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Seeking Justice

The subjugation of nature and women as seen through the struggles for
environmental justice and reproductive justice in the U.S.,
1970-present

Degree of Master of Science (Two Years) in Human Ecology: Culture, Power and Sustainability
30 ECTS

CPS: International Master's Program in Human Ecology
Human Ecology Division
Department of Human Geography
Faculty of Social Sciences
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Term: Spring Term 2018

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| Title and Subtitle: | Seeking Justice: The subjugation of nature and women as seen through the struggles for environmental justice and reproductive justice in the U.S., 1970-present |
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| Examination: | Master's thesis (two year) |

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| Term: | Spring Term 2018 |
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Abstract

This thesis aims to gain a better understanding of the modern subjugation of nature and women in the United States, by looking at the recent history of the Environmental Justice Movement (nature) and Reproductive Justice Movement (women). Through examining the history of these movements and relevant politics from 1970 to present day, events can be analyzed to shed light on the current political situation in the U.S., where reproductive freedom and environmental protection are under threat by the Trump administration. Therefore, this study looks at the progress that has been made by the Environmental Justice and Reproductive justice movements, as well as the forces at play that have helped or hindered these movements from making progress, whether political or social. What was found is that conservative alliances, which have formed between members of the liberal elite, Christian right and Republican party, have provided a strong oppositional force to the progressive agendas of both movements. To understand the purpose for such opposition, this thesis looks at potential gains these forces can obtain by taking action against reproductive freedom and environmental protection. With the use of ecofeminism and David Harvey's theory of "accumulation by dispossession" a presentation of possible gains is made, claiming that dispossession of the following: reproductive rights, access to reproductive healthcare, environmental protection and health, has helped the conservative alliances gain power through political influence. However, in the face of the neoliberal and conservative agendas of these alliances, the movements for Environmental Justice and Reproductive Justice have made significant progress in recent history, leading up to the present.

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Acknowledgements

I would sincerely like to thank my advisors, Noura Alkhalili and Andreas Malm, for the encouragement and insight they have provided me throughout this process. I would also like to thank my fellow CPS students for introducing me to new perspectives and helping to make this master's program a genuinely fun and unforgettable experience. Lastly, I would like to thank my mom and husband, for their encouragement and unwavering patience from the beginning of the thesis process.

List of Acronyms

CAA - Clean Air Act

CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CJ - Climate Justice

CJM - Climate Justice Movement

CPP - Clean Power Plan

EJ - Environmental Justice

EJM - Environmental Justice Movement

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

IEN - Indigenous Environmental Network

NASA - National Aeronautic and Space Administration

NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act

NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

OSHA - Occupational Safety and Health Administration

REDMAP - Redistricting Majority Project

RJ - Reproductive Justice

RJM - Reproductive Justice Movement

1. Introduction

The control of the state over women and nature has a long-standing history in the United States, not the least in recent decades, leading up to present day with the election of Donald Trump and his attempted policy changes directly attacking environmental protection and women's reproductive rights and freedom¹ (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Bullard, 2005; Bomberg, 2017; Grossman, 2017). Since the 1970s however, social justice movements concerning reproductive and environmental issues have been gaining ground in the face of such attacks (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Cole & Foster, 2001; Bullard, 2005). In this thesis, I focus on these issues by looking at the history of the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) and Reproductive Justice Movement (RJM) in the United States from 1970 to present day in order to understand how these movements have made progress and what forces have been at play that have helped and hindered these movements from making progress and influencing change in politics. I look at the popularization of neoliberal thought and the formation of conservative alliances in the late 1970s to see how these forces influenced the formation of the EJM and RJM by providing an oppositional force to both movements. To help address these issues, I aim to answer the following three research questions:

1. What progress have the Reproductive Justice Movement and Environmental Justice Movement made during the recent historical period of 1970 to present day?
2. What forces have been at play that have helped or hindered the RJM and EJM from influencing progressive changes in politics in the United States?
3. What gains could be made by the oppositional forces to the EJM and RJM, by providing political obstructions to the progressive goals of these movements?

The theory of radical ecofeminism is used as the broadest theoretical framework to analyze the coupled oppression of women (through the Reproductive Justice Movement) and nature (through the Environmental Justice Movement) that has occurred during the timeframe of this study and is still occurring today through the Trump presidency. Because of the broad and varied forms of oppression nature and women are susceptible to in today's society – from unequal wage between men and women to victim-blaming of rape survivors; from pollution to the potential opening of protected federal lands for fossil fuel extraction (Elsesser, 2018;

¹ Reproductive freedom refers to the freedom for everyone to have control over their reproductive bodies and includes a long list of needs, such as "access to safe, legal abortion, effective birth control, sex education [...], an end to sterilization abuse," LGBTQ rights, child care, freedom from violence, safe workplaces, and the list goes on (Fried, 1990, p. x).

Szalavitz, 2018; Rice, 2018; Leber, 2017) – and due to the scope of this thesis, the topics of “nature” and “women,” as referred to in ecofeminist discourses, are altered and narrowed down. Firstly, I have decided to focus on movements for social justice in this thesis because I see these movements as key for moving forward towards a more just and equal society, as long as the movements recognize that not all of the oppressed are oppressed in the same way. It is important to understand and acknowledge the varied degrees of inequality in society in order to dismantle the structure which created the inequalities in the first place and thus alleviate the different layers of oppression (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017).

Secondly, I find it misleading to broadly refer to the oppression of *nature* and *women* when it is much more complicated than that and here I will provide two examples from history to help explain why. 1) Nature: With the protection of nature through the formation of national parks in the United States, came the forced removal of Native populations from their ancestral lands (Spence, 2000). In these instances, with the protection of nature, came the oppression of people who had lived on the land for centuries (ibid.). 2) Women: While women’s suffrage occurred nationally in 1920 in the United States, many African-American women were not able to practice their right to vote until the 1960s (Little, 2015). This shows that the color of someone’s skin can play an acute role in their experience of oppression, so while many people consider 1920 to be the year when all women were able to vote in the U.S., this is not entirely true (ibid.). It is due to historical examples such as these, which show that supposed victories for nature and women are not always as they seem, coupled with my interest in looking more closely at movements for social justice, that I have decided to do this historical study on the Environmental Justice² Movement and Reproductive Justice³ Movement.

It should be stated clearly that the intent of this thesis is not to provide a comprehensive overview of the history of these movements during the period of 1970 to present day. Rather, it is to look at the progress made by these movements and how the power structure in the United States has played a role in helping or hindering progress through government and policy changes. Additionally, while there is much relevant history that could be presented which looks internationally, I will predominantly maintain a domestic focus on the United States. In this thesis, I also aim to dissect the reasons for opposition that form towards the goals of

² Environmental justice is the aim for social and economic justice in order to overcome environmental racism which has been prominent in poor communities and communities of color throughout history (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 10).

³ Reproductive justice is the crossover between social justice and reproductive rights and health (Ross & Solinger, 2017).

reproductive and environmental justice. For this, the ecofeminist framework is reinforced with the assistance of David Harvey's theory of "accumulation by dispossession," and additional insight is provided through the support of intersectional theory. Ultimately, this is a brief historical overview to shed light on recent history and how it has led to contemporary events in the United States regarding the actions of the Trump administration – the motivation for doing this study – which I will delve into further in chapter 2.

2. Background

2.1 Current Political Events in the U.S.

On the 21st of January, 2017 – the day following the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States – it is estimated that the Women's March on Washington, including its sister marches across the country, "was likely the largest single-day demonstration in recorded U.S. history" with over 4 million people throughout the nation taking to the streets in protest against Trump's rise to power (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2017; Edwards, 2018; Pettway, 2017). The marches brought together people who were concerned about the future of a diverse range of progressive issues, such as women's rights, reproductive rights, environmental protection, social welfare, racial rights, LGBTQ rights and immigration rights (Fisher et al., 2017). With Trump's famous slogan, "Make America Great Again," he promised to roll back the clock on many progressive advances made throughout the Obama years and prior, from promising to pull the U.S. out of the Paris Climate Accord of 2015 to reversing the 1973 landmark decision of *Roe v. Wade* which resulted in the national legalization of abortion (Edwards, 2018; Boys, 2018; Grossman, 2017). Millions of people understood that his promises, if put successfully into action, would threaten American democracy as they know it (Beauchamp, 2018). As was predicted, him and his cabinet have been attempting, in some cases with success, to make his campaign promises come to fruition (Boys, 2018; Edwards, 2018).

2.2 Attempted Changes by the Trump Administration

Many of the attempted changes by the Trump administration show that Trump and his cabinet have strong opinions pertaining to environmental and reproductive issues, amongst many other matters (Bomberg, 2017; Grossman, 2017). Trump started out his presidency by filling his

cabinet with climate change skeptics and deniers, as well as individuals who are proponents for reducing environmental regulation (Bomberg, 2017). Trump also chose a myriad of anti-abortion advocates for his cabinet and nominated Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court – a man who has a history of hostility towards women’s equality and reproductive rights (Murray, 2017; Grossman, 2017).

Since Trump became president, he has made many attempts to reverse Obama era environmental and climate policies, such as the Clean Power Plan (CPP) which regulates emissions in the power sector (Bomberg, 2017). He has also reversed restrictions and allowed the continued construction and use of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines (ibid.). Additionally, his proposed budget includes a substantial reduction in funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other science-focused governmental research sectors, such as the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), where important scientific information on the climate and environment come from (ibid.). In fact, the Trump administration has not only shown its disregard for science-based evidence by cutting funding to these groups, but has even banned the use of several phrases and words, such as “evidence-based” and “science-based”, in budget documents at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (Belluz & Irfan, 2018; Helmore, 2017). Further, on June 1st, 2017, Trump officially announced that he will begin the 4-year process to remove the U.S. from the 2015 Paris Climate Accord (Shilu et al., 2017).

Regarding issues around reproductive rights and accessibility, the Trump administration has been equally eager to make headway on its promises (Grossman, 2017). Plans have ranged from defunding any clinic associated with Planned Parenthood, many of which provide healthcare to low-income individuals, to a federal ban on abortion after 20 weeks of gestation (ibid.). As previously mentioned, Trump hopes to reverse the 45-year-old landmark case of *Roe v. Wade* which resulted in the legalization of abortion, though this will not be an easy task for him to achieve (Murray, 2017). However, some of his cabinet members are working to present a pathway for state leaders to implement policies that could put greater restrictions on abortion and reproductive clinic access within their respective states (ibid.). This means that while Trump may not be able to change policy on a federal level, him and his cabinet can embolden states to take matters into their own hands and make drastic changes on the state level (ibid.).

2.2.1 The U.S. is not an Anomaly

By taking a brief look outwards to focus internationally, the grander scale of this issue can be seen more clearly. The attack on environmental protection and reproductive rights that is ongoing in the United States through the Trump administration is not a unique phenomenon, but is in fact occurring in countries throughout the world, two of which I will provide examples for here. In Poland a recent law passed which allows for unregulated tree-felling on private properties thus leading to a rapid increase in tree loss; and women are facing strict anti-abortion laws and a government that is aiming to further reduce reproductive rights through an abortion ban (Davies, 2017; Santora & Berendt, 2018). In Brazil there is also a looming threat of an abortion ban and the government has proceeded to reduce environmental protection on a vast scale, from reduced conservation of Indigenous peoples' land to the proposed legalization of land-grabbing (Long, 2018; Arsenault, 2017). These examples show that when it comes to the domination of nature and oppression of women, the U.S. is not alone, as this is occurring in various countries throughout the world. It also sheds light on the notion that this trend might be part of a greater global structure that is emboldening the coupled subjugation of nature and women. However, this is a topic to be further addressed in future research, as to maintain an international focus is beyond the scope of this thesis.

2.3 Social Action in the Face of the Trump Administration

The aforementioned attempted changes by the Trump administration have been met with opposition throughout the country, such as the previously mentioned Women's March on Washington, as well as many other significant demonstrations (Pettway, 2017; Bomberg, 2017). The March for Science, which occurred on Earth Day in 2017, followed by the People's Climate March a week later in Washington D.C. (each with parallel marches held in cities throughout the country) saw millions of people take to the streets in protest of Trump's disregard for scientific evidence, as well as "the social, health and justice implications of climate change and inaction" (Bomberg, 2017).

The changes that Trump hopes to accomplish regarding reproductive and environmental politics, accompanied by his inaction on climate change, provide the greatest threat to communities of people who are already marginalized (Quinn-Thibodeau & Wu, 2016; Ross & Solinger, 2017, L2572). In response to these threats, movements for social justice are looking for ways to create a better future and are mobilizing to take action across the country (Fisher et

al., 2017; Bomberg, 2017; Ross, 2017b). The Climate Justice Movement (CJM), which can be seen as a continuation of the EJ, has recognized that achieving justice under the Trump administration will not be easy and thus grassroots organizing and direct action is needed now more than ever in order to protect already marginalized communities (Quinn-Thibodeau & Wu, 2016). The RJM recognizes that in order to fight for justice in the face of Trump's politics, it needs to be an example of a human rights movement which recognizes the nuances of oppression that people face while allowing for both scholarly and activist engagement in the path towards achieving justice (Ross, 2017b).

In the past, social movements have played a key role in mobilizing people from the ground up and demanding change in society and politics (Aronoff, 2017). The purpose of this study is to examine how the coupled oppression of women and nature has prevailed during recent decades by looking at the history of the Environmental Justice (EJ) and Reproductive Justice (RJ) movements, along with the relevant politics, in the United States from the early 1970s to present day. The purpose is also to better understand the progress these movements have been able to make and what opposition they have faced. By looking into this history, we can closely examine what has happened in the past that led to where we are today and thus attempt to gain a better understanding of the current situation (Lange, 2013).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism, or ecological feminism, is a philosophy which posits the coupled subordination of women and nature as a manifestation of the patriarchal societal norms which began to form during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Miles, 2007; Merchant, 1989). In Carolyn Merchant's book, *The Death of Nature* (1989), the societal shift towards man's domination over women and nature is laid out as taking form during the Scientific Revolution during those two centuries and the simultaneous shift towards a market-focused culture in Europe at the time (Merchant, 1989, p. xx). During this societal shift, which focused on science and technological advances, women's role as equal breadwinner to their male counterparts shifted as well (ibid., p. 149). Women were coerced into the limited role of domesticity, where they were to be passive and dependent on men in regard to both production and reproduction (ibid., p. 149-150). This

was coupled with the domination of nature for the benefit of humankind and a linking of the female gender with earth and nature (ibid., p. 169).

In modern ecofeminist discourses, there are two main tracks of thought known as radical ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism (Miles, 2007). Radical ecofeminism argues that it is important to understand the inner workings of this patriarchal system of oppression and thus work to decouple the association of women and nature in an effort to end the exploitation and subordination of both (ibid.). Cultural ecofeminism argues that women are more innately connected to nature due to their gender roles and biology and thus, care more deeply for the environment and its protection (ibid.). I find this latter view to be exclusionary and far from my own personal beliefs, as it seems to promote that gender and behavior are predetermined by our biological makeup. As Val Plumwood discusses in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), the version of ecofeminism which claims and embraces a supposed innate connection between women and nature fails to understand the realities of women's lives and the differences between women. This connection, which often claims that women are inherently nurturing, empathetic and cooperative, the basis of which is in women's reproductive capacity, seems to claim that it is only "properly womanly women" who are connected with nature and thus can save it (Plumwood, 1993, p. 8-9). It is for these reasons and my disagreement with the perspective of cultural ecofeminism that this thesis will solely focus on the ideas within radical ecofeminist theory.

3.1.1 Oppression of Women and Nature in the U.S. – Now and Then:

As seen in section 2.2, for the past year, the Trump administration has been attempting to make several changes that threaten reproductive freedom and environmental protection. This includes working on efforts that would reduce access to reproductive health services throughout the U.S. and put greater restrictions on abortion, thus reducing women's autonomy over their own reproductive bodies. At the same time, the Trump administration is taking steps to reduce environmental protection through deregulation of polluting industry, continued fossil fuel extraction, and denial of the escalating threat of climate change (see section 2.2). The oppression of women and domination of nature in Trump's America are not glossed over, but are presented in clear view without shame. However, this simultaneous subjugation – something that Plumwood refers to as "backgrounding," where nature and women are in the background to the dominant sphere of recognized achievement – is nothing new and has been a trend in western society for centuries, dating back to sixteenth and seventeenth century

Europe (Plumwood, 1993, p. 21; Merchant, 1989). As Europeans began to spread and colonize the world, so did their ideals, and the to-be-established United States was no exception (Smith, 2008). The subjugation of women and nature were present throughout the country's formation and history, such as through colonialism and slavery (Ross & Solinger, 2017, Bullard, 2005, pp. 87-89).

Throughout U.S. history women have been subordinated in relation to work/labor and their reproductive bodies, while nature has often been treated as a resource for human use and a dumpsite for waste (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Cole & Foster, 2001; Bullard, 2005). This long historical trend of the subjugation of women and nature was highly contested in the 1970s as social movements demanding equality for women and environmental protection began to gain momentum (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 298; Ziegler, 2015). Since the 1970s, these progressive movements, including the EJM and RJM, have been met with many roadblocks (political and social) that have hindered them from influencing progressive change (see sections 5.3.2, 5.5.1). Ecofeminism provides the theoretical framework through which to view these political, social, as well as ideological shifts and events throughout the period of this study in an attempt to shed light on the coupled oppression of nature and women during this modern era.

3.2 Accumulation by dispossession

Accumulation by dispossession is a theory by David Harvey which claims that, since the 1970s when the concentration of wealth started to funnel into the hands of a few through neoliberal policies and capital accumulation, many people have been dispossessed of their wealth, land and rights (Harvey, 2003, pp. 147-152). This capital accumulation has occurred through corporatization, privatization, deregulation, financialization, and state influence (ibid.). As Harvey states:

The rolling back of regulatory frameworks designed to protect [labor] and the environment from degradation has entailed the loss of rights. The reversion of common property rights won through years of hard class struggle (the right to a state pension, to welfare, to national health care) to the private domain has been one of the most egregious of all policies of dispossession pursued in the name of neo-liberal orthodoxy (2003, p. 148).

These are related to some of the forms of dispossession that will be presented in this thesis, such as the loss of welfare, rights and protection for the environment. It is important to note that accumulation by dispossession can occur in various ways, some which might not seem obvious

(Harvey, 2003, p. 149). Motivations may also differ for various types of accumulation – a capitalist will seek to gain more capital and a politician may seek to maintain their position of power and their responsibility to their allied forces, such as an elite group or a class (ibid., p. 27).

In this thesis I will focus on the accumulation of power by the liberal corporate elite⁴ and their allies through the shift to neoliberal ideology in the late 1970s and their subsequent efforts to maintain power – often through reactionary politics from fears of the changing status quo (Tanenhaus, 2016). Indeed, during the last third of the twentieth century in the United States, power has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of the wealthy, who now have significant control over social policy (Mayer, 2016; Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 101). Regarding dispossession, I will look at the dispossession of people from their ability to live and work in safe and clean environments, and their ability to have reproductive autonomy and freedom. For these reasons, I will focus on dispossession through the struggles of the Environmental Justice Movement and Reproductive Justice Movement, which formed due to experiences of greater dispossession by some, predominantly regarding inequalities based on class, race and gender.

3.3 Intersectionality:

Intersectional theory claims that social inequality can be better understood if the crossover of various social identities – such as race, class, gender, etc. – are recognized and used in looking at experiences of discrimination (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 11-12). Intersectionality will not play an integral part in this thesis as an overarching theory to explain the phenomenon I am aiming to understand, but it will be used to provide support in recognizing the varying degrees of oppression people face. It is also an important theory that is often used within RJ discourse (see section 5.3.3), and while not as prominent within EJ discourse, I find it to be equally relevant in helping to recognize the varying degrees of environmental oppression that can be linked to class, race, gender, etc.

⁴ In this thesis, those described as “elite” – whether it be “liberal elite,” “corporate elite,” “business elite” and the like – refers to the extremely wealthy individuals in the U.S. who value neoliberal ideology and the preservation of their class status. This elite group, and their role in shaping the economic system and politics throughout the period of this study, is more thoroughly discussed in David Harvey’s book, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005); and Jane Mayer’s book, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (2016).

4. Methods and Methodology

4.1 Ontology/Epistemology

Throughout this thesis, I hold a critical realist perspective, in that I believe there is an undeniable reality which occurs despite its discernibility within the human realm of thought. Pertaining to the topic of this thesis, I believe in the reality of occurrences and outcomes such as, the dumping of toxic waste in the environment creates real health implications for humans exposed to these toxins; the emissions of fossil fuels are causing climate change; policies have an effect on how or if women can control their reproductive bodies; etc. Epistemologically, I maintain that it is viable to perceive and learn about such cause and effect relations, but that human error is always a possibility through misconceptions or biases (Bhaskar, 2008). Throughout the thesis, I aim to explicitly state my perspective and provide evidence to support this perspective when necessary.

4.2 Comparative Historical Methodology

For this study, I did a comparative historical analysis of the EJM and the RJM in the United States from 1970 to present day. The study looks not only at the movements themselves over time, but also at the relevant politics and social norms/changes that influenced and shaped the progression of the EJM and RJM. Comparative historical methods can be used to provide insight into important social issues and changes throughout history, which can then be used to better understand contemporary society and the processes that took place to result in said society (Lange, 2013, p. 1). This was my overarching goal with this study – to analyze the relevant history of these two social movements (the RJM and EJM) in parallel and conjunction to provide insight into the present-day situation in the U.S., where reproductive freedom and environmental protection are under threat by the Trump administration (see section 2.2). As William Faulkner famously wrote, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past” (Faulkner, 1951) and it is with this conviction – that the current situation in which society finds itself is a result of past events and processes – that I sought to examine these specific social movements throughout the recent time period of 1970 to present day.

4.3 Applied Methods

The comparative historical methodology used for this study follows that which can be found in Matthew Lange's book, *Comparative Historical Methods* (2013). The broader methodology consists of what are referred to in the book as "comparative methods" and "within-case methods" for doing comparative historical research (Lange, 2013). The term "within-case" is used to refer to the historical component of the research, which is then divided into primary and secondary methods (ibid., p. 40). This section will discuss my primary and secondary within-case methods as well as comparative method for conducting research and how I used them in this study.

4.3.1 Primary Within-case Method: Historical Method

The primary within-case method constitutes the evidence that is then later analyzed using the secondary within-case method (Lange, 2013, p. 55). The primary within-case method used in this study is a historical method, which includes finding historical narratives and evidence that are relevant to the comparative study to be conducted (Lange, 2013, p. 56). The evidence I found for the comparative historical analysis of the RJM and EJM, including the relevant politics and societal dynamics, was found primarily through historical narratives in secondary sources (in section 4.4.1 I will discuss the limitations to this approach). These historical narratives are then referenced in the study and used as evidence throughout the historical analysis and comparison.

To be more specific, I have found several secondary sources that provide historical accounts of the RJM (Ross & Solinger, 2017; Fried, 1990), EJM (Cole & Foster, 2001; Gottlieb, 2005; Bullard, 2005), Neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005) and other relevant topics, such as reproductive rights (Ziegler, 2015), the environmental movement (Gottlieb, 2005), capitalism and climate change (Klein, 2014), and the rise of the liberal corporate elite (Mayer, 2016). These books provided the bulk of information used for the history presented in this thesis, along with several articles (both scholarly and news) which primarily provided the information needed for the past decade. Regarding court cases, laws, and other official governmental documents, I reviewed the original sources when possible (the limitations of which I will discuss further in section 4.4.2).

4.3.2 Secondary Within-case Method: Causal Narrative

The secondary within-case method involves the analysis of information and the presentation of this information (Lange, 2013, p. 42). It often includes detective like work of finding data that can give insight into the various “culprits” that change and shape society as well as the processes within a given society over time (ibid., p. 43). The secondary within-case method used in this study was causal narrative, which “is an analytic technique that explores the causes of a particular social phenomenon through a narrative analysis” (ibid., p. 43). In the study I conducted, the social phenomenon I seek to find the cause of is the current political and social situation where those who hold the highest power in government are attempting to make changes that could adversely affect people and the environment throughout the country (see section 2).

In order to analyze the historical evidence, I divided the period of this study, from 1970 to present day, into sections based on social and political shifts, as well as significance to the RJM and EJM. Within each period, I used a narrative analysis to present the relevant information pertaining to each social movement as well as any overlap between the movements I came across while doing research. There are five sections which I have divided the historical period into:

1. 1970-1980: This is the first historical period because of the significant social movement momentum during these years. Also, many progressive advances were made in politics during the first few years of this decade, which I found intriguing since the Republican president, Richard Nixon, held the office at the time. This was interesting because my knowledge of politics has been that the Republican party is conservative-leaning, while the Democratic party is progressive-leaning. It shows that issues that are now associated with one party, used to hold bipartisan support. (See section 5.2)
2. 1981-1989: The second period coincides with the presidency of Ronald Reagan (Republican) who entered office with a very conservative and neoliberal agenda, which proved to be an enormous obstacle for progressive gains. (See section 5.3)
3. 1990-2000: The third period shows the aftermath of the Reagan administration and the progressive advances made by the Clinton administration (Democratic) which came into power in 1993. It is also the decade throughout which very significant events occurred for both the EJM and RJM. Environmental Justice entered into the political sphere

through the Clinton administration and the RJM formed and started gaining momentum. (See section 5.4)

4. 2001-2008: The fourth period coincides with the George W. Bush administration (Republican) who brought a conservative agenda into office and provided another set of roadblocks for progressive advances in politics. (See section 5.5)
5. 2009-present: The final and fifth period coincides with the presidency of Barack Obama (Democratic) and the beginning of the Trump administration (Republican). Obama entered office with a very progressive agenda, however was met with many obstacles from the Tea Party alliance, essentially limiting the breadth of progressive change he could make. (See section 5.6)

By analyzing the relevant history of the EJM and RJM, I was able to gain a better understanding of how the movements formed and have progressed over the period of this study. I have also found information that helps me to understand the political and social climate within which the movements had to try and make headway. The “culprits”⁵ I found, which make up the oppositional forces to the progressive goals of the EJM and RJM, are varied though many have formed alliances with each other to build a larger network and a greater oppositional force. They can broadly be defined as the New Right alliance which gained momentum in the 1970s and 80s (see section 5.2.4), and the more recent alliance of the Tea Party, which gained momentum in 2009 (see section 5.6.1). Both alliances were brought together by a group of liberal corporate elite who worked to gain influence in politics and thus, hold more power to be able to further their own agenda (Harvey, 2005; Mayer, 2016).

4.3.3 Comparative Method: Narrative Comparison

The method used in this study to compare the histories of the EJM and RJM is a narrative comparison or more specifically, a process-oriented comparison. Narrative comparison, as the name implies, uses narration to compare various constituents that are being studied, which allows for the consideration of broad societal structures, processes and events when doing the comparison (Lange, 2013, pp. 96-97). Process-oriented comparison is a subcategory to narrative comparison, and involves studying causal processes – in this case within and related to the RJM and EJM – which can then be compared (ibid., p. 99). The goal of this study was not

⁵ The word “culprits” is the word which Lange (2013) uses to describe those who change and shape society as well as the processes within society over time. This is also mentioned at the beginning of section 4.3.2 on page 12.

to make broad claims or be able to generalize about social phenomena, therefore a narrative approach has been appropriate and suitable for the aim of this research.

The comparison I conducted between the RJM and EJM did not follow a specific predetermined structure, however the historical sections includes sub-sections regarding EJ, RJ, their overlap (excluding sections 5.5, 5.6) and relevant politics during the timeframe of the section. What I tried to accomplish was looking at the historical progression of both the EJM and RJM to understand what forces were at play against both and if these forces, which perpetuate the domination of nature and oppression of women, were the same (or related) between the movements. What I found is that there is a great deal of overlap between the forces that provide opposition to both movements (see sections 6.3, 6.4)

4.4 Limitations to Methodological Approach

4.4.1 Secondary Sources and Misinterpretation

The predominant limitation with the choice of comparative historical methodology is that I have relied heavily on secondary sources, such as historical narratives (Lange, 2013, p. 144). Whenever possible and when it made sense, I sought out and thus referred to primary sources throughout the presentation and analysis of the data, but this is not always a possibility when it comes to governmental documents (see section 4.4.2).

Another limitation is the possibility of misinterpretation, because as the researcher, it is up to me to choose the information I present and find relevant to the study, thus factors must be omitted in my retelling of the story. In other words, “it is the historian who not only assigns order and coherence to events but also renders them significant, or not” (Nealon & Giroux, 2012, p. 108). This is an important realization – that throughout this study, as the researcher, I am presenting specific historical events I have chosen and am interpreting those events from my own perspective in order to support my theoretical framework (ibid., p. 109). Since I do not present a comprehensive history of all relevant data to this study, factual events must be omitted and thus, my historical presentation becomes an interpretation of the past (ibid., p. 109). However, it is necessary to be selective when writing about history, because as is the case for this study, history can often be too extensive and convoluted to be presented comprehensively in one narrative (ibid., p. 114).

4.4.2 Restrictions

The restrictions I have faced throughout the research process have been few, but with some significance. Restrictions of access, in various ways, have been the main barrier. There is the restriction of time and mobility in the sense that the research process spanned only four months and took place entirely in Sweden, thus, far away from the United States, which is the country I have decided to focus on for this study. This means that I was unable to access some primary sources due to restricted online access of certain documents and records, as well as the inability to travel to the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C., where this information would be available. Luckily, these records are often referred to in highly referenced books and other secondary sources, such as websites with catalogues of governmental documents, which means I have been able to compare these secondary sources to see if the information presented is consistent.

Another area for concern is the recent alteration of governmental websites by the Trump administration (Milman & Morris, 2017). One of the more shocking examples is the removal of the phrase “climate change” from the website for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which, prior to the Trump administration, had an entire section on the topic (ibid.). Examples such as this show that even with full access to governmental websites, there is reason to question whether the information presented is comprehensive, or perhaps only congruous with the ideologies and perspectives that the current administration adhere to.

5. Findings

5.1 Why the 1970s?

The early 1970s mark the beginning of this study for many parallel reasons. It was during this period, and leading up to it, that political, social and ideological shifts were beginning to manifest and take form pertaining to several issues (Harvey, 2005; Ziegler, 2015), some of which, I will refer to or delve into deeper in the following sections. The social movements which will provide the focal points for this initial period in the 1970s, are those pertaining to women, environmental, health and reproductive issues. This is because the EJM and RJM were still in the preliminary stages of forming during these earlier years, though the rhetoric and actions that would form the backbone of both movements were taking shape during this period, and even prior (Ross &

Solinger, 2017, p. 54-55; Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 19). Indeed, the formation of these movements are the result of long-standing injustices that precede the 1970s, though it is at this time of widespread social movement momentum, following the pinnacle of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and at the beginning of an ideological shift towards neoliberalism near the end of the 1970s, that this study will begin (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 14; Cole & Foster, 2001, pp. 20, 29; Harvey, 2005, p. 1).

5.2 1970-1980: Mainstream Social Movement Momentum

5.2.1 The Mainstream Movements and Policy

The 1970s – dubbed the “Environmental Decade” – saw a surge in environmental policy as well as a shift in activity for the mainstream environmental movement in the United States (Gottlieb, 2005, pp. 158, 177). The U.S. Congress was controlled by the Democratic party and a substantial amount of regulatory reform was signed into law in the early years of this decade (Harvey, 2005, p. 13), much of which was geared towards environmental protection. In 1970 alone, the Republican president, Richard Nixon formed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and signed into effect the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and a revised version of the Clean Air Act (CAA), not to mention, the first Earth Day took place, bringing together millions of citizens in a day of peaceful action (Gottlieb, 2005, pp. 156-57, 175, 179, 180). With the public growing more concerned with issues such as pollution and pesticide use, coupled with widespread media coverage prior to the first Earth Day on April 22nd, environmental awareness spread throughout the country and held bipartisan support (ibid., pp. 153, 157). Environmental protection had become popular.

While Earth Day brought together people throughout the country, about 10 million, to participate in a diverse range of activities to promote environmental awareness and protection on the ground, the older mainstream environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society, began to shift their focus from strict conservation of lands to lobbying and litigation within the political arena, as well as building a national environmental policy system (Gottlieb, 2005, pp. 157, 164, 181, 263). Throughout the 1970s, the new mainstream environmental movement, which included old and new groups, largely excluded itself from local level mobilization and, towards the end of the decade, began to hold an increasingly cooperative role with some of the environmentally destructive industries which local level groups were fighting against (ibid., pp. 182-83). Largely left out of the mainstream movement and policy

formation were communities who were at the frontlines of environmental neglect – whose neighborhoods were susceptible to a higher degree of pollution, waste disposal and toxins – predominantly poor communities of color (Cole & Foster, 2001, pp. 16, 30; Bullard, 2005, p. 34).

At the same time, movements regarding women’s liberation and reproductive rights had been building up to the early 1970s (Ziegler, 2015, p. 8). However, not all of the movements worked cohesively together and at times clashed over perspectives and alliances. One such alliance formed between the abortion rights movement and the population control movement, which attributed the overuse of natural resources and the impending threat of such overuse to a growing population (Ziegler, 2015, p.98; Gottlieb, 2005, p. 331). This alliance was seen with skepticism by many people, not the least poor women of color (Ziegler, 2015, p. 98). A glance at history prior to the 1970s shows that illegal abortion amongst poor women of color was high, not necessarily because the pregnancies were unwanted, but because of “the miserable social conditions which dissuade them from bringing new lives into the world” (Davis, 1981, p. 17). Additionally, population control has historically been prevalent in populations of poor women and women of color in the U.S., either through forced birth control or sterilization (ibid., p. 17). Thus, this led to an understandable feeling of skepticism towards the alliance of the abortion rights and population control movements of the 1970s, as fears of the past began to resurface (ibid., p. 17). The broader women’s movement at the time had trouble finding common ground with the abortion rights movement during its alliance with the population control movement for these reasons (Ziegler, 2015, p. 98). However, the primary discourse within the abortion rights and broader women’s movements was predominantly contributed by white, middle-class women, while the voices of poor women and women of color were largely subdued in these mainstream movements (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p 121-122).

In politics, the perspectives of women of color were also largely omitted when making decisions (Ross & Solinger, 2017). In 1970, Nixon signed into law Title X or the “Family Planning Services and Population Research Act,” which held bipartisan support and is still the only federal program focused on providing family planning services (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 147; Nixon, 1970). This law provides needed services for women, but the intentions of it are rooted in controversial and racial population politics (Silliman et al., 2004, p. 15). In 1973, in the midst of an already heated cultural debate over abortion, the *Roe v. Wade* case was settled, resulting in the national legalization of abortion (Ziegler, 2015, p. 2). This case, while a big victory on the quest for women’s liberation at the time, was still limited in its reach to include abortion access

for all women (Davis, 1981, p. 15-16; Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 124). *Roe* started out by giving the sole deciding power to physicians – women could not officially make the decision to have an abortion until 1977, at which point women were provided the *choice* to have an abortion (*Whalen v. Roe*, [1977]; Copelon, 1990, p. 35; Ziegler, 2015, p. 129). What this case failed to address was that not every woman has the ability to make such a choice due to various barriers, such as not being able to afford the procedure or the long-distance travel to a clinic that provides abortions – barriers that mostly fell on poor women and women of color (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 124). Poor women, often not being able to afford the cost of seeing a private physician, depended on public clinics where the staff frequently agreed with legislators on the opinion that motherhood was an economic status, or in other words, women should not have children if they did not have sufficient funds (*ibid.*, p. 50-51). In the 1970s, studies showed that the sterilization of women of color, as well as women who received welfare benefits or Medicaid⁶ occurred at a much higher rate than of women who did not fall into either of these categories. (*ibid.*, p. 51). Laws were proposed in thirteen states that would mandate sterilization of women who had “too many” children while receiving welfare or other public assistance, predominantly targeting African-American, Puerto Rican and Mexican immigrant women (*ibid.*, p. 50).

5.2.2 Movement Overlap and Shortcomings

The broader women’s movement and mainstream environmental movement had both been gaining momentum into the early 1970s, though there was little connection between the movements at the time (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 298). However, one particular case stands out, showing that women’s reproductive health could be intricately tied to environmental neglect. The women’s occupational health movement formed during the 1970s, as more women entered the workforce out of necessity due to a stagnant economy and the shifting role of women from stay-at-home housewives (*ibid.*, p. 294). This new movement brought to the table reproductive health issues in relation to the workplace environment as well as gender-based restrictions in industry (*ibid.*, p. 294-295). In the late 1970s, after hiring 25 women (out of over 500 employees) the company, American Cyanamid, a lead pigment plant in West Virginia, proceeded to ban all women ages 15 to 50 from working in various hazardous, often high paying, positions (*ibid.*, pp. 295-296). This was because women in this age bracket were seen as fertile and therefore at a higher risk to environmental hazards (*ibid.*). To work these jobs, women in this age group were required to either become sterilized or risk being terminated or transferred to lower paying

⁶ Medicaid is a form of government-funded healthcare in the U.S.

positions (ibid.). Eventually, the company was taken to court for not complying to lead standards, though they won on the argument that they could not afford to reduce ambient lead levels to protect a developing fetus (ibid.). In other words, the company was allowed to continue harming the environment and thus excluding women from the workforce so it could do so (ibid.).

Through the rise of the mainstream movements, the call for women's equality and environmental protection were made central to the social and political climate during the 1970s (Gottlieb, 2005; Ziegler, 2015). However, looking back on this period, it is possible to see the inadequacy of these movements to recognize the important nuances regarding inequality within women's issues and environmental issues. During this decade of social movement momentum, many people were excluded from the mainstream discourses – predominantly people who were already marginalized based on class, race, gender and immigration status (Gottlieb, 2005; Ziegler, 2015). The loudest voices within the mainstream movements pertaining to environmental issues and women's issues at the time were those of white, middle-class individuals, the only difference being that the advocates for the environmental groups were primarily white men and the women's groups, white women (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 165; Ross & Solinger, p. 52). New movements began to form in order to address the shortcomings of the mainstream movements and it is from these recognitions that the seeds were planted for the to-be EJ and RJ movements (see section 5.2.3).

5.2.3 Reproductive Justice and Environmental Justice Beginnings

During the 1970s (and prior), marginalized women began to mobilize, pointing out the limits of choice and access to healthcare, as well as demanding their right to be mothers, regardless of their poverty, in light of the sterilization of poor women, women of color and immigrant women that had been occurring throughout history (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 14, 42-43). Groups that had existed prior or that formed in the 70s, such as the National Welfare Rights Organization, National Council of Negro Women, the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse in NYC and the Native organization called Women of All Red Nations began to address some, if not all of these issues (ibid., p. 50, 54-55, 94). Regarding environmental issues, grassroots organizing was also spreading and occurring throughout the country in marginalized communities that were facing environmental hazards head-on, however these grassroots initiatives were largely isolated throughout the decade (Bullard, 2005, p. 17). This activism did not focus on environmental protection explicitly, but more on “land use, social impact, [and] human health” (Szasz, 1994, p. 40). One of the landmark examples of mobilization that led to the EJM took place in 1979 in

Houston at Northwood Manor, where the first lawsuit was filed in opposition to a waste facility, using civil rights claims (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 125).

5.2.4 The Political, Ideological and Social Shift of the Late 1970s

As these movements began to form, another set of ideologies and movements were gaining ground and forming alliances that would prove to present some of the greatest roadblocks for reproductive freedom and EJ. The pro-life movement, Moral Majority, Christian right, and elite upper-class (also known as the “liberal elite”) formed an alliance with the Republican party to further their agendas (Harvey, 2005, p. 49-51; Ziegler, 2015, p. xvi). Together they formed the New Right (ibid.). One of the first successes of this newly formed alliance was when the Supreme Court first established in 1976 that corporations were allowed, under protection from the First Amendment, to make unlimited monetary contributions to political parties (Court, 2003). Another gain during the same year, for the pro-life movement which was now allied with the New Right, was the Hyde Amendment (Ziegler, 2015, p. 201). It resulted in a federal ban on abortion services for those receiving Medicaid (federally funded) healthcare (Fried, 1990, p. 4). The people who this affected the most were poor women, women of color, young women and federal and state employees who obtain their healthcare services through Medicaid (ibid., p. 4). Since surgical sterilizations, funded by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (now called the Department of Health and Human Services) remained free on demand, more and more poor women were forced to opt for permanent infertility (Davis, 1981, p. 17).

The shift during the 1970s also included an emphasis on individualization, which can be seen in both the environmental movement and reproductive politics during this decade. Such as the individual choice to have an abortion through the *Roe v. Wade* case or that environmental protection was gradually becoming an issue to be addressed as individuals (Ehrenreich, 2008, pp. 1-2; Gottlieb, 2005, p. 263). Putting the emphasis on individualization provides early evidence of a mounting trend throughout the country that would soon permeate the society as a result of the aforementioned alliances and their emphasis on “individual freedom” (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 99). The societal, ideological and political shift towards neoliberalism via the political force of the New Right was well underway, soon to reach full manifestation during the Reagan administration of the 1980s (see section 5.3).

5.3 1981-1989: The Reagan Administration

5.3.1 The Shift to Neoliberalism

The growing trend towards neoliberalism in the late 1970s unveiled itself as the new mainstream ideology in the United States through the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism claims that privatization, strict property rights, free markets, free trade and little governmental interference are needed to increase human well-being; although another take on neoliberalism is that it was and has been “a [political] project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2, 19 [emphasis removed]). This was due to the fact that the concentration of wealth in the upper one percent had dropped in the 1970s and thus these elites sought an alliance with the Republican Party in order to push forth their agenda (ibid., p.15, 48). These groups also joined forces with the Christian right and white-working class, who could be mobilized through discourse that swayed skepticism from capitalism and the neoliberal state to put the blame (regarding their feeling of economic insecurity and exclusion from state benefits) on “liberals” who were said to provide excess state power to special groups, such as women, environmentalists, people of color, etc. (ibid., p. 50). The 1980s, which came to be known as the “greed decade” by some, brought about significant changes and opposition to many socially progressive issues, which will be further discussed in this section (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 375).

5.3.2 Reagan and Opposition to Governmental Control

The Reagan administration was against governmental control over many things that benefited the poorest people in the country. It was anti-welfare, anti-union, anti-abortion and anti-regulation – especially pertaining to industry for the latter (Joyner, 1990, p. 210; Gottlieb, 2005, p. 185; Harvey, 2005). The elites who had helped form the New Right saw the social movement buildup during the previous two decades, which called for such things as racial and gender equality as well as environmental protection, as threatening to redistribute wealth and thus, alter their upper-class status (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 99; Klein, 2014, pp. 201-204). During the 1980s, the fight for reproductive freedom and environmental protection were especially arduous as the people in power were in opposition to both (Copelon, 1990, p. 28; Klein, 2014, p. 204).

The Reagan administration strongly opposed abortion and made many attempts to overturn or decrease the power of *Roe v. Wade* through the claim of fetal rights⁷ (Copelon, 1990, p. 28-29). While the administration did not achieve its goal of overturning or altering *Roe*, it found other ways to make headway in its anti-abortion efforts (ibid., p. 28). About half of the federal judiciary and Supreme Court Justices appointed by Reagan were chosen based on their anti-abortion stance and their goal to overturn *Roe* (ibid., p. 29). Their claim was that the court had no power to protect rights that were not explicitly in the text of the Constitution (ibid., p. 29). Animosity towards abortion rights did not only stay within the political sphere, but was very present within society as well. In 1985, 47% of abortion providers in the U.S. were harassed by anti-abortion proponents (Fried, 1990, p. 195). Bomb threats, blocking of entrances to clinics so patients could not enter, and mass scheduling of no-shows were just a few of the ways in which abortion providers were harassed during 1985 alone (ibid., p. 195).

The Reagan administration not only wanted to eliminate abortion rights, but it also wanted to take away public welfare (Copelon, 1990, p. 28-29; Harvey, 2005, p. 76). To sum up what this means: the administration wanted women to carry their pregnancy to term, but did not want to provide federally funded, affordable healthcare and childcare services for low-income mothers-to-be (i.e. welfare benefits) (Ross & Solinger, p. 95). However, "A key tactic for building the anti-welfare movement during the administration of President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s was to claim that motherhood should be a class privilege reserved only for women who can afford children" (ibid.). When this perspective of the administration is taken into account, it explains why they would attack both abortion rights and public welfare. It was Reagan who introduced the rhetoric around the "welfare queen," which is a myth that claims poor women, primarily in reference to poor women of color, take advantage of the welfare system to gain wealth (Black & Sprague, 2016).

Reagan also had a complete disregard for the environment, providing strong opposition to the goals of the environmental movements at the time (Harvey, 2005, p. 172; Klein, 2014, p. 204). Under his presidency, unions were under major attack, occupational health was struggling to maintain standards and in industry where workers were susceptible to environmental hazards due to corporate neglect, workers were especially at risk of losing their protection and rights (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 375). Industry could cut costs when they were able to avoid cleaning up after

⁷ When the attempt is made to legally re-criminalize abortion through such claims as "fetal rights," it is broadly described as a "human life amendment" (Fried, 1990, p. 4).

themselves, meaning they could dump toxic waste and create pollution without having to worry about the consequences, and thus improve their chances of reaching top dollar (Harvey, 2005, p. 67). They could degrade the surrounding environment and subject their workers to dangerous substances, which could lead to adverse health effects (ibid.). If an industry relies on workers to maintain production, would they not have an interest in keeping those workers healthy? However, some neoliberals claim that the cure will be worse than the disease, and when needing to choose between the industry, the rights of the laborers or environmental care, the neoliberal state will almost always side with the industry (Harvey, 2005, p. 67, 70).

Workers are not the only ones who can be negatively affected by industry, because the people who live in the surrounding area can be just as susceptible to adverse health effects by living in proximity to polluting industries (Cole & Foster, 2001). When a company is making a decision on where to place a waste facility, they most often choose a rural area due to cheaper land cost, though many of these rural areas are made up of communities of color (ibid., p. 71). So while the intent to choose such an area might not be explicitly racial, it ends up being that way – and once again poor communities of color experience the negative effects of polluting industry substantially more than white communities (ibid., p. 71). The California Waste Management Board in 1984, claimed in a report, that lower socioeconomic neighborhoods which reside in industrial areas provided the best locations for waste sites because they would bring about the least public opposition (ibid., pp. 71-72). These waste facilities do not always bring jobs to these communities either, but sometimes create an even worse socioeconomic situation for the residents who live in the area. Such is the case for residents along Cancer Alley, a name given to the industrial corridor that runs along the Mississippi River in Louisiana, where numerous industrial facilities have been placed in poor communities (ibid., p. 77).

5.3.3 Growing Movements of Both EJ and RJ

In the 1980s, mainstream environmental groups were on board to fight against the Reagan administration, but then they met with chemical companies like Exxon, American Cyanamid (see section 5.2.2) and Monsanto, which resulted in reduced confrontation with the administration (Gottlieb, 2005, 173-174). The mainstream reproductive and women's movements were also still lacking with a narrow focus, as they continued to look at choice as the main goal for their movements (Fried, 1990). Disenfranchised communities and communities of color found that they needed to change the discourse to reach a broader group of people who were being disproportionately affected by the changes the current administration was making (Gottlieb,

2005, p. 3; Fried, 1990). This decade saw a surge in people of color activists coming to the forefront and establishing these movements for justice, which will be discussed further in this section.

The EJM was gaining momentum in the early 1980s due to some key events that took place, such as a 1982 protest in Warren County, North Carolina (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 20). Community members in Warren County, mostly African-American, protested a proposed landfill for highly toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), resulting in five hundred arrests and thus prompting a study on the correlation between waste disposal locations and both race and poverty level of the surrounding communities (Bullard, 2005, p. 20). A crucially important movement during this decade, and one said to be a precursor to the EJM, was the Anti-toxics movement (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 22). The roots of this movement can be traced back to churches during the Civil Rights Movement, and in the 1980s the church continued to play an important role in movement momentum through a groundbreaking toxic study (ibid., pp. 20-21). In 1987, a study by the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, titled *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, found that toxic waste sites were disproportionately located near African-American and Latino/a populations (ibid., pp. 55-57).

Diversity within the Anti-toxics movement and early EJM was prominent throughout this decade and included essential contributions from people of Mexican origin, Native groups, as well as African-American women (Bullard, 2005, p. 188; Cole & Foster, 2001, pp. 134-136; Gottlieb, 2005, pp. 275-276). Latino/a populations created cooperatives and campaigned for sustainable agriculture in light of the adverse health effects and fatalities that occurred due to exposure to toxins through pesticides (Bullard, 2005, pp. 189-191). Native Americans protested against proposed toxic waste sites and won (Cole & Foster, 2001, pp. 134-136). In 1987, African-American women held the Women in Toxics Organizing conference in Virginia and sought to address race and class disparities within the anti-toxics struggle, amongst other matters (Gottlieb, 2005, pp. 275-276). In fact, women of color were also coming to the forefront regarding struggles for reproductive freedom and forming the seeds for RJ during these years (Fried, 1990).

During the Reagan years, women of color realized that there was much missing from the broader reproductive rights movements (Fried, 1990). This could be found in the abortion rights movement, newly titled "pro-choice movement," which failed to focus on women's liberation,

sexual freedom, and the diverse range of needs for all women (ibid., pp. 2-3). While the Hyde Amendment had hugely negative effects on poor women, predominantly women of color (see section 5.2.4), the mainstream movements had been largely quiet during this attack on women's rights and seemed to only mobilize for the concerns of white middle-class women (Joyner, 1990, p. 210). However, the movements did surface a couple times during the decade, once in 1981 when a ban on all U.S. abortions was posed at the outset of the Reagan administration and again in 1989 when the March for Women's Equality and Women's Lives took place in Washington DC, yet both instances still conveyed a narrow message (Fried, 1990, pp. x, 5). Women of color formed organizations to try and fill the gaps left by these mainstream groups, such as the National Black Women's Health Project in 1984, which looked at the limits of choice; and the Women of Color Partnership Program created by Religious Coalition of Abortion Rights in 1985 (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 54; Fried, 1990, p. 293).

In the wake of the Reagan administration, during the first months of the George H.W. Bush administration, the case, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* decreased reproductive autonomy even further than just prohibiting abortion services in facilities that receive federal public funding (Fried, 1990, p. 4). *Webster* allowed states to choose in favor of the fetus over the woman when the state was paying the medical bill (Copelon, 1990, p. 30). There was little public outcry and mobilization against the Hyde Amendment, had there been, *Webster* might never have happened. Why wasn't the action there?

Because of racism and elitism in the women's movement. Because Hyde knocked on the doors of poor women and Webster knocks at the doors of white, middle-class women. Because of a narrowness and self-centeredness among many white, middle-class feminists who seem to mobilize only when their own self-interest is directly threatened. (Joyner, 1990, p. 210)

The movement needed to change and during the next decade, it did (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 65; Fried, 1990, p. x). A first and crucial step, was the coining of the term "intersectionality" in 1989 by critical legal theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw which helped illustrate the oppression that Black women experience based on race and gender (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 73). This would come to be central to the RJ framework in later years (ibid., p. 169).

5.3.4 Overlap Between the Movements

The overlap between reproductive and environmental issues during these years was largely thanks to neoliberalism and the near elimination of the social safety net (Harvey, 2005, p. 76).

Reagan proved to be an aggressive oppositional force to health and safety in the workplace due to his goal of abolishing the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 373). These issues largely focused on occupational health and hazards, where corporations used “fetal protection policies” and claims that they were protecting fertile female workers by not allowing them to work certain jobs (Daniels, 1989, pp. 271-73). Due to these policies, women were forced to forgo working in positions that pay well in order to be safe at work, essentially keeping them a step below men in the workplace (ibid., p. 278). This is part of a trend in history where the needs of women as mothers and as workers collide in the workplace, and typically the State will support the traditional gender role of motherhood, rather than supporting the needs of female workers (Daniels, 1989, p. 278). However, an example that shows the State does little to support mothers as well – through deregulation of polluting industry – can be seen through the Mother’s Milk Project of 1985 (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 92). This group from the Akwesasne Reservation protested against the practices of unregulated corporate polluters whose actions poisoned a river, which Native communities relied on for fish (ibid., p. 92). The toxins from this river ended up in the breast milk of women who ate the fish and therefore profoundly harmed the gestational environments of women and the food supplies of these Native communities (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 92). During this decade, the lack of regulation in polluting industries and the obvious effect this had on poor communities of color, as well as the disregard for the needs of women as mothers both in the workplace and at home, provide examples of how the neoliberal state could profoundly affect people’s lives in adverse ways by weakening the infrastructure put into place (through policy) to protect people from such injustices to begin with.

5.4 1990-2000: Progressive Change in a Neoliberal Society

5.4.1 Limitations for the Clinton Administration

After a quarter of a century of Republican presidents, except one, Wall Street bankers and financial powerhouses had gained significant power over social policy, solidified with neoliberalism as the predominant worldview, which continued to influence the Democratic presidents thereafter (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 101). The biggest success of the Reagan years was that his administration helped make the minor ideology of neoliberalism, mainstream (Harvey, 2005, p. 62-63). This made it difficult for Democrats, like Bill Clinton – elected in 1993 – to maneuver within the new political system without assisting in the restoration of class power, despite their better judgements (ibid., p. 62-63). Democrats, like Republicans, now depended on

money to gain ground in politics, so despite their alignment with many groups, such as women, laborers, people of color, etc., they could not easily cut their ties with powerful financial groups through opposition to the capitalist and corporate political powerhouse that had come into being (ibid., pp. 49, 51). However, the Clinton administration, despite the constraints of the neoliberal state, made an effort to move forward with a progressive agenda, especially pertaining to environmental issues and EJ in particular (Bullard, 2005). Clinton's transition team were both EJ leaders, Reverend Benjamin Chavis (who conducted and published the 1987 *Toxic Waste and Race* study – see section 5.3.3) and Dr. Robert Bullard (sociologist who has contributed substantial literature on EJ and is a prominent figure in the EJM) (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 163).

5.4.2 Environmental Justice Gains Popularity and Influence in Politics

The EJM made enormous leaps in the 1990s and began to influence policy and create real change in the United States. One of the most significant events in the movement's history occurred in October of 1991 when the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit took place in Washington, DC (Bullard, 2005, p. 20). During the four days of the summit, people from diverse backgrounds in the movement found a collective voice and changed the EJM forever (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 32 Bullard, 2005, p. 20). In the same year, the seventeen "Principles of Environmental Justice" were created to give the movement's motives some structure (Bullard, 2005, p. 21). After the summit, momentum continued with subsequent studies and political influence. In 1992, the National Law Journal discovered that when comparing penalties of hazardous waste laws between white communities and communities of color, the penalties for having a hazardous site by a white community was about 500 percent higher than near a community of color (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 57). In the same year, the Environmental Justice Act was introduced, and while it did not pass, it shows that the movement for EJ was gaining ground, becoming widely recognized, and making its way into the political realm (ibid., p. 21). Even Republican president, George H.W. Bush (1989-1993) was on board with environmental protection as his views aligned more with the mainstream Republican party, rather than the ultra-conservative New Right that had commandeered the party to use as their guise (Mayer, 2016, p. 231).

In 1994, due to an increase in public concern and scientific evidence, while at the "Health Research Needs to Ensure Environmental Justice Symposium," Clinton enacted executive order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (Bullard, 2005, p.21). Additionally, despite the consistent failings of the

mainstream environmental groups and the EPA to address environmental injustices (Bullard, 2005, p.189), the EPA made headway on EJ in the 90s as well. After conducting research that showed environmental inequalities, researchers at the University of Michigan met with officials at the EPA to discuss how this topic could be addressed (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 24). Their meeting influenced the formation of the Work Group on Environmental Equity (renamed Office of Environmental Justice in 1993 during the Clinton administration) in 1990 during the George H.W. Bush administration (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 24; Bullard, 2005, pp. 41-42). Later in the decade in 1997, Dr. Bullard found a case of racism in siting decisions for a uranium facility, which resulted in the loss of the permit by the company heading the project (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 74), showing that EJ was finally being achieved on the ground.

The headway made by the EJM during this decade was profound, and largely contributed by grassroots environmentalists within the movement who were predominantly poor, working-class individuals coming from disenfranchised communities, many of whom were people of color (Cole & Foster, 2001, pp. 32-33). Huge contributions to the movement were made by Native Americans and women of color in the early 90s. The Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) formed in 1990 with ten to twelve Native American activists who saw the need for environmental action for the sake of Indigenous peoples (*ibid.*, p. 140). They held the first Protecting Mother Earth Conference in 1990 and participated in the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 (*ibid.*, pp. 139-140). The IEN had an influence on the mainstream environmental movement as well, which occurred when Greenpeace began to reconsider its policies and focus more on Native American issues (*ibid.*, p. 148). Women of color also had a major influence on the EJM during these years through grassroots initiatives, often fighting for justice in their own communities and helping to build the movement across the country (Bullard, 2005, pp. 64-65).

5.4.3 Overlap Between Movements

In one instance of overlap, the small community of Buttonwillow, California experienced a devastating loss when a pregnant woman in the community gave birth to a baby that lived for only 40 minutes due to a severe birth defect called anencephaly, meaning the baby was born without a brain (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 80). A toxic waste site, including radiation waste, located near the largely Latino/a community, was the culprit (Cole & Foster, 2001, p. 81; Johnson, 2002). After another baby was born with a birth defect, the community started to take action against the toxic dump and its proposed expansion (*ibid.*, pp. 81-82). The struggle for

justice has been long, with a slight win in 2002 when the company decided it would officially refuse any additional radiation waste (Johnson, 2002). Another example of crossover was when Katsi Cook, who formed the Mother's Milk Project in 1985 (see section 5.3.4) recognized that women are the first environment for people and thus there is an important connection between maternal health and the health of the surrounding environment (Zimmerman & Miao, 2009). By 1993, her efforts to bridge the gap between midwifery and environmental health research resulted in the First Environment Communications Project and subsequent projects to research environmental health with reproductive and maternal health in mind (ibid.).

5.4.4 Reproductive Justice Gains Popularity

The RJM did not have as significant of an effect in creating policy change during this decade, however the movement itself made huge bounds forward. The Clinton administration circumvented reproductive health care and abortion in its plan for health care reform, perhaps to please the oppositional force of the Republican party that had become so hostile towards such matters (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 63). Clinton also maintained the rhetoric around the “welfare queen” that had been so prominent during the Reagan administration and in 1996 Clinton proceeded to end welfare (ibid., p. 175). However, the avoidance of discussing reproductive issues during the Clinton administration, coupled with the ending of welfare, did not deter proponents of reproductive freedom from pushing forward and creating a movement that would forever change how reproductive issue are discussed and perceived (ibid., pp. 63-65).

With the coining of the term “intersectionality” (see section 5.3.3) came a way to start exploring the systems of oppression in society and thus be able to recognize the varied inequalities that people face, which was used early on in the RJM (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 74). The movement itself formed in a humble way, at a conference in Chicago in 1994 which advocated for pro-choice and the need to address the avoidance of reproductive health care, especially abortion, in the Clinton health care plan for health care reform (ibid., pp. 63-65). Twelve Black women met at the conference to discuss the limits of choice and from this meeting, they formed Black Women for Health Care Reform and began to build the RJM (ibid., p. 65). Since the beginnings of the RJM in 1994, Reproductive Justice started to take precedence over the pro-choice rhetoric used by many activists (ibid., p. 68). These twelve women were the instigators of a new movement that would revolutionize reproductive political activism in the U.S. and influence how the mainstream groups saw reproductive politics (ibid., p. 65).

In 1997, the group SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective was formed, which played an important role in creating momentum for the RJM (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 60). Women of color were motivated to take action against policies, that for the last third of the twentieth century, resulted in reproductive abuse of poor women, women of color and their communities (ibid., p. 14). Some of the abuses experienced were coerced sterilization, welfare restrictions and elimination, and the Hyde Amendment – all of which disproportionately affected poor women and women of color, and thus in turn influenced the formation of the RJM (ibid., p. 14). During the second half of the 1990s, the RJM formed its agenda, which calls for the right not to have a child, the right to have a child, the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments, and demands sexual autonomy and gender freedom for every human being (ibid., p. 65).

Overall, the 1990s saw significant bounds forward for both the EJM, with its newly obtained political platform, and the RJM, with movement formation and momentum. However, the gains of the 1990s for the EJM and RJM were soon to be challenged. The liberal elite who had interest in keeping the fossil fuel industry up and running saw the Democratic presidential candidate and environmental activist, Al Gore, as a threat to their agenda and funneled millions of dollars towards the campaign for George W. Bush and other Republican candidates during 2000, ensuring that the next president would be on their side (Mayer, 2016, p. 239). A similar occurrence took place to re-elect Bush in 2004. In fact, by the middle of Bush's presidency, 80 percent of funding for political campaigns coming from the fossil fuel industry was going towards Republican candidates, a jump of 20 percent since the early 1990s, showing that the industry was becoming increasingly tied to the Republican party (ibid., p. 267).

5.5 2001-2008: The George W. Bush Administration

5.5.1 Bush and Corporate Welfare

The winners during the George W. Bush administration from 2001 to the beginning of 2009 were the liberal corporate elite who basked in the top 0.1 percent of the nation's wealth (Mayer, 2016, p. 13-14). Their influence over regulatory and tax laws in the U.S. grew vastly during these years, showing their accumulation of power (and wealth) was near limitless when the governing body was on their side (ibid.). The tax reform that took place during these years began phasing out tax on both wealth (i.e. estate tax) and income from investments, while taxes on wages and salaries remained intact (Harvey, 2005, p. 17). Corporations, and those who ran

them, benefited greatly during these years as corporate welfare increased through the redirection of public money (Harvey, 2005, p. 165). The Bush administration's energy bill of 2005 reduced regulations on many polluting industries and provided tax breaks for companies that relied heavily on fossil fuels (Mayer, 2016, p. 241). In addition to the Bush administration's actions that directly benefited the ultra-wealthy, he held a firm pro-life stance, something that could have only helped him win the vote of the Christian right – allies of the corporate elite (Mayer, 2016, p. Blackman, 2001). Yet, despite the enormous gains made by the liberal corporate elite during the Bush years, some still did not see his politics as conservative enough (Mayer, 2016, p. 14).

5.5.2 RJ Momentum Despite Political Opposition

Despite the obvious opposition in the White House towards women's reproductive freedom, the movement for RJ continued to make big strides during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2003, SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective organized the first conference which featured a plenary and workshop on RJ, a hugely significant breakthrough for the movement (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 66). RJ was becoming widely recognized, respected and embraced. It caught the attention of mainstream groups who also saw its importance and therefore began adopting RJ into their own rhetoric, thus, started bridging the gap between mainstream reproductive rights and RJ groups (ibid., p. 67). In 2003 the National Organization for Women became the first mainstream women's organization to use the phrase "reproductive justice" (ibid.).

The 2004 March for Women's Lives in Washington D.C., which at the time became the largest march in U.S. history with 1.15 million participants, was organized in collaboration between mainstream reproductive rights groups and women of color focused groups (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 67). Women of color now had more influence and decided to change the initial focus of the march from "choice" to "reproductive freedom for all" (ibid., p. 67). Then in 2005, just two years after the SisterSong conference, some progressive individuals from the mainstream groups held a conference titled, "Reproductive Justice for All" (ibid., p. 112). It seemed as though RJ was spreading like wildfire during these years, with new and significant breakthroughs occurring often. Such was the case in 2007 at Smith College in Massachusetts, when the Law Students for Choice changed their name to become the Law Students for Reproductive Justice (ibid., p. 112). These changes in rhetoric, from choice to reproductive justice, were groundbreaking for the movement and long-overdue.

Another significant contribution to the development of the RJM was a paper titled “A New Vision,” published in 2005 by the Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (now called Forward Together) (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 67). The paper discusses the importance of centering the focus of RJ on the most vulnerable people so that their needs are not left behind in order to achieve progress faster (“A New Vision,” 2005). The paper also defined “reproductive oppression” which they stated

is the control and exploitation of women, girls, and individuals through our bodies, sexuality, [labor,] and reproduction. The regulation of women and individuals thus becomes a powerful strategic pathway to controlling entire communities. It involves systems of oppression that are based on race, ability, class, gender, sexuality, age, and immigration status (“A New Vision,” 2005).

As is apparent, many gains were made during these years, but the struggle for justice was still ongoing. In 2002 Texas refused federal funds that would extend prenatal services for immigrants, and decided they only wanted federal funding to cover medical care for fetuses, not pregnant people (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 146). In 2004, a white woman who was giving birth to twins refused a c-section and was charged with murder when one of the twins died during the birth (ibid., p. 188). These attacks against mothers proved that there was still a long way to go for the RJM.

5.5.3 Losses for Environmental Justice in Government

After all of the gains made by the EJM throughout the 1990s, EJ became nearly non-existent at the EPA during the George W. Bush administration of the early 2000s (Bullard, 2005, p. 12). Within the EPA, there was criticism towards the lack of attention to the subject and in 2004 it came out through a report titled *EPA Needs to Consistently Implement the Intent of the Executive Order on Environmental Justice* (Bullard, 2005, p. 12). Despite the fact that “[t]he EPA was never designed to address environmental policies and practices that result in unfair, unjust, and inequitable outcomes” (Bullard, 2005, p. 29), these failings to address such issues in government shed light on the Bush administration’s disregard for the environment and how this disregard affected people’s lives. To add to this, Bush provided massive regulatory exemptions through what is known as the “Halliburton Loophole”, which allowed for oil and gas fracking that resulted in contamination of drinking water in neighborhoods surrounding these activities

(Hauter, 2015). This loophole was further solidified through the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which provided vast giveaways to the fossil fuel, nuclear and ethanol industries (ibid.).

In spite of the lack of attention from the Bush administration towards environmental protection and the huge break provided to polluting industries, action was taken against this and some progress was made during these years of opposition. In 2002, the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit took place thanks to the efforts of many women of color who came to the forefront to make it happen (Bullard, 2005, p. 63). In 2002, a win for a community along Louisiana's "Cancer Alley" against Shell Oil Company, whose chemical plant and refinery were causing horrible health problems for community members, resulted in a buyout which funded the relocation of residents in the town (Goldmanprize.org, 2004). In 2003, after around twenty-thousand residents in Anniston, Alabama filed lawsuits against Monsanto for polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination, Monsanto, Solutia and Pharmacia paid \$700 million collectively to settle the lawsuits ("Anniston PCB cases," 2003). Again in 2003, after waiting over two decades for justice in Warren County, residents who had first started protesting in 1982 (see section 5.3.3) finally obtained justice when the detoxification efforts of their town were completed (Bullard, 2005, p. 38). In 2005, lawyers at Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, addressed human rights violations of the U.S. government's authorization of toxic industry to operate in close proximity to disenfranchised communities of color (ibid.).

Then, in 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit the U.S., showing just how unprepared the country was in the face of natural disasters and the negative ramifications this has for disenfranchised communities (Rushton, 2015). One article states that, "Hurricane Katrina showed us that neighborhoods with the fewest resources have a harder time escaping, surviving and recovering from natural disasters" (Ellis-Lamkins, 2013). Even president Bush addressed the issue of poverty after Hurricane Katrina, stating that this poverty "has roots in a history of racial discrimination which cut off generations from the opportunity of America. We have a duty to confront this poverty with bold action" (Bush, 2005). After Hurricane Katrina, corporate interests who wanted to shrink the public sphere took advantage of the vulnerability in New Orleans, attacking public health and education and thus creating a more vulnerable city for the next disaster (Klein, 2014, p. 407). It was time to revitalize movement momentum to address climate change and the injustices that it creates, however the climate movement remained top-down throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century (Klein, 2014, p. 211-212). The Climate Justice Movement (CJM) was still years away from gaining significant momentum and while it

had emerged on the international scale, it was still in an early stage of forming in the U.S. (Bullard, 2005, p. 292).

After Katrina, rather than directly addressing the fossil fuel industry, Bush claimed it was the responsibility of all citizens to help conserve energy as individuals (Wilson, 2005). The Energy Policy Act of 2005, which was signed into law by Bush a mere two weeks before Hurricane Katrina formed, gave enormous tax breaks to the fossil fuel industry (Hauter, 2015; Rushton, 2015). In the wake of the hurricane, while Bush was telling people to use less fuel, Republicans in Congress were planning to move forward with legislation that would provide these tax breaks, but also on initiatives that had been previously blocked due to environmental concerns (Wilson, 2005). These initiatives would allow states to bypass bans on coastal oil-drilling as well as open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling (ibid.). Essentially, the Republicans in Congress were using the shock from Katrina, to push forward with their corporate-friendly agenda (ibid.). Over the next few years, it became increasingly recognized that the movement for climate action needed to change and the leaders in office needed to support such action (Klein, 2014, p. 211-212).

5.5.4 A Progressive Wave on the Horizon

In 2008, both candidates for presidency – Barack Obama and John McCain – saw climate action as necessary (Mayer, 2016, p. 232). However, there was already at this time a strong network of groups and individuals who were providing funding to organize against climate reform, in favor of the continued extraction and emission of fossil fuels (ibid.). With the recession sweeping the nation in 2008, and a presidential election looming on the horizon, the corporate elites were shocked when a progressive wave took place in the next race for presidency (Mayer, 2016, p. 326). The blame for the recession was put on poor people by the Republicans, allowing the real offenders – elite financial leaders and the Republican party – to divert the blame away from themselves, until Obama called them out on it (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 35; Mayer, 2016, p. 286).

5.6 2009-present: The Obama Administration and Tea Party Backlash

5.6.1 Obama and the 2010 Roadblock

In the wake of the economic crisis of 2008, Barack Obama entered office as the 44th president of the United States in January 2009 (Mayer, 2016, pp. 14-15). In his inaugural speech he stated, “A nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous” (Obama, 2009), seemingly addressing the conservative and liberal corporate elite who had made so many gains during the George W. Bush administration. When he entered office, there was hope that a real progressive agenda – at least in comparison to the previous eight years – would come to fruition and result in actual policy changes and advances (Mayer, 2016, p 14). During Obama’s first one-hundred days in office, he made several gains regarding environmental and reproductive issues (Sheppard, 2009; Bohm, 2009). The topic of the environment was something he paid particular attention to while on his campaign trail and though he was still in support of clean coal, his climate and energy plan appealed greatly to environmentalists (Grist staff, 2008).

The plan centered on a cap-and-trade system that aimed for 80 percent reduced CO2 emissions from 1990 levels by 2050 (Grist staff, 2008). It also included a \$150 billion investment to boost clean energies and create green jobs, encourage public transportation, and the like (ibid.). Then during his first one-hundred days, he did not disappoint, presenting an ambitious budget for green initiatives, and further research into the negative impacts of greenhouse-gas emissions (Sheppard, 2009). On his campaign trail, Obama was less vocal about reproductive health issues, but he did make some significant gains during his presidency (Taylor, 2011). During the first one-hundred days in office, he signed the FY2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act which contributed numerous advances, such as affordable birth control and healthcare for low-income individuals and at college and university health clinics, as well as increased funding to the Title X Family Planning Program and a cut to funding for abstinence education (Bohm, 2009). Obama’s approval ratings were high during his first months due to these reasons, however, the powerful force of the conservative corporate elite was gaining momentum and not about to back down to the Obama administration, because to them, he threatened to create insurmountable setbacks for their own agenda (Mayer, 2016, pp. 13, 189).

The retaliation efforts of this exceedingly exclusive and private group began to emanate through another group called the Tea Party, while the conservative business elite remained obscured from widespread public visibility (Mayer, 2016, p. 17; Nesbit, 2016). The Tea Party, as a result

of the hugely funded and organized efforts of some of the richest people and corporations in the U.S., along with the help of media attention from Fox News, was ready to take action against Obama by spring of 2009 (Nesbit, 2016; Klein, 2014, p. 227). Tea Party members stormed town-hall meetings shouting about Obama's plans for the country in a conspiracy-like manner, representing what appeared to be a grassroots movement (Mayer, 2016, p. 274; Klein, 2014, p. 227). Then, with the help of millions of dollars in funding, a project formed called Redistricting Majority Project (REDMAP), with the goal to redistrict the states through efforts known as gerrymandering in order to gain Republican control of the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm elections (Mayer, 2016, pp. 274, 300). They succeeded in flipping districts and states that had voted Democrat in the recent presidential election, to Republican just prior to the midterm elections (ibid., 300). Once the Obama administration realized how drastic the situation was, it was too late and with a sweeping victory, the Republicans succeeded in flipping the House to Republican majority and even gained Senate seats as well (ibid., pp. 299-300). Many of the seats that flipped were filled with Republican candidates who were backed by the corporate elite (ibid., p. 300). In the states that were flipped to Republican "[t]hey undermined [Obama's] policies on health care, abortion, gay rights, voting rights, immigration, the environment, guns, and labor." (ibid., p. 300). Republicans were now in the position of power to wage a "guerrilla war" against the Obama administration (Harris & MacAskill, 2010). The political environment within which Obama was to carry out and achieve his progressive agenda was now in place, and it would prove to be anything but easy.

Time and time again, Obama was met with opposition and losses for his progressive agenda, not to mention his approval rating was dropping rapidly (Klein, 2014, p. 227; Mayer, 2016; Ball, 2014). Along with the midterm election losses in 2010, the same year saw the decision for the Supreme Court case, *Citizens United v Federal Election Commission*, which resulted in allowing corporations and labor unions to give unlimited amounts of money to political campaigns (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 101). With that, presidents could now be funded by billionaires, something they would take full advantage of in the next presidential race (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 101; Mayer, 2016, p. 336). When it came to the 2012 presidential election, enormous amounts of funding (over \$1 billion) went towards federal campaigns, much of which to Republican candidates (Mayer, 2016, p. 350). While the attempt to replace Obama failed, Republicans were able to keep House majority due to gerrymandering efforts by REDMAP, which allowed Republican wins despite not obtaining the majority vote (Wing, 2013). Through the 2013 case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, political power became concentrated in the hands of the wealthy, and

in 2014, another midterm election brought again a huge win for the Republican party as they took over the Senate, further expanding their reach and power (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 101; Ball, 2014).

5.6.2 Reproductive Justice and Political Opposition

The RJM during these years experienced similar battles, often occurring in the name of fetus rights and/or on religious grounds. Such examples include a 2011 ballot initiative in Mississippi that declared life begins at conception and would thus make abortion illegal, and the 2014 Supreme Court decision in the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* case, which allows corporations to refuse to pay insurance coverage for contraceptives when the owner opposes fertility control for religious reasons (Ross & Solinger 2017, p. 113). Related to the latter case, in 2015 Republicans in the House of Representatives introduced the First Amendment Defense Act which protects employers who fire single mothers because, on religious grounds, they believe that sexual relations should be properly reserved to marriage (ibid., p. 143). To further exacerbate this, in 2016 with a complete disregard for the separation of church and state, millions of state dollars were able to go to religious-based, anti-abortion groups (ibid., p. 182). Again in 2016, state legislatures were presented with the opportunity to help poor people within their states by expanding Medicaid, but nearly twenty of these legislatures refused to expand Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act for disenfranchised people in their states (ibid., p. 140).

There were, however, some gains in the movement during this period, such as the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene adopted the RJ framework to inform and guide all of their work in its Bureau of Maternal, Infant, and Reproductive Health (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 71). The movement also spread internationally, an example being South Africa where the RJ framework was used in the formation of health policies (ibid.). In 2014, Justice NOW won a big victory for women in prison, who have historically been treated in an especially degrading way when regarding reproductive issues (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 89). From the late 1970s to 2013 the amount of women incarcerated increased nearly 900 percent from 11,200 to 111,300 (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 104). Some of these abuses experienced by incarcerated women were illegal sterilization, coerced abortion and shackling of pregnant women, including during childbirth – the latter of which ended in federal prisons in 2008 (ibid., pp. 89, 91, 105). The Justice NOW victory was from winning legislation in California that prevented the illegal sterilization of women in prison, something that hundreds of women had experienced (ibid., p.

89). Towards the end of his presidency, Obama also showed his support for reproductive freedom by defending its importance and *Roe* in a speech on the 41st anniversary of the ruling in 2014, at the same time that pro-lifers were holding their annual March for Life in Washington D.C. (Boyer, 2014). While Obama did not make as many advances for reproductive freedom as he would have liked, he was however still able to make headway on some of his environmental initiatives, especially pertaining to efforts that could help combat climate change.

5.6.3 Environmental Justice and Climate Justice

Climate Justice (CJ) during the Obama years made huge strides, most notably in 2011 against the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. In June of that year, over 1,200 people were arrested while protesting the pipeline in Washington D.C., making it “the largest act of civil disobedience in the history of the North American climate movement” (Klein, 2014, p. 139, 302). In 2013, over 40,000 people protested outside the White House to show Obama their opposition to the pipeline (ibid., p. 302). Prior to these events, the action had already started with the combined forces of ranchers and Indigenous people living along the proposed route of the pipeline (ibid., p. 139). In the wake of such disasters as the Deep Horizon oil spill and the Kalamazoo River oil spill, both occurring in 2010, and due to public opposition, the pipeline was delayed and eventually rejected by Obama in 2015 (Ewing, 2013; Abdullah & Chadwick, 2015). According to Naomi Klein, the actions taken around the Keystone XL pipeline during this time “sparked a movement so large it revived (and reinvented) U.S. environmentalism” (Klein, 2014, p. 303). Again, in 2016, opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline soared, with Indigenous people at the forefront of this action, most recognizable being the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in South Dakota (Ross, 2017a). Solidarity protests and peaceful action occurred throughout the world, and the hashtags #NODAPL, #WaterIsLife, #DefendTheSacred, amongst others were spread across social media in support of the tribe and their efforts (ibid.).

During these years, organizations that focused on the needs of poor people and people of color began to add a focus on CJ, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (now Forward Together) (NAACP.org, 2018; Rojas-Cheatham et al., 2009). It was becoming increasingly recognized that communities of color have been suffering from the pollutants causing climate change for a long time (Ellis-Lamkins, 2013). These communities were also being harder hit with climate change itself, leading to the realization that it is not only an environmental issue, but is also a human rights issue (ibid.). The importance of the coupled aim of climate change mitigation and

adaptation was becoming widely acknowledged, as well as the need for communities to have the means to respond to extreme weather and disasters (ibid.).

During these years, like climate injustices, environmental injustices were also prominent, such as those experienced in two instances: Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and the Flint, Michigan water crisis in 2014. Hurricane Sandy disproportionately affected low-income and minority communities by subjecting them to greater harms from the impact (Hintzen, 2015). As a result of the storm, which was caused by climate change, buried chemicals from industrial sites began to resurface and entered the water supply of these communities (ibid.). Another water crisis arose in 2014 in Flint due to a shift in the location of their water supply, thanks to a deal made to save money (Dana & Tuerkheimer, 2017). When residents started to complain about the water, it was tested and found to be in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act (ibid., p. 889). Flint has a large population of African Americans and many people fall below the poverty level, showing that the “environmental regulators may [have been] motivated by implicit biases that rest on both race and class” (ibid., p. 888).

In politics, Obama also began to push forward with a more progressive environmental agenda, which meant even changing some of his previous proposals to make them more progressive. Obama’s final draft of the Clean Power Plan (CPP) of 2015, meant to address and help combat climate change, included an increased focus on EJ for communities who face pollution and environmental health hazards (White-Newsome, 2015; Bowen & Stone, 2015). At a speech about the CPP in 2015, Obama even stated that, “If you care about low-income, minority communities, start protecting the air that they breathe,” showing his strong support for EJ (Bowen & Stone, 2015). Obama had hoped he could do more for disenfranchised communities, but it had proved difficult with the economic crisis (Klein, 2014 p. 392). However, in 2016 the EPA released the Environmental Justice 2020 Action Agenda, which aims to protect communities of color and disenfranchised communities from disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards, such as pollutants and the effects of climate change (“EJ 2020 Action,” 2016), showing a significant gain in politics for the EJM and CJM. Additionally, the EPA proposed carbon emission limits on coal plants, which is a historic step to slow the growth of a pollutant that contributes to global climate change, something that crosses over to RJ due the effect of such air pollutants on maternal, fetal and child health (Wilf & Madrid, 2012).

5.6.4 And Then Came Trump

Now, with Trump in office, the struggles for the EJM and CJM are ever present due to the actions of him and his administration (see section 2.2). Trump hopes to eliminate the Office of Environmental Justice from the EPA; he is pushing forward with the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines; and climate change denial in politics is consistently being funded by billionaires with interests in maintaining the fossil fuel industry (Houston, 2018; Bomberg, 2017; Mayer, 2016). However, in light of this, action persists with widespread public mobility demanding that these issues be addressed (see section 2.3). Diverse groups of people are getting involved, which can profoundly be seen with the youth climate movement (Medrano, 2017). Youth are indeed the future, so if they are on board with fighting for justice, there can only be hope that their actions will continue throughout their lives and help change society to one where justice is achieved.

6. Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Introduction to Analysis and Discussion

In this brief narrative of the EJ and RJ histories in the United States, it becomes clear that the path towards progress ebbs and flows depending on those in power. It can also be seen that oppression of women (through opposition to reproductive freedom) and domination of nature (through unregulated polluting industries and more recently, a complete disregard for climate change) have been consistent throughout the years of this study, but highly dependent on the individuals who hold power in the nation. Throughout the analysis and discussion, I will use the theoretical framework of radical ecofeminism as a lens to examine this coupled subjugation of women and nature. However, this history shows that the situation is much more complicated than solely the domination of nature and oppression of women. As can be seen through the history presented in this thesis, with the domination of nature comes the oppression of many people, predominantly those who are poor and/or people of color – factors that also strongly determine the types of oppression women experience. This is one reason why I see intersectionality as an important theory to consider when analyzing the relevant history pertaining to the EJM and RJM. People experience varying degrees of oppression based on race, class, gender, etc. and I see an importance in recognizing this to try and determine if there is intention behind these varying degrees of oppression – as in, perhaps those in power

perpetuate such oppression with the purpose to obtain a specific outcome. In this section, I will further dissect this issue and how the coupled domination of “women” and “nature” is dependent on those in power, as well as look into the question of why this is happening. In other words, what do those in power have to gain from this coupled domination? First, I will briefly recap the history presented in this thesis and look at the progress made by the EJ and RJ movements to further examine what factors allowed them progress and what inhibited progress.

6.2 Recap of History: Movement Progress & Forces at Play

The 1970s saw a rise in social movements pertaining to women’s liberation and environmental protection, which presented the potential to shift the society to one where the environment is protected and women hold equal rights to men (Gottlieb, 2005; Ziegler, 2015). The mainstream reproductive and women’s movements made a big leap with the legalization of abortion, but not as far-reaching as the mainstream environmental movement during this “Environmental Decade,” that saw mounds of regulation and environmental policy (see section 5.2.1). Yet, with the shift to neoliberalism through the alliance of the New Right in the late 1970s and throughout the Reagan administration of the 80s, the mainstream movements were prevented from making significant advances during this period (see section 5.3). Many people saw the need for change largely because the broad mainstream movements for environmental protection and reproductive rights excluded a significantly large portion of the population from their arguments and efforts (see sections 5.2.2 & 5.2.3). It was during this period of the 1970s and 80s that disenfranchised communities and people of color began to notice the necessity for new movements to address the needs of more people, not only middle-class, white individuals (see section 5.3.3). The EJM began to gain momentum in the 1980s, while the seeds for RJ had been planted with the coining of the term “intersectionality” and the formation of several organizations to address the varying degrees of oppression poor women and women of color faced (see section 5.3.3). The EJM and RJM thus became the movements to fill the gaps left behind by the mainstream movements.

The EJM and RJM formed during the period of political and social upheaval during the 1970s, 80s and 90s (Gottlieb, 2005; Ross & Solinger, 2017; Harvey, 2005) and both movements saw significant events in the 1990s, yet in different ways. EJ made a groundbreaking leap into the political realm with the Clinton administration in 1993 and the RJM formed, influencing a shift from mainstream pro-choice rhetoric to RJ, yet was still excluded from politics (see section 5.4).

Then, with the Bush administration in 2001 came a huge roadblock for the EJM with the administration failing to maintain a focus on EJ in the EPA (see section 5.5.3). Regarding the RJM, while the Bush administration was in opposition, the movement and RJ continued to spread outside the political realm and gain popularity (see section 5.5.2). It wasn't until 2009, with the election of Obama, that the EJM and RJM saw hope again in making progress in the political sphere, which they both did at the beginning of his presidency (see section 5.6.1). With the turning of the House of Representatives to Republican dominance in 2010 came another set of obstacles in politics for these movements as the opposition between Obama and the House created a stalemate where little progress was made by either party (see section 5.6.1). Apart from politics, the movements made advances on their own, most notable was the gain in momentum for the CJM (see sections 5.6.2, 5.6.3). Now, with the election of Trump, progress has not only halted, but has started to reverse with the actions the Trump administration has been making (see section 2.2). This has led to a soar in public opposition and action throughout the country (see section 2.3).

6.3 Reactionary Politics

When looking at this very brief overview of the history, a pattern can be detected, showing that each time a progressive leader comes into power or progressive movements begin to make headway, such as RJ and EJ, forces come into play that challenge and even halt this progress. This has been referred to as reactionary politics, which can occur on both the ideological left or right-wing side of politics.

It describes an organic response to political and social revolution, and the quite sensible fear that the shared common life of a people has been wrenched out of its cherished patterns (Tanenhaus, 2016).

When progress was being made in the 1970s by the mainstream movements, progressive influence in politics halted with the formation of the New Right and subsequent election of Ronald Reagan. Again, when progress regarding EJ gained grounds during the presidency of Bill Clinton, it was halted again once George W. Bush was elected into office. Yet again, when Barack Obama became president in 2009, his presidency started off making big strides for both EJ and RJ, but with the turning of the House in 2010, once again progress halted in politics. Now, with Donald Trump as president, progress has not only halted, but is being reversed. Every time a president backed by the corporate elite and their allies (i.e. through the New Right, Tea Party, etc.) is elected into office, progress is halted to some degree and even reversed as

can be seen now. Their reactionary politics to progress show that they hold some sort of value in the status quo of the past, but why?

The fact that those in power play an enormous role in whether the movements for EJ and RJ make progress or not, shows that the environment we live in and our own bodies are highly politicized and used as instruments by those in power for their own gain. President Richard Nixon, a Republican – not without his own controversies – was supportive of environmental protection and some reproductive rights, apart from abortion (Ziegler, 2015, p. 12; Gottlieb, 2005; Nixon, 1970). Yet, with the New Right – an alliance that formed between the pro-life movement, the Christian right, the liberal elite and the Republican party in the late 1970s – the topics of environmental protection and reproductive rights became strongly disassociated within this new Republican party (see section 5.3.2). Now a similar alliance has formed, known as the Tea Party (see section 5.6.1). So what do these groups, brought together by the liberal elite, have to gain from not protecting the environment and taking away women’s reproductive rights? By looking at Val Plumwood’s ecofeminist view of “backgrounding” with the help of David Harvey’s theory of “accumulation by dispossession,” this can be seen more clearly.

6.4 Ecofeminism and Accumulation by Dispossession

The “backgrounding” of women and nature is something that is discussed in Val Plumwood’s book, titled, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993). With an ecofeminist perspective, she states that backgrounding is the treatment of women and nature in society as if they are part of “the background to a dominant, foreground sphere of recognised achievement or causation” (Plumwood, 1993, p. 21). The backgrounding of nature can be seen in the dominant western perception of humans as separate from biospheric processes and that nature can provide limitless resources for humans, without needs of its own (ibid.). The backgrounding of women is most apparent regarding their traditional roles of domesticity and especially their roles as mothers (Plumwood, 1993, p. 22). The western hegemonic society has systematically denied the importance of women and nature and their dependency on both (ibid., p. 21-22). Additionally, the denial of dependency on nature “is a major factor in the perpetuation of the non-sustainable modes of using nature which loom as such a threat to the future of western society” (ibid., p. 21).

As can be seen when looking at the history presented in this thesis, the backgrounding of both women and nature has been occurring throughout the years of this study and continues into the present. Nature is polluted with little regard for the environment or the people who live and work in that environment, which can be seen through the struggles of the EJM. Through the RJM, women are still fighting for the right to have full autonomy over their reproductive bodies, something that is consistently being challenged by those in power today and provides one of the most heated battles within politics. I argue that there is a purpose and a reason for this perpetual backgrounding of women and nature throughout the historical period of this study, leading up to the present day. By using Harvey's theory of accumulation by dispossession regarding nature and women, the purpose for the backgrounding of each becomes more apparent.

6.4.1 Accumulation by Dispossession: Nature

Accumulation by dispossession regarding nature in the United States, and in relation to this thesis, can be found in the political trends of increased corporate welfare and deregulation of industry, amongst other activities. These actions were very present during the administrations that were heavily backed by the liberal corporate elite (e.g. Reagan, George W. Bush, Trump) (see sections 5.3, 5.5, 2.2). What did they have to gain from deregulation of industry and an increase in corporate welfare? Profit. By allowing industry to dump waste and pollute without monetary consequences (in conjunction with decreased labor rights through the rapid decline in unions and protection for workers), companies could reach top dollar. Much of this money could then be funneled to the liberal elite who helped form the New Right and/or Tea Party, as well as to those who do their bidding for them (i.e. the Republican Party) (see sections 5.3.1, 5.5.1.). Thus, from this knowledge I conclude that by dispossessing workers of their rights, such as a safe and healthy work environment, and dispossessing the environment from its ability to regenerate, maximum profit can be accumulated by those in power.

6.4.2 Accumulation by Dispossession: Women

When it comes to accumulation by dispossession regarding women in the United States, the path is less obvious, though still visible. During the 1970s the women's movement and a stagnant economy began to broaden the scope of possibilities for women outside the domestic role of housewife, which society had coerced them into long ago (see section 5.2.2). Movements called for equality between men and women in the broadest sense and for women's

right to control their reproductive bodies. I argue that once the alliance of the New Right formed and backlash against the demands of the progressive women's movements came forth, the path to accumulation could be twofold. First, the alliance of the New Right included such groups as the pro-life movement, Christian right and others dubbed the 'Moral Majority' – these groups, all of whom are against abortion, helped to form a portion of the voter base for the New Right (under the guise of the Republican party). In this sense, by dispossessing women of their ability - through access, affordability and policy – to control their reproduction, those in power can please a voter base which they rely on for votes to maintain their powerful position. In this case, power can be seen as accumulation⁸, in the sense that they can continue to control society for their own benefit. The second way towards accumulation that I see is deeply rooted in the long and controversial history of the United States and thus requires a quick glance back in history.

Women's bodies have been controlled by the governing body in the United States for centuries and for what would be seen today as controversial reasons (Ross & Solinger, 2017, ch. 1). During slavery, forcing pregnancy on female slaves was for the purpose of maintaining a population of slaves (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 16). After slavery ended, in the late nineteenth century, women of color were forced to undergo sterilization because of eugenics and the belief that the white race was superior (ibid., pp. 15, 32). During the same period this was beginning to happen, white women were stripped of their right to legal abortion services in order to influence the growth of a white nation (ibid., p. 24). Fast forward to the scope of this thesis and it can be seen that coerced sterilization has continued to be prevalent for poor women and women of color since the 1970s, while time and time again, the liberal corporate elite allies have attempted to take away women's access to abortion – something that would affect all women, including white women (see section 5.2, 5.4.4, 5.6.2). In other words, women of color and poor women were being coerced into not having children through coerced sterilization, at the same time that the administration was attempting to take away abortion rights for all women, meaning more white women would need to carry their pregnancies to term. What does all of this say about accumulation? By dispossessing women of their reproductive freedom, the powers at hand can literally control the future population of the nation as they see fit and therefore “accumulate” the population they deem favorable. They could influence the population's dominant race, class and/or whether the population grows or not – something that is touched upon in the book, *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction* (Ross & Solinger, 2017),

⁸ As mentioned in section 3.2, David Harvey (2003) says that accumulation by dispossession can occur in many ways and the motives may differ in the pursuit of various types of accumulation. For example, gaining or maintaining a powerful position in politics can be seen as accumulation, which is related to the claim I am making here.

While the reproductive oppression of white women has differed in detail and scope from oppressions faced by women of color, all women are vulnerable to state control because every government throughout history has depended on the reproductive capacity of those who can give birth for achieving key national goals, such as producing a white country, creating a no-cost (enslaved) or low-cost labor force, and producing sufficient population for military forces. These reproductive controls have also aimed to achieve key cultural goals such as enforcing female subordination and enforcing standards of racial normativity (p. 93).

While this theory might seem outlandish, it has happened in the not-so-distant past in the United States and as the saying goes, history has a way of repeating itself. In fact, to broaden the scope internationally for a moment, the Polish government is currently trying to influence population growth in their country – due to declining birth rates – through an advertisement that encourages citizens to “breed like rabbits” (“Polish government,” 2017), showing that this is a reality elsewhere.

Whether this last theory is accurate or not, remains to be proven, yet with the confidentiality surrounding the actions of the liberal elite and their way of remaining outside of the public eye (Mayer, 2016), it seems this would be difficult for almost anyone to prove. Those with the power in the United States, are not always those who are often seen on the television and read about in the news, but are individuals who remain behind their curtain of wealth while they order (or fund) others to do their bidding (ibid.). The words oligarchy and plutocracy have begun to surface in the past decade as it became increasingly recognized that the concentration of wealth and power has funneled into the hands of a few (Mayer, 2016, p. 19; vanden Huevel, 2018). This is rooted in a deep history of the dominance of the western hegemonic society and its power over everything and everyone else (Plumwood, 1993, p. 190). The oppression of women and nature through neoliberal order has potentially a purpose for maintaining the status quo of keeping the United States as the supreme global powerhouse it has become (Ross & Solinger, 2017, p. 107). It is due to these reasons that I see intersectionality as a crucial theory to keep in mind when looking at forms of oppression – because there are several layers of oppression in society and to dismantle the system that perpetuates this subjugation, each layer needs to be recognized and called out, so nobody gets left behind in the battle for justice.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to understand the oppression of nature and women through the recent history of the EJM and RJM, to help illuminate the reason for the current situation in the United States, where the Trump administration is in opposition to the progressive agendas of environmental protection and reproductive freedom. To do this I looked into the history of both the EJM and RJM, as well as relevant politics, from 1970 to present day, to gain a clearer understanding of the preceding events to the current phenomena. What I found, which other historians have documented very well (i.e. Harvey, 2005; Mayer, 2016; Ziegler, 2015), was that with the rise in popularity of neoliberalism in the late 1970s and into the Reagan administration years of the 1980s, that a group of liberal corporate elite formed an alliance with the Republican party (as well as the Christian right, Moral Majority and white-working class) to make headway on their own agenda to gain power and retain their class status. In recent years, a similar alliance has formed known as the Tea Party. I conclude that the domination of nature and opposition to EJ is inherent to their agenda because their agenda calls for deregulation of polluting industry, corporate welfare and the elimination of unions and workers' protection. The oppression of women and opposition to RJ comes from the need of this group to appease a conservative pro-life voter base and potentially hold power over women's reproductive capacities.

It can be argued that to truly eliminate the coupled oppression of women and nature, their long-standing association must be severed and all aspects of oppression associated with women and nature must be exposed in order to not only provide justice for some, but for every living thing, human and non-human alike. This includes recognizing how class, race and gender play an intricate role in determining who are oppressed and how they are oppressed. As Plumwood states in favor of ecological feminism,

We need a common, integrated framework for the critique of both human domination and the domination of nature – integrating nature as a fourth category of analysis into the framework of an extended feminist theory which employs a race, class and gender analysis (1993, pp. 1-2).

This coupled oppression, which has occurred for some five-hundred years, has started to become exposed and recognized in recent decades through ecofeminist discourses such as this (Merchant, 1989; Plumwood, 1993). The EJM and RJM have recognized these forms of oppression separately, with some overlap, thus I hold the same view as Ross & Solinger (2017) where they state,

Reproductive justice calls for a world in which all women and parents achieve the human right to have children (or have the right to decide not to), raise families, and work and play in safe environments that do not threaten anyone's reproductive health or the health of their communities. Clearly these life events and conditions require a societal commitment to environmental justice as well as to reproductive justice, as these programs intersect in so many ways (pp. 233-234).

While the history presented in this thesis might seem bleak at times, social movements have shown their unwavering tenacity to stand their ground and demand change. If it were not for the persistence of the EJM in the 1980s, it might have never reached the political realm in the Clinton administration of the 90s. If the RJM had not spent so much effort on movement momentum since the 90s, then perhaps the mainstream groups would all still be staunchly stuck in their single-issue pro-choice rhetoric. In order for the social movements for RJ and EJ to influence further change and overcome the powers that inhibit the possibility for progress and equality, we (as in us U.S. citizens) need to elect people into office who hold the same values as these movements, something that is easier said than done, which can be seen with Donald Trump who did not in fact win the majority vote, but still was elected into office (Beaumont, 2016). However, change is already occurring with a new wave of progressive individuals winning elections across the country in 2017, including many women, people of color and LGBTQ candidates (Nilsen, 2017). Bernie Sanders is another example of the changing tide in U.S. politics because he speaks for so many people on both sides of the political spectrum, and many people believe he would have won if he had been up against Trump (Beaumont, 2016). With exposure of the forms of oppression discussed in this thesis, and wider recognition of the powerful forces who help perpetuate this oppression, perhaps this momentum will retain and a greater number of progressive individuals will win in upcoming elections. As it stands now, RJ and EJ (and CJ), both steps in alleviating the subjugation of women and nature, will not be achieved as long as someone like Trump is president, so a change is necessary.

To extend this research, I would recommend looking internationally at how the coupled subjugation of women and nature is occurring in other countries. This could help to illuminate if the culprits abroad are similar to those in the United States. Are there corporate elites forming their own alliances to achieve similar neoliberal agendas elsewhere? I would also recommend looking at how the United States is influencing this oppression internationally through foreign affairs and neoliberal globalization.

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