth Engagement

1. Do you engage or collaborate with youth around environmental issues or climate change? If so, how?
2. What does climate justice and youth engagement look like in practice?
3. How do individuals in your field engage youth in climate change discussions?
4. How do women of color engage youth of color in climate justice initiatives?
5. What are challenges and opportunities to engage youth in climate justice?

Gender and Climate Change

1. How would you describe the relationship, if one at all, between gender and climate change?
2. How does your community perceive the relationship between gender and climate change?
3. How are women (impacted) by climate change compared to men or folk who do not self-identify as women?
4. In your view, is the intersection of gender and climate change an under-addressed issue in the US? If so, can you tell me a bit more about that?
5. In your opinion, is gender justice adequately incorporated into the climate justice movement in the United States?
 - a. What evidence do you see of this integration? How could the incorporation of gender justice be strengthened?
6. Which organizations are addressing the intersection of gender and climate change in the US?
7. What are the biggest challenges for addressing the intersection of gender and climate change? Environmental justice? Please explain.
8. What are your most effective strategies/tactics for addressing the intersection of gender and climate change? Please explain.

Policy and Political Climate

1. Can you describe the policy issues you are most concerned about? Least concerned about?
2. Do you see yourself involved in climate or adaptation policy? Please explain.
3. How are you involved in environmental policy and politics?
4. Are there opportunities for you and other women to be involved in climate policy? What are barriers to involvement? Please explain.

5. Are there opportunities for your community to be involved in climate policy? What are barriers to involvement? Please explain.
6. What current climate policies or adaption policies do you like or dislike?
7. Given the opportunity, how would you design and implement climate policies?
8. What would women's meaningful participation in policy look like? Do we currently have meaningful participation?
9. What skills or knowledges do women need to equitably participate in policy?
Environmental decision-making?
10. How would you describe the impact of the current political climate on the environmental movement?
 - a. On women's participation in the environmental and climate movement?
 - b. On your strategies and priorities?
11. To what extent are you leveraging the current political moment for your (or your organization's) goals and objectives?

Climate Justice and Social Movement Building

1. How do you feel about climate adaptation? Can you explain further?
2. How do you feel about climate resilience? Can you explain further?
3. How would you define climate justice?
 - a. What does the climate justice movement look like in your region or city?
 - b. What does the climate justice movement look like in the South?
4. What does the future hold for women who care about climate change and environmental issues?
5. What do you wish you were doing to address gender, environmental issues, and climate change that you're not able to do?
 - a. Why can't you do it now?
 - b. What would you need to be able to do more?
6. What would a climate just future look like for Louisiana?

Conclusion

1. Is there anything we did not discuss that you would like to discuss now?
2. Do you know any other women who might be interested in sharing their ideas and perspectives on the topics we discussed today?
3. How do you feel after sharing your thoughts with me today?
4. Do you have any additional questions or comments?

Demographic Information

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Organizational Affiliation(s):
4. Career/Job:
5. Geographic Location:
6. Gender/Sexuality:

7. Preferred Gender Pronouns:
8. Cultural/Ethnic Identity:
9. Where are you from?
10. What year did you move to New Orleans (before/after Katrina)?
11. Southerner (Y/N):
12. Education Level:
13. Income Level:
14. Political Affiliation:
15. Do you have any children?
16. Spiritual/Religious Affiliation:
17. Marital Status:

Appendix 2 Popular Writings Based on Dissertation Research

Roberts-Gregory, F. 2021. "Climate Justice in the Wild n' Dirty South: An Autoethnographic Reflection on Ecowomanism as Engaged Scholar-Activist Praxis before and during COVID-19." Pp. 125-146 in *Mapping Gendered Ecologies: Engaging with and Beyond Ecowomanism and Ecofeminism*. K Melchor Quick Hall and Gwyn Kirk (Eds). Lanham: Lexington Books.

Roberts-Gregory, F. 2020. "[My Petrochemical Love](#)." *Anthropology News*, December 17, 2021. DOI: 10.1111/AN.1387

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Roberts-Gregory, F. 2019. "[I do not drive in the South....And here's why](#)." *ViaNolaVie*