THESIS

A FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN AFRICA

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Octavius Jones

Department of Ethnic Studies

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Master's Committee:

Advisor: Caridad Souza

Karina Cespedes
Melinda Laituri

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ABSTRACT

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This study seeks to elucidate the roles that Western conservationists play in conservation's relationship with Indigenous communities and local ecologies within African countries. Employing a qualitative analysis of conservationist research practices, the study seeks to examine Western community-based conservation research approaches that value collaboration with the participants of study in order to ascertain whether and how conservationists incorporate women into their research. For the purposes of this thesis, the inclusion of women refers to local and Indigenous women in the communities where community-based conservation projects and research occur. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted with five CSU faculty who work on ecological research in Africa to tease out the epistemic foundations of Western conservation research practices. Findings show that the adoption of community-based approaches to research do not necessarily coincide with increased incorporation of women and their knowledges into conservationist research practices in the field. Women in local communities remain marginal to research practices that purport to promote equity with Indigenous people in the field based on collaborative methods. Findings also indicate that conservation research practices continue to marginalize women in local contexts in ways that make Western conservation efforts detrimental to global ecological protection and sustainability.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to all the animals and ecosystems that gave me the space and time to see that my life and my work is birthed and nurtured by the complex web of life and through living on this planet. I commit myself to love and the many paths towards hope and liberation it lays before our feet.

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PROLOGUE

WHERE I AM FROM

I am from church pew mahogany and ravine riddled concrete from dawn dish soap and payless before it became expensive.

I am from the urban and suburban sprawl, within arm's reach of the ocean but buttressed by desert heat.

I am from the bees I would smash not knowing where my food came from, the packaged and processed food in hand since fresh fruits and veggies were for those behind TV screens

I am from harsh chemicals to erase any signs of poverty and early onset baldness (may be stress, maybe genes…probably both), from Steve, Teresa, Ethel, Claudia, and ancestor's unknown.

I am from a learned fear of water and ocean horizons as if we know there are homelands now lost to us behind the infinity of sky kissing sea.

From trips to Africa where I was told both to stay in the land of melanin and ancestral home and go back to America since me birth and passport stamp me as better than.

I am from deep spiritual songs that reverberate beats and rhythms in my body and guide me to both past lives and future dreams

I'm from upgraded vernacular and diction, from appropriate dress and demeanor, because I want to feel safe when I walk out the door.

I am from strong women who have birthed my consciousness through love and patience.

I am responsible to move forward the love and humanity bestowed to me without payment

Now, where are you from?

Melanin and Mermen

Little brown eyes light up at the ways that bioluminescent fish make rainbows in dark ocean depths. I have not yet been told that these spaces and interests are not for me but only for others. Wouldn't I like a football or basketball instead? But I find libraries and learn about the vestigial organs of whales and manatees, I dream of tree houses, Amazonian jungles, and lush coral reefs. I have not yet been informed that my life is not my own to choose and thus I should be helping my community, my country, that is much more needed, a more productive life.

Hospitals scare me; there is no life in them but only the stagnant stench of apathy and pain. Burning human flesh sickens me in a way that surprises me, especially because I have seen killing all my life so I am not a stranger to blood and gore. But my body rejects the smell of living flesh being cauterized. I hide in break rooms, away from sickly patients and austere nurses. I dream about oceans and beaches and marine life, but black bodies must do black work. And I am just too busy to wonder why my mind and my dreams are so disconnected from the work of my hands and feet.

Twenty-nine years since I first left the safety of amniotic fluid I return to a space and a pressure that provides me comfort and safety. I have moved away from the buzzing in my ears that had for so long drowned out my own heartbeat, but now I feel it in the depths of the sea. I notice the uniqueness of my melanin even in this space, far removed from the terrestrial lands in which I cannot control my buoyancy and there is no surface for me to swim towards. In a medium that amplifies sound so much better than air, why do I hear nothing but a little brown boy's joy?

I could not stay there in the womb of the sea; content and having a sense of belonging or at least acceptance. I return to a land that muffles the sound of my voice and my heart. But I am grateful to know that I am more lungfish than man, so my awkwardness here on land is justified, almost pitiable. So, for me, my next home is not on some distant planet in the stars up above, but in the borderlands of visible light and pitch darkness in the ocean. My evolution will not be for space travel and thin atmospheres. Instead I will radiate my own light shows and rainbows to communicate with the aliens of the uncharted oceans

Feminism Gave Me the Keys to Many Doors

Feminism is not a side ideology that I flirt with and use at my convenience or whim, but it provides foundational epistemologies and methodologies that led to my continuous transformation and makes clear a path towards a disidentified life to imperial and colonial practices. For my work and life to not be in vain and the activism and coalition work I plan to participate in the future. To do the work necessary in the communities that call and accept me I am required to be reflexive and put forth my own positionality within my work.

I must consider who I am writing for and with and what medium will I communicate this information most effectively and honestly. Poetry continues to be the methods I use for this communication.

I write these poems as an acknowledgement that I come from both a place and a people. Who I am now is informed by where I have been and the people that have been a part of my life for the past 29 years. I would like to follow within traditions that I learned while abroad that even though I will be writing this thesis I cannot deny I bring with me the knowledges, words and practices of many mentors, teachers, friends, and family. It is within this framework of family and community that I ask you to read and understand my work. Thank you.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Various terms are used throughout this thesis and since there can be multiple meanings for each of them, I would like to define them here for the reader.

- Global North- In this thesis, the Global North includes the United States, Canada, Western Europe, developed parts of Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. The Global North shares similar economic and cultural characteristics including/involving colonial and imperial epistemes and practices within the land they currently inhabit and lands under their historical or current subjugation. The West will also be used interchangeably in this thesis with the Global North and will indicate not only the geographical borders of countries, but the epistemologies and practices of individuals and institutions that define themselves with power, privilege, cultural advancement, and prestige and deny those characteristics in anyone outside their own epistemes, geographies or institutions (Mimiko, 2012; Narayan & Harding, 2000; Therien, 1999; Said, 1978)
- Global South- The Global South includes Latin America, Africa, developing Asia, and the Middle East. Countries in the Global South are considered economically poorer than those of the Global North and are sites of historical or current colonial or imperial subjugation (Mimiko, 2012; Narayan & Harding, 2000; Therien, 1999).
- Africa- is a continent that contains 54 countries and 9 territories. As of 2016, Africa accounts for 16% of the world's human population out of 1.2 billion people (Haub & Kent, 2016).

- Epistemology-A branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. Epistemology studies the nature of knowledge, its justification, and the rationality of belief. This thesis looks at a branch of epistemology defined as social epistemology, which is a broad set of approaches that can be taken in the study of knowledge that construes human knowledge as a collective achievement (Steup et al,. 2013).
- Necropolitical ecology-A concept that examines the process in which, "land, resources and the surplus value arising from those were systematically extracted from Indigenous populations and utilized to support their further subjugation under imperial rule" (Cavanagh & Himmelfarb, 2015, p 60).
- Green Colonialism- the practice of land abuse and resource exploitation by former colonial powers and multinational corporations, such as the inequitable land redistribution to minority whites and their corporations, which lead to displacement of Indigenous communities under Zimbabwean British rule from 1890-1980 (Kwashirai, 2009).
- Feminist Epistemology- emphasizes how ethics and politics are important values in shaping epistemic practices and interpretations of evidence. Feminist epistemology studies how gender influences our understanding of knowledge, justification, and theory of knowledge; it describes how knowledge and justification disadvantage women by: preventing them from inquiry and presenting women as an inferior because these theories of knowledge satisfy only male interests, which strengthen gender hierarchies (Young, 1990; Anderson, 2017).
- Transnational Feminism— A feminist scholarly paradigm that draws from postcolonial feminist theories to emphasize how colonialist legacies have shaped and continue to shape the social, economic, and political oppression of women and men

across the globe. It rejects the idea that people from different nationals have the same subjectivities and experiences with gender inequality, and recognizes that global capitalism has created similar relations of exploitation and inequality, around which feminists around the world can find solidarity and seek collaboration (Mohanty, 1988, 2003).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The ocean had a laugh when it

saw the shore

I said the ocean had a big big laugh when it

saw the shore

it pranced on up the boardwalk and

pummeled my front door

There’s no talking to the water full

of strength and salt

no, there’s no bargaining with water so

full of strength and salt

I’m a Mama working two jobs

global warming ain’t my fault

I said *Please water, I recycle got a*

garden full of greens

I said *looka here I compost got a*

garden full of greens

water say *big men drill and oil spill we*

both know what that means

now my town is just a

river bodies floatin,

water's high my town is

just a river

but I'm too darn mad to cry

seem like for Big Men's

livin little folks have got to

die

seems like for Big Men's livin

little folks have got to die

-Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie, "Global Warming Blues"

Throughout my childhood, I was very fascinated with books about the diversity and amazing physiologies of animals. I remember being riveted by television programs in elementary school about scientific discoveries in the deep ocean, a space devoid of sunlight but containing a plethora of interesting sea creatures living and thriving who also produced their own light. That metaphor of light and dark, and the perception of absence of life with the reality of diversity and abundance, would stay with me throughout my life. My American education taught me that Africa was the "heart of darkness" and that within such an abyss there was very little humanity. I am not sure if I completely understood that this positioning of Africa, my ancestral homeland, as inherently savage and stuck in primordia, undeveloped l past also taught me to accept my own inferiority and subjugation within the United States.

I kept two burning desires in my heart: to visit and know the depths of the oceans and to see and experience with my own eyes and feet the continent named Africa.

I was not able to justify to others why an African American boy wanted to learn about animals or deep seas, but I would continue to experience a deep resonance and longing for the world under the waves. To some extent, I think I had a visceral connection to difference in the animal kingdom, somehow intuiting that difference there served very specific purposes and allowed animals to live and survive in their environments. I felt out of place in my own environment growing up, so when I finally got to Africa and swam in its oceans I felt I had finally found the environment for which I was agreeably adapted. The slave trade had taken my ancestors away from these spaces and communities that would allowed me to thrive. Back home, I felt like I was in a zoo. America was a land that did not accommodate my growth and happiness and instead saw my mind and body as the raw materials necessary for its propagation and proliferation. During the three years I spent in Botswana, I finally divorced myself of my childhood goal of becoming a doctor, work deemed acceptable and necessary by my family, colleagues, and institutions and to dream freely about what I envisioned for myself. I came to terms with the idea that poetry, art, dance, marine ecosystems, and love were the most important things in my life. I found myself letting go of superficial markers of success, like money and prestige, because my deepest desires and dreams did not coincide with the hierarchies of power those superficial markers encouraged. I decided that I would pursue my passions to continue working in Africa and other continents outside of the United States with local communities on environmental issues. I found the Ethnic Studies program at Colorado State University, which was a department open to allowing me to work on my research interests. There I also discovered a community of researchers and faculty that do work in various African countries on conservation.

Finding myself back in academia for a master's degree meant I could develop a different toolkit than my earlier scientific training provided. Learning this new toolkit allowed me to build relationships with a new scholarly community, both through textually and face-to-face, who used decolonial methodologies. I was also introduced to transnational feminist scholarship. These new understandings opened me up to African Feminist epistemologies and Indigenous methodologies that help complete an approach to my life work involving communities in Africa from in an ethical position. These new decolonial scholarly approaches helped expose for me how the images and narratives I had received about Indigenous people regarding ecosystems point towards imperial and colonial legacies in conservation work. This exposure was the initiating impetus to help me unveil the many ways that conservation's stated goals of the equitable and respectful engagement with Indigenous people become implicated in that very history.

Purpose of the Study

Climate change and ecological degradation of all ecological spaces are paramount issues for all who live on the planet. As evident by Tallie's opening poem, women, and Indigenous communities—those "little folks" she says "gotta die"— are often socially, politically, economically, and geographically marginalized. They do not experience any buffering from the effects of climate change and ecological degradation resulting from Western modernity and neoliberal capitalist practices. Thus, some of the loudest voices in seeking global redress for climate change issues are those "little folks" who cannot afford to look away as the human impact on the environment causes natural and unnatural disasters at an increasing frequency.

The complexity of climate change and the web of interlocking issues that comprise it require greater collaboration and cooperation across scholarly disciplines, cultures, and continents. This research is one small contribution to the growing canon of work that seeks to understand the

past and present epistemologies and actions that led to envisioning the type of future that could restore and conserve the lands and cultures of human and nonhuman species on the planet. My educational journey led me to examining Western concepts of ecological conservation that get framed as a desire to save nature and ecological spaces from the ravages of human contact and destruction. This approach examines how framing humans and nature as opposites in an antagonistic relationship work in ways that are counterproductive for conservation research. Thus, an important aim in this work is to bring the scholarship of feminist Indigenous scholars into dialogue with conservation research and its practices and see what can be useful for conservation research that can help chart out a better ecological future for all who live on Earth.

Working within Ethnic Studies and Conservation and Ecology sciences is difficult, to say the least. While there has been less resistance to this pairing on the part of Ethnic Studies, which is interdisciplinary, there is an acute hesitance from the natural resource sciences to engage in the perceived ambiguity and iconoclastic spaces of Ethnic Studies. Yet, there is still not a thorough decoupling of conservation and marine ecology sciences from their imperialist and colonial origins in the Global North, something that the field of Ethnic Studies helps to achieve.

Goals of Study

The goal of this study is to tease out the epistemologies of conservation research practices that use community-based methods in order to understand how these treat Indigenous women and feminist epistemologies. In my consideration of the role of women in African conservation work, I draw on the epistemological lens of Transnational Feminism, African Feminisms, and Indigenous epistemologies to ask the following questions:

RQ1: What are the epistemological foundations of Western Conservation research and practice?

RQ2: How do those epistemologies inform Western community-based conservation projects and practices in Africa?

RQ3: How are Indigenous women and their respective epistemologies viewed by Western community-based conservation projects and practices?

The aim of this research is to offer pathways towards decentering the Western gaze in community-based conservation and understanding the epistemic views of African communities and African women in community-based conservation. To do so, I must first identify my own positionality in my research and acknowledge the journey I am on towards transnational consciousness.

These concepts used throughout this thesis aim to help clarify ways that unexamined conservation research practices become implicated in colonial and imperialist legacies established a priori to fieldwork. My use of these concepts allow for a mutual engagement between Conservation Science and Ethnic Studies in order to reach an understanding about one informs the other.

Deconstructing Western Epistemes: On African Dreams and How a Black Boy Learns About Love

I spent three years of my undergraduate degree at the predominantly white institution of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, simultaneously taking classes in African Literature and Languages along with science courses towards a premedical major. I had a certain level of hubris and self-righteousness as I was the only African American male in many of my classes. I was often the only student voice in my classes that spoke against unilateral statements that all African women are oppressed and denied agency in their societies and cultures or other such false universalization of Africa and Africans. Experiences like these meant that I could recognize the rudimentary ways that Western epistemes operated generally in U.S. society. What my education did not afford me was a way to interrogate the many ways that such Western episteme also lived in me albeit in a different, often-subtler format. My own Western foundations were not exempt from the influences evidenced among my white peers.

My visits to Kenya, Ethiopia, and Botswana helped lay bare my own framing of Africa in Western colonial ways. These encounters with African people helped me learn about the prejudices and biases I unconsciously carried that were grounded in Western frameworks and knowledge production. These lessons began through the love I received from of a Muslim family in a village situated in the Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary in Kenya that helped me become aware of and transform my indoctrinated fear of the "demonic Muslim Other." The irony here is that it was the simple power of their love, situated in a space and time where material resources, like running water or electricity or food were limited, that I received a kind of acceptance of my person I had never before experienced. Coming from a very strict Christian upbringing, my initial host families in Nairobi and Mombasa were Christian prior to coming to this rural village to live with the Muslim

family. In those Christians homes, I was told that "these people" (meaning Muslims) believed in a false god that would damn my own soul simply through spatial proximity. Yet that Muslim family was the best and most treasured memory from my entire year in Kenya. Their gentle, loving ways, unlike anything I had experienced it within a Western context, helped birth my emerging consciousness about my own Western episteme. I experienced a completely different way of being and interacting with human beings that was not perverted by imperialist and colonial understandings that many of us in the spatial and temporal confines of the West describe as love. In that space, my existence was not continually questioned, my body was not continually threatened, and my voice was not continually undermined. I gained confidence and a sense of playfulness as a result. It has been my experience with love in Africa that has emboldened me to tackling this type of thesis topic, to use poetry in my academic writing, and focus on love as a political practice; and it was that Muslim family's love that transformed my consciousness, that changed my heart and my life. Therefore, I bring to this thesis all those who have love me, in the United States and abroad, and I make it a point to acknowledge that those individuals are a part of the audience I speak with and to.

My journey to uncover my own epistemological foundations in Western colonialism, imperialism, and heteropatriarchy through the transformative power of Indigenous love led me to the work of feminist scholars who grapple with similar issues. I find the work of feminist philosopher Maria Lugones (1987) useful when she posits that moving from arrogant perception to loving perception in relations between groups becomes an important mode of decolonization within white supremacist and heteropatriarchal contexts. This perspective helps define my own conceptualization of a decolonial conservationist perspective. According to Lugones, loving perception allows the type of "cross-cultural and cross-racial loving that emphasizes the need to

understand and affirm the plurality in and among women as central to feminist ontology and epistemology." She sees love "not as fusion and erasure of difference but as incompatible with them. Love reveals plurality," (Lugones, 1987, p. 3). Her notion of arrogant and loving perception forms the basis for my own decolonial conservation practice because it compels me not to erase difference but to highlight the nuanced ways it exists in the African contexts within which I work. Her emphasis on loving perception is especially useful to my own emerging decolonial approach to conservation research.

Conclusion

A truly decolonized approach to my conservation work would not merely include indigenous women as objects of my thesis but would in fact have them as co-researchers, consultants, and even advisors to the overall research project. While this has become an important limitation of my study, it also serves to delimit this particular project because this realization has pointed me in the direction of an epistemic critique of conservation work.

This chapter lays out how I came to this thesis topic and explores how some of my earlier life experiences provide a context for what I bring to conservation work. It addressed the purpose of my research, my research questions, and the goals of the study. I have also positioned myself as a researcher to allow for a self-reflexive critique of my emerging epistemes. In chapter two that follows, I discuss literatures that cover the history of Western conservation, African critiques of those conservation projects and their colonial ties, and Feminist epistemologies of our relationship to nature, with a Feminist critique of Western science. Chapter three outlines the methods of the thesis, a demographic survey of the interview participants and limitations of the study. Chapter four provides the four major themes that were found in the interview data after coding and explain their significance in answering the research questions. This chapter also provides a poetic

transcription and analysis of two interviews as a method of providing a holistic re-presentation of the interviews. This method of poetic transcription of interviews gestures towards the complexity and meaning of the text not just through individual words or quotes but within the spaces between words and those moments of time that lose meaning out of the context of the whole. The complexity of thought and existence by the interviewees can be demonstrated and engaged with through poetic transcription. Chapter five provides an analysis of the research findings and their significance to the study. The chapter also outlines updated domestic and international news that has significantly influenced the conclusions and recommendations of the thesis. I end the chapter with recommendations for Western researchers interested in conservation projects and Indigenous communities, including women in those communities, who are solicited to provide space, time and knowledge to Western researchers concerning the ecosystems they live in.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the Governance of the Commons, Governmentality, and Feminism. To address my research questions, I use feminist critiques of the field of conservation that examine the epistemic foundations of conservation work with a specific emphasis on a critical analysis of community-based conservation research. In order to discuss how this epistemology informs research projects and practices in communities in Africa I begin with an examination of how as a seminal work, the ”Governance of the Commons” dictates how Western researchers should see local communities as the enemies of ecological conservation (Hardin, 1968). I then assess the literature on governmentality, as reconfigured by African scholars and theorists, and how it implicates conservation work in imperial and colonial histories. Finally, I address questions of how women are either excluded or marginalized in these projects and research practices by examining African Feminist critiques of colonial conservation.

Common Pool Resource and the Governance of the Commons

Hardin’s (1968) analysis of common pool resources and the governance of this commons is the foundation of what we now call ecological conservation, community-based conservation, and natural resource management/community-based natural resource management. In “Tragedy of the Commons,” Hardin tackles the issue of over-population through a series of hypothetical scenarios. Hardin’s work has been critiques because it foregrounds theoretical scenarios that stay within the realm of philosophy, which is generally not deemed legitimate by the natural sciences that emphasize empirical data. Hardin (1968) asserts that humanity rushes toward ruin motivated by self-interest and that “freedom” in a commons is the source of destruction. Hardin argued that

education would not suffice in altering the destruction of the commons and advocated for the political and economic control of natural spaces away from "the common man":

> "Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all. Some would say that this is a platitude. Would that it were! In a sense, it was learned thousands of years ago, but natural selection favors the forces of psychological denial. The individual benefits as an individual from his ability to deny the truth even though society as a whole, of which he is a part, suffers. Education can counteract the natural tendency to do the wrong thing, but the inexorable succession of generations requires that the basis for this knowledge be constantly refreshed." (p. 28-29)

As Hardin underscores in this passage, the tragedy of the commons involves how individuals, when s allowed to have unlimited access to the finite resources of "the commons" within a given ecosystem, would lead to ecological ruin because of the inherent selfish nature of man. Hardin's view of human nature and its relationship to ecosystem relationships is not a universal feature of human behavior cross cultures or ecosystems globally. Indigenous writers have often discussed the ways in which traditional Indigenous ecological practices have allowed for equitable use of land without individual ownership and ruin of those ecological resources (Deming & Savoy, 2011; Kwashirai, 2009). Thus Hardin's framing of the relationship between "the commons" and human nature as individualistic and destructive to common pool resources influenced the field of conservation and systems of common pool resource management, such as the development of national parks (Cooper & Stoler, 1997; Brechin et al., 2002; Sorlin & Warde, 2009). It provides a philosophical foundation for its main epistemic tenet that humans and nature are incompatible. What is often not addressed is that Hardin's framework only included Western understandings of "the commons" and thus imposed a Western framework on the rest of the world.

Colonialism and Conservation

Following in the systematic and widespread incorporation of Hardin's "tyranny of the commons" thesis, much of the current major literature in conservation is concerned with forests and other spaces that were previously unclaimed or repossessed by African nations (Cavanagh & Himmelfarb, 2015; Goldman, 2007; Kwashirai, 2009). While much of the conservation scholarly work focuses on Africa savannah's or forests, coastal regions of Subsaharan Africa can be also viewed within the purview of the acceptable allocation of space to white colonial possession and a repository for the vices and feminization of African spaces and bodies (Kempadoo, 2001, 2004). Sovereignty over space and identity continues to be a contentious issue within conservation movements, as those communities who can pass the Western litmus test of Indigeneity find themselves with international recognition and nominal rights. Arab traders established the spice trade along what is known now as Eastern Africa, but were later displaced by the Portuguese and then regained much of their trade lands back and forced the Portuguese down into the lands we now call Mozambique. Though Portugal would continue its standing in Mozambique, with the League of Nations, the British and Germany took ownership of areas we now call Kenya and Tanzania, respectively. This effectively displaced indigenous communities to spaces further inland from the coastlines, which were taken by European colonists as important trade locals and spaces for vacation and leisure (Akinola, 1975; Anderson & Grove, 1989; Hoyle, 1999). This history is significant in that it shows a possible explanation as to why communities along the coast of Eastern Africa are marginalized and left unprotected against white possession through conservation movements.

Lipsitz (2007) provides a window through which to view the racialization of space and the spatialization of race in Eastern and Southern Africa. Through the lens of landscape architecture,

Lipsitz (2007) examined the institutional violence of the US government against People of Color from equal opportunity to asset accumulation and inheritance. Although his focus centers on the United States, his examination of the ways race and space are has salient application for the neocolonialism evident in Eastern and Southern Africa (Cavanagh & Himmelfarb, 2015; Goldman, 2007; Kwashirai, 2009). Along the coastal shores of Mozambique, Kenya, Zanzibar, and South Africa there are clear implicit and explicit regulations of physical space based on race, with unidirectional mobility only accessible to White expatriates and tourists. These stratifications are maintained through violence, "housing and lending discrimination, by school district boundaries, by policing practices, by zoning regulations, and by the design of transit systems," with South Africa being the most complete utilization of these strategies. The residue of the institutions and policies created during the Apartheid regime of South Africa still maintains deep spacial segregation of space throughout the country, and especially along the coasts. Western expatriates and tourists may not inhabit the same spaces necessarily, but both group's investment in whiteness mutually benefits each other. Both Western expatriates and tourists' use of the beach as a space to engage in sex tourism with African locals, but the circumstances might not be the same. Western expatriates might have arranged agreements with sex workers that may involve children they have together. Tourists often have short term relationships with sex workers that last the duration of their trip. Expatriates provide a bridge for Westerners to come to Africa and inherit property and rights taken away from Indigenous people. This connection to colonial lineages of power and property were recently manifested in Mozambique as the economic downturn in Europe lead to high unemployment rates in Portugal.

On December 10, 2015 an environmental organization, Conservation International, released a public service announcement video during the Paris climate change summit that ended

with the line, “nature doesn’t need people, people need nature.” This phrase encapsulates and helps perpetuates the colonial nostalgia for a mythical past when nature was untamed and devoid of human presence. In reality, humans have been reshaping and cultivating their lands for centuries and many environments have a very close symbiosis with humans. Public service announcements such as this one contain ideologies that are dangerous because they provide the ideological foundation for necropolitical ecology, a form of conservation biopower (Cavanagh and Himmelfarb, 2015). Necropolitical ecology is the process in which, “land, resources, and the surplus value arising from those were systematically extracted from indigenous populations and utilized to support their further subjugation under imperial rule,” (Cavanagh and Himmelfarb, 2015, p. 60). These types of public service announcements rarely get directed at Global North countries with vast expanses of devastated land and industrial development. Instead, the targets of these announcements are those spaces inhabited by Indigenous people, establishing the consensus that nature within these loci does not need people. This point is exacerbated by the imagery used in the video that is devoid of human beings and shows nature reclaiming some of the wooden homes in one location. Indigenous people are the enemies of nature and conservation efforts in the announcement seek to elicit consent for the utilization of necropower to control Indigenous populations. This ideology falls in line with the gas extraction project that is gearing up in Northern Mozambique and demonstrates the “geographical imaginary of a population straddling the precipice between a familiar *status quo ante* and the imposition of an ominously colonial-capitalist modernity,” (Cavanagh and Himmelfarb, 2015, p. 60).

Cavanagh and Himmelfarb demonstrate how the Uganda Protectorate and the tribes of Mount Elgon refused to pay taxes to an institution placed in authority over them by the British Empire. Accordingly, the authors assert that the violent imposition of “such ‘modern’ institution

as the state and the transcontinental market economy" was utilized by the British and other colonial countries to maintain power, and these practices provide very similar blueprints to the violence of environmental conservation. They documented how "the institutionalisation of protected areas restricted local access to livelihood-supporting land, wildlife, and forest products, while the imposition of colonial taxes simultaneously forced households to produce cash crops-such as cotton and coffee" for Ugandans (Cavanaugh & Himmerlfarb, 2015, p. 56). They believe that such "techniques of colonial governance" were not truly biopolitical, and instead propose they were, "necropolitical," "primarily seeking to create metaphorical "*death worlds* . . . forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*," (Mbembe, 2003, p. 30). Past scholarship has relied on Foucault's notions of biopolitics and Mbembe's concept of necropower to show how taxation and agricultural technologies are used as civilizing violence, and operate within a framework that is politically and legally focused. Cavanagh and Himmelfarb's (2015) work further the discourse of necropolitical ecology through discussing how its goal is not towards the "optimisation of the lives of some at the expense of a minority of others, but rather a strategic 'instrumentalisation' or even *zombification* of certain populations, a 'making live' simply for the betterment of those deemed to be racially or otherwise categorically superior," (2015, p. 59). This provides another lens for examining the development of gas extraction in Northern Mozambique, as the local people are not considered or consulted about the development of the area for the workers of the multinational corporations.

When locals cited religious and cultural fears about working on the underwater portion of the offshore rig, the multinational companies brought in Westerners to do the work. These companies later noted that when locals realized the "opportunities" they were missing, they began

signing up for the jobs in droves. Such description of the events belie the violence of neoliberal capitalist companies that impose values and work practices most convenient for their extractive purposes in ways that bypass the epistemes and needs of local people. The reality is the profits and development may provide some monetary revenue to the nation state along with the ethnic and class elites in the capital, but most often at the expense of the local communities of northern Mozambique who see their livelihood and environment radically changed for the extraction of resources. When all the gas is taken, or if it becomes less economically profitable to continue operations, the national government and the multinational corporations will move on to other sites. Historical practices of resource extraction and migration to new sites has transformed the metaphorical "living-dead" into the lived realities of Indigenous communities that must live within contexts created and sustained through necropower by multinational corporations with the aid of national governments.

Feminist Critiques of Conservation: Colonial and Postcolonial Perspectives

A feminist epistemology in conservation research provides a path to the development of research questions and the methodology and methods that value local and indigenous knowledge. The strictly quantitative approach to research historically employed by conservation science with its push to conduct representational research obscures the need to focus on how conservation sciences are encultured with colonial and imperialist epistemes that mask their exclusion of women and other marginalized populations. Examining the way that conservation sciences are rife with colonial histories that leads to these exclusion of the marginalized forms the center of this feminist critique of Conservation Science. Both feminist and Southern postcolonial science movement emerge as necessary correctives for examining the continued marginalization of women and "deviant" groups within conservation research and community-based projects with its broader

implications for sustainable work in non-Western countries. This "political unconsciousness" of conservation research practices (Harding 2006) have obfuscated the violence inherent in the discipline of Conservation Science against women, sex workers, and the marine animals along the coastal regions. Harding draws on the literary critic Frederick Jaimeson's concept of the political unconscious which she applies to Western scientific discourses and philosophies that recruit "scientists and the general public into advancing local and global inequalities-of class as well as gender, race and ethnicity, and other kinds-even as they profess to provide only culturally neutral facts through objective methods," (Harding, 2006, p. 4). Aligning Harding's understanding with Conservation Science allows me to excavate the political unconscious of conservation research practices. In Conservation Science, the subfield of Community-based Conservation promotes a rhetoric of pro-democratic and social justice values, but in the actual research that is conducted and the engagement with the community are anti-democratic and authoritarian (Kwashirai, 2009; Cavanagh & Himmelfarb, 2015). Harding's calls for "robust reflexivity" highlight Western idealizations of "natural" space and the role they can have in "protecting" the biodiversity of coastal regions (Harding, 2006).

The field of Conservation Science has extensively discussed the impact of Indigenous people on the lands around which they live. This has the effect of placing Westerners in a position of authority to intervene and help these Indigenous communities to become stewards of their ecosystems. This is especially true for women and other marginalized groups who are seen as victims of their cultures and whose communities do not have ecological skill sets. Narayan (2013) points out that the construction of "the problems of women in Other cultures" negates how Western colonial countries experience many of the same problems. Environmental pollutions occurring in "developed" countries have been historically egregious and continue to be perpetuated today.

Indigenous knowledge and the knowledge produced by indigenous women (those who work with the land) have been appropriated, erased, and demonized depending on the economic benefits that can be assigned to any of those relationships of power and oppression (Narayan, 2013; Shiva, 2005). Much of the research conducted around conservation takes the guise of "information retrieval," especially when dealing with women or other marginalized groups. Yet Narayan points out that that this "suggests that we need to understand the ways in which feminist agendas are shaped by the different conditions that obtain within different national contexts" (Narayan, 2013; Shiva, 2005; Jaggar, 2015). The fetishizing of the problems faced by indigenous women globally is an important part of the missionary role that Western researchers and conservationists play out within their international work. A cursory examination of mission statements on conservation NGO websites along the coastal regions of Eastern and Southern Africa demonstrate how indigenous women play a miniscule role in the management, community outreach, and development of these projects. The Marine Megafauna Foundation in Mozambique is an NGO that works towards the protection of giant manta rays endemic to the coastal seas of Tofo, Mozambique. On their website the African women listed are the cleaners and cooks for the NGO and none hold any position that works towards the goals of the NGO. The World Wildlife Fund is a major international NGO that oversees and helps in research and implementation of conservation projects across the globe, including Africa, has one woman of African descent on the leadership team, as the Vice President of Human Resources, and in the list of global experts they collaborate and consult with for conservation projects there are no women of African descent listed on the website. Shiva's examination of how women farmers in India maintaining not only their families and communities but the biodiversity and health of the ecosystem in which they live showcases how colonial/neocolonial and oppressive masculine/patriarchal ideologies are false, and the real

work, must also be coupled with decolonial methodologies that do not continue a long history and lineage of oppression and instead aid in the liberation of not only the subjects of the study but the research as well.

Feminist Critiques of Colonial Conservation

Climate change due to human activity and pollution has had significant effects on the environment and has led to increased visibility of the conservation and environmentalism movements. In the developing world, especially in Eastern and Sub-Saharan Africa there have been conservation movements to catalogue the indigenous local knowledge and the biodiversity of the region, because of fears that they will both soon disappear. To understand the current framework and ideologies that pervade conservation movements a clear understanding of the history of conservation is needed. Here, focus on the historical origins of conservation helps examine the role that colonialism has played in shaping the main tenets of conservation ideology and practice. Western perspectives about indigenous people living in the spaces that conservationists deem worthy of focus often exclude the voices of local populations. Indigenous perspectives on conservation practices are not valued. The vestiges of colonialism and patriarchal oppression still inform Conservation Science and leads to underrepresentation of those communities and their most important issues. A feminist epistemology provides a critique of approaches to research used by conservationists that provides an alternative vision for the future of conservation movements along the Eastern and Southern coasts of Africa.

Conservation work is wrapped in a mythical past that sees its goal as protecting unmolested wilderness. The mythologizing of pristine spaces readily erases how Indigenous people live in these spaces. Reimerson (2013) presented an insightful argument regarding the spaces for Indigenous agency in the Convention of Biological Diversity. He found a conflict between the

images of “pristine” wilderness created by conservationists and the Indigenous people who live on those lands. Traditional nature conservation has been at odds with local communities over local or indigenous utilization of nature and natural resources along the coastal region, issues around fishing and hunting of “protected” animals and commercially viable animals, such as sea turtles, through tourism have been part of the conflict nature conservationists have with local and indigenous communities. Though Reimerson (2013) is reticent to make direct correlations between ‘internal colonialism’, which is the exploitation of distinct cultural groups within a country, and ‘classical colonialism’, such as the British rule over Kenya, she does acknowledge that they “stem from the same ideological basis of racism, separation and exclusion, homogenising and stereotyping of ‘others’, [and] denial of the ‘others’ history,” (Reimerson, 2013). These practices continue in much of the research by Western conservationists who continue to distance themselves from a distinct colonial past. Indigenous communities see very clearly the direct lineage between colonialism and conservation (Chiro, 2007; Khan, 2014).

Among conservationists there has also been increased recognition that Indigenous knowledge about the local environment and land management practices are useful to their work. This form of inclusion is often one-sided and problematic, because the terms of inclusion of indigenous communities occurs from an asymmetrical political position of nation-states (Reimerson, 2013). Increasingly, Indigenous people see their knowledge stolen by the West for profit (Chiro, 2007). Reimerson (2013) points out that reclaiming Indigenous traditional practices is a double edge sword, one that overshadows other representations of the community/people by homogenizing notions of ‘indigenousness’ and ‘traditional.’ Local and indigenous communities have inhabited and cultivated the land and modified their environments based on their needs. Their efforts to adapt on the land should be seen as stewards of natural resources and biological diversity.

Such arguments become salient within a Western context because many communities along the coastal regions of Eastern and Southern Africa are not seen as indigenous, thus cannot make the same claims to land and indigenous knowledge that other communities leverage to gain position in the international discourse

Conservation Science has many of the same ideological foundations as the science of environmental justice, one of the fields that has given a prominent voice to local and indigenous people that allows a space for non-Western perspectives and histories to be told and acknowledged. Chiro (2007) provides a significant contribution to the discourse around Indigenous people and biocolonialism, which is a form of colonialism propelled by the genetics revolution, through her chapter on the responses of the Native American attendees to the Environmental Health Genetics and Communities of Color Conference, that took place February 4-5, 2002. The rhetoric used by Dr. Kenneth Olden during the conference about the immediate imperative to grow a catalogue of genetic variations in "susceptible subgroups' (Chiro, 2007) is also the language used by conservationists, such as Michael C. Gavin, who call for cataloguing to confront "the rapid global loss of both biological and cultural diversity," (Gavin, 2015). Chiro (2007) outlines the exploitation and marginalization that comes with new technologies and genetic cataloguing that directly extend colonial legacies. She provides a strong critique against governments, scientists, and institutions who gain monetary compensation and/or prestige from local and indigenous bodies, their territories, and their traditional knowledge. Chiro (2007) highlights the Maori attorney, Moana Jackson, who recalls a history of dispossession and cultural annihilation due to the pollution and contamination of rivers for dams, from the tearing down of forests for sheep farming. Chiro uses Jackson's work to highlight a history that is often obfuscated by Western conservationists who blame local communities and nation-states for environmental degradation,

and then highlight these narratives as justification for their own interventions. The vast majority of environmental degradation and climate irregularities are a direct consequence of decades of colonial, industrial, and neoliberal capitalist practices that continue to globally devastate communities and ecosystems.

Authors such as Michael Gavin, who write about a recognition of local and indigenous rights and the need to involve local communities in conservation management, seem to adopt postcolonial and antiracist rhetoricbut still rely on institutional frameworks that are quite colonial and Eurocentric. Gavin et al. (2015) writes, "managing human behavior is fundamental to conservation." His assertion raises the question, as proposed by Native American activist Debra Harry "on whose terms" (Chiro, 2007) will human behavior be managed and to what ends? Gavin's assertion about the management of human behavior has its origins in colonial history and is incompatible with his and other's assertion about accepting local and indigenous people input as equal. Within conservationists it is rare to find a critical examination of Western involvement in environmental degradation or a serious admonishment and call to action against said degradation. For example, China is not reprimanded for its exportation of timber from the forests and mangroves of coastal countries, such as Mozambique. One of Chiro's (2007) main arguments is the notion that marginalized communities are seemingly offered equal participation in decision- making with little change in the historically and contemporary relations of colonial and neocolonial power between the developed world and local and indigenous communities. She highlights how many local and indigenous communities want sovereignty over their own bodies, lands, and resources and do not see any need for Western involvement in the management of their own natural resources.

According to her there is a nascent but growing viewpoint among Western conservationists that center the West and developed world as the people in need of behavior change and correction.

Most importantly, Chiro's work promotes a perspective regarding management of local resources that accepts local and Indigenous people as equals. This must be extended to local and indigenous communities in Africa as well.

Historically indigenous women have been on the frontlines of the conservation and environmental justice movement, as both generally concerned with the family and children, as well as other disadvantaged populations. Waghiyi et al. (2012) shed an exacting light on the environmental violence and destruction indigenous women confront and its effects on populations that are not discussed by male authors in conservation and environmental justice. They presented the various issues many of the women and children in coastal communities along Eastern and Southern Africa face. Colonialism saw the displacement and degradation of lands inhabited by local and indigenous people, and along the African coasts this often meant a push further inland where first Muslim, then European settlers took over prime lands along the beaches. Part of that degradation was the deliberate pollution of the land through environmental contaminants from pesticides and waste byproducts of industrial and/or military manufacturing (Waghiyi et al, 2012). Conservationists do not generally talk about multinational corporation involvement in the destruction and pollution of the environment and tends to focus on the small-scale impacts that local and indigenous communities have on their environments, which is a major blind spot in their rhetoric about the urgent need to preserve biocultural and biological diversity in the developing world (Gavin et al., 2015). This omission is both insidious and dangerous, because environmental contamination does not only lead to long term pollution of the land, but leads to severe harm to the Indigenous community, women, children and future generations (Waghiyi et al., 2012).

Since women play a significant role in farming, food gathering, and food preparation alongside other traditional cultural practices, they have an extricable link to the natural

environment, which makes them particularly vulnerable to environmental contaminants (Waghiyi et al., 2012). While this is generally known in conservation science, it is not accorded a respect that leads to focusing on it as a research topic. McCarter & Gavin (2014) discussion about ethnomedical knowledge in Vanuatu assert that their findings support research on South America, the Pacific, and Africa where men provide a richer body of ethnomedical knowledge than do women. They then postulate that this knowledge may have deteriorated faster in women than men, but state that more research is needed to confirm this assertion (McCarter & Gavin, 2014). These researchers reveal that women have extensive knowledge of ethnomedicine around the human reproductive cycle, but as researchers they did not include those questions in their study.

Anderson's (2017) critiques of science show us how masculinists assumptions about women's behavior lean towards diminishing their role in important work and asserts that gender bias can often be a cause of error in data, because "theories go beyond the data that support them, with the gap often being filled by sexist and androcentric assumptions" (Anderson, 2017). This criticism is bolstered by Waghiyi et al.'s (2012) article where women are connected to both the modern and traditional knowledge of their food and medicinal plants. Anderson (2017) maintains that masculinist science: 1) the excludes or marginalizes women scientists in ways that impair scientific progress; 2) applications of science and technology disadvantage women and other vulnerable groups and treat their interests as less important, and 3) biases toward working with "masculine" cognitive styles as opposed to "feminine" models have impaired scientific understanding. These tenets become quite clear when research from Waghiyi et al. (2012) is juxtaposed against that of McCarter & Gavin's findings and the assumptions they make about "perceived" deficiency in the ethnodeical knowledge of Indigenous women. Later they acknowledge that their findings may have not have equally considered women.

By their own admission, they demonstrate implicit bias in not considering women's knowledge and women's issues equally as important as men's. This sheds light on the importance of Waghiyi et al. (2012) research and the barriers indigenous and local women face in the conservation and environmental justice work. Such connections between epistemology and practice must be revealed in order to show how both operate within a cyclical nature that perpetuate g and reify colonial legacies. The next section will delve deeper into the epistemic tenets of conservationists and their research practices. The next section will delve deeper into the epistemic tenets of conservationists and their research practices.

A feminist critique of science can be utilized to address the notion of patriarchal dictation as opposed to the feminist acknowledgement that different communities have their own interests and that we must acknowledge and promote (Anderson, 2017). Traditional and modern conservationists resist a feminist lens in their work and oscillate between fictive narratives of the mythical Native, who is forever in-tune with nature and the subordinately racialized "Other" that says indigenous people are enemies of nature (Wilshusen et al., 2002). Even with information and research that demonstrate how the West and developing countries take part in the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity, conservationists maintain their narrow focus on the management and control of indigenous and local populations and bypass the ways that forces larger than those populations have a direct hand in how those populations are positioned within those ecosystems. Local communities are left to adapt, survive, and attempt to thrive in war torn, polluted, and commercialized spaces they are forced to inhabit. Anderson (2017) details some of the reasons for this intentional ignorance as epistemic injustice, which demonstrate how dominant groups often accord epistemic authority to themselves and deny it to their subordinates (Fricker, 2007). Feminist epistemology and critique of science, and by extension the conservation movement, is critical

because it allows for the voices of marginalized populations to be recognized, heard, and understood. The future of conservation and local engagement will need to include women and marginalized populations, which are often excluded from research and international dialogues/policy making.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed one of the foundational works in ecology, "The Tragedy of the Commons," by Garrett Hardin and the epistemological tenets it helped solidify in the field of ecological conservation. The chapter also outlined different lenses through which to view the relationship between governmentality and conservation at the loci of African ecosystems. Necropolitical ecology was used to help define colonial histories and practices along the Sub Saharan coasts, as well as a lens on contemporary relationships between Indigenous people and conservationists. Finally, I discussed Feminist perspectives that critique Western science and the ways that Western science, and institutions enact epistemological violence against indigenous women. In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework for this study, the methods used for data collection, and the limitations of this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the rationale for utilizing qualitative research methods for this project. I layout my theoretical framework, method, participant demographics, recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, use of poetry and poetic transcription of interviews as a method, and the limitations of the study. Lastly, I provide an examination of what it means to do feminist research.

Methods

This is a qualitative study chosen that attends to feminist critiques of traditional quantitative research. This approach was also chosen, because traditionally women are rendered invisible in traditional sciences and theory (Duran, 1991). In the field of conservation/natural resource management a feminist framework helps ensure that the voices of Indigenous women are not marginalized or erased in the process of research. Thus, this thesis uses a qualitative approach that involves interviews with academic professions in the field of conservation and natural resource management to assess where, when, and how women appear in said research. I use a feminist epistemological critique of science (Crasnow, 2008) and transnational feminism (Mohanty, 1988; Maathai, 2010; Shiva, 2005) to provide tangible tools for Indigenous African communities to address colonial and imperialist conservation epistemologies and practices.

Recruitment

I conducted semi-structured interviews with Colorado State University (CSU) faculty members, who actively engage in community-based conservation work in Africa. The interviewees

were chosen based on the following selection criteria: 1) their status as a researcher or faculty members at CSU; 2) past or current community-based conservation research projects in Africa: 3) any significant involvement with international, national or NGO community-based conservation projects in Africa (non-research focused). These criteria were developed so the data that would be gathered from the interviews would be able to align with my research questions. A demographic survey was completed by each interviewee and used in conjunction with the coding and poetic analysis of their interviews to better understand the intersections between their backgrounds/identities and their academic epistemologies. This criterion for recruitment was used for participant selection in this thesis to gain firsthand accounts about why these faculty members specifically choose community-based conservation in Africa to understand the connection between their epistemologies and practices of conservation/natural resource management regarding women.

Data Collection

For this research project, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Interview questions were developed to understand the epistemological tenets of participant research practices. The questions focused on early interactions with nature, scientific mentors, interest in Africa, defining the epistemology of the field, and discussing the roles women and Indigenous knowledge play in conservation work in Africa. All of the questions were developed to build a level of comfort and historical narrative that allowed the interviewee and interviewer to understand the life arch of their research practices. Interviews were chosen as a primary method because "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate (Merriam, 2009, p. 88).

A demographic survey was administered to each interviewee and used in conjunction with the coding analysis of their interviews to better understand the intersections between their backgrounds/identities and their academic epistemologies.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and coded line by line, and data was assessed for emerging themes. Axial coding (Richards & Campbell, 2005) was used and gender as a social and historical construct (Oyewumi, 1997) and a transnational feminist analysis (Mohanty, 1988) were applied to the data to gain a decolonial interpretation that elucidates the themes and epistemologies embedded in the data. This allowed the researcher to relate codes (categories and concepts) to each other to ensure that the concepts and categories accurately represent the responses to interview questions. Feminist grounded theory analysis was also used and memos were created from the coding to develop theory(ies) that emerge from the data (Hesse-Biber, 2014).

Poetry and other forms of creative arts were included in this research consistent with a growing trend of textual experimentation (Ely, 2007). Arts-based research provides an opportunity for researchers to challenge dualisms and explore the possibilities of interpretivism and re-presentation of social science research (Knowles & Cole, 2008), which include poetry and poetic transcription (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1994, 2000). Poetic transcription was included in my data analysis as a way to engage a Feminist practice and Indigenous methodologies in my research. Richardson (1994) suggests that "writing up interviews as poems honors the speakers' pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms, and so on. Poetry may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting snippets in prose: (p. 522). The inclusion of poetry and poetric transcriptions was an intentional use of interview material to allow for an

analysis of how language and nonverbal behaviors shape the interview data and also reveal important insights into the interviewee's epistemic foundation.

Two of the interviews were analyzed through poetic transcription and were selected because they presented two of the outliers on opposite spectrums of the interviewees. Both interviews also best examined the ways in which the interviews were a conversation between the interviewees and I and the relationship and stories that were discussed between us. Both interviews were listened to multiple times and then, using key words and/or phrases as the kernels for ideas and images, used to form two poems that allowed for a more holistic analysis of the interviews and email correspondence by the interviewee. Using poetic transcription was a means of foregrounding a feminist methodology concerned with including polyvocality regarding who speaks and how in qualitative research (Alcoff, 1991). Poetry is a method I used during my trips to Africa for communicating and building bridges between myself and the people within the communities I lived. Poetry is also the literary devise through which I see the world and best express my understanding of myself, my analysis of others, and the interactions experiences between others and myself.

Participants: The Demographic Survey

Data was collected from all the interviewees using a Google Sheet survey. All five interviewees identified as Caucasian. There was an option for other, but it was not selected by any of the interviewees. Three of the interviewees identified in the 65 to 74 age range, one interviewee identified within the 55 to 64 age range, and one interviewee identified in the 45 to 54 age range.

The interviewees were asked about the highest degree or level of education attained by their mothers. Two interviewees had mothers with PhDs, one interviewee indicated a mother with

a graduate or professional degree, one interviewee indicated a mother with bachelor's degree, and one interviewee indicated a mother with a high school diploma (includes equivalency).

The interviewees were asked the highest degree or level of education attained by their fathers. One interviewee had a father with a graduate or professional degree, two interviewees indicated a father with a bachelor's degree, one interviewee indicated a father with some college, no degree, and one interviewee indicated a father with less than high school education.

The interviewees were asked their religious preference. One interviewee identified as Agnostic and Protestant, one interviewee identified as Unitarian, one interviewee identified as none, one interviewee identified as Agnostic, and one interviewee wrote in "not your business."

The interviewees were asked about the number of years have they worked in conservation/natural resource management. Three interviewees indicated 20+ years and two interviewees indicated 19-20 years.

Limitations

Funding limitations prevented me from traveling to Africa to conduct community-based participatory research, which would be ideal in accessing the perspectives and input from the local people that also falls in line with African methodologies that place the participants as co-creators in the research project. Therefore, in selecting a subject to pursue for this thesis I needed to consider how I might still do research around my topics of interest regarding community-based conservation projects in Africa. There has also been very little qualitative research done in the Global North on community-based conservation discipline and as such there has been little opportunity for the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies that allows the voices of local Indigenous communities to be heard.

Examing the discipline of Conservation Science through the research practices of its subfield of community-based conservation seemed a fruitful space to examine when and where women were incorporated.

Feminist Research

In this study, a feminist research approach provides me with a path that directly connects the development of my research question with the actual methodology and methods I use. One reasons I moved away from the "hard" sciences and strictly quantitative research was its constant push to conduct representational research instead of focusing on why and how conservation sciences are encultured with colonial and imperialist epistemologies that are masked but then universalized. This "political unconsciousness" (Harding, 2006) of conservation epistemology, research, and practice has obfuscated the violence inherent in the discipline regarding women, sex workers, and the marine animals along coastal communities in Africa. Harding's concept of "robust reflexivity" has helped me understand how my own interest in conservation and my desire to work internationally has ties to Western idealizations of "natural" space and the role I can have in "protecting" the biodiversity of coastal regions. Unreflective of the ways in which I have been complicit in colonial and imperial legacies in and the degradation of marine ecosystems, I have begun to examine the historical ontology of conservation in order to operate outside of its violence and necropolitical power. Therefore, I have focused this master's thesis on an epistemological critique of conservation research practices through a transnational feminist lens. This decentering of self and Western epistemologies allows for a critical space in which I shift from speaking for others a Western imperial lens and instead work within and through more liberatory epistemologies that recognize the worth and value of indigenous perspectives.

Such a value stance requires more work and more openness to working with other ways of knowing, but it is through this work that I have continue to transform my understanding of my own positionality and ethical responsibility towards this work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the methods used in this qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 participants that were purposely selected based on selection criteria. I then discussed the data collection and analysis, which involved coding the interviews for themes and creating two poetic transcriptions to allow an opportunity for the entirety of the interviews to be understood and contextualized. Demographic survey was also conveyed and I discussed the limitations of this research and biases that I need to be conscious and critical of as I complete this study. Finally, I discussed how a feminist framework on research helps me become mindful of my own positionality and ethical responsibility in this study and the conservation work I do.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from my interviews and lays out the three major themes emerging from this set of data. The participants in this study are all self-identified Caucasian with three indicating 20+ years of work experience in conservation/natural resource management and two indicated 19-20 years of experience in conservation/natural resource management. The major themes discussed in this chapter are: conservation and community collaboration, roles of African women, and invested ignorance. Poetic transcription of two of the five interviews was used to demonstrate the significance of the complex ways that personal practices and Western science epistemes plays out in the intricate and subtle interplay between the researcher and the interviewees. Poetic transcription is a qualitative method that writes up an entire interview as a poem and gives space for the alliterations, narrative rhythms, and pauses of the interview; it provides a more holistic representation of the interviews than simply quoting snippets in prose (Richardson, 1994). The poems are used to continue a narrative thread throughout the thesis which allows the challenging of dualisms and explores the possibilities of interpretivism and re-presentation in social science research (Knowles & Cole, 2008).

First Theme: Community and Collaboration

Questions were asked in the interviews about the role that community and women play in the work that participants conduct in their conservation work in Africa. The participants discussed the ways in which they interact and work with communities in their research, and what they mean by the terms community and collaboration in practice.

All the interviews indicated that historical thoughts, practices about community members, and the role of science and scientists have moved towards a greater awareness about the impact researchers have on local communities. All participants also suggested the need to work more transparently and ethically with Indigenous peoples. One interviewee expressed a sentiment about the extractive nature of research practices prevalent during his training as a scientist both historically and in contemporary terms:

> "In those days, it was a long time ago, remember it was 30 years ago. We weren't giving back to the community. We went out there, did our PhDs, came home with our data and analyzed it. And I did go back as a postdoc and it was not to give them data but to work with them. And now we would never think of working with Indigenous people without, first of all, asking what's important to them, and secondly, giving them the data back. So it was a very old school kind of approach and we simply don't do that kind of science anymore."

The interviewee indicated that the concept of giving back to the community is a fairly new one and was not an available epistemology or practice when s/he was earning his/her PhD. The practice of coming back to America to analyze data with no input from or consideration for the community is also significant to note because Western researchers often make such agreements in order to secure the support of community members to help answer their research questions. What was not discussed in depth by interviewees is the mechanisms they used to go back to the same communities they previously worked in and continue to extract knowledge without giving any information to the communities they worked with in Africa. All the interviewees quickly rushed through discussions about historical practices in conservation/natural resource management with an understanding that they would now be considered unethical and were more apt to discuss present practices where generalizations about Western researchers abound regarding always including Indigenous people and their knowledge in their research. Despite current understandings

in conservation field research that Indigenous people should be consulted and allowed access to data and its analysis, women are also still marginalized from these practices.

One interviewee also had a critical analysis of the role that science previously played and the ways their previous training did not take into account communities:

> "I soon really felt terrible that scientists had this model of going in and taking information; building my own career, you know, becoming a doctor, but not really giving that benefit back to the communities I worked with, and the people I interviewed, and the trees I measured and things like that. So I didn't think it was ethical what science was doing."

This understanding about the ethics of scientific inquiry gestures at how the practices taught and implemented by science within conservation/natural resource management did not seek to help Indigenous communities in Africa. The interviewee connects the unethical practices by scientists working in the field with local communities with the professional journey in "building my own career," and "becoming a doctor," accomplishments supported by following in those very unethical practices. Noting the local people interviewed along with the trees measured in the context of the rest of our conversation during the interview gestured towards an acknowledgement that people and ecosystems are connected.

Part of my interview goals were to understand what motivated CSU faculty's desire to work in Africa since that work require a level of interaction, understanding, and negotiation of a host of factors that can hinder or complicate research. Each interviewee was asked why they decided to work within Africa for their studies/research. Two of the interviewees gave their own accounts of why they choose to work in Africa and with African communities. One interviewee stated:

> "I really felt like Americans and our society was set up so that we really were very distant from our environment and I wanted to work with people who really understood their environment. You know, were part of it, so I thought Africans would know that and they do, very much so. I wanted to learn from them."

The assumption that Americans are distant from their environments and thus can "learn from" communities and Africans, because they are considered to be closer to their environment and have knowledge that can be useful to Americans. The juxtaposition of Americans as outside of nature and the environment and Africans as inside of nature and having knowledge about the environment create narratives that can lead to an idealized view of Indigenous African communities and their knowledge. The interviewee continues:

> "I just think that they are just amazing people. They are hardworking; they have huge hearts. They will do anything. They have a tremendous sense of family. They also have some downsides, like a tremendous sense of corruption."

The adjectives used to describe African people as "amazing," "hardworking," and "tremendous sense of family" all speak to a very positive image in the mind of the interviewee about the people and cultural customs of Africa. The comment about the "huge hearts," and the willingness to "do anything" is also important because it aligns with established discourses about African people who were considered superfluously kind and accommodating of others, especially those of European descent. The interviewee references her own experiences of 20+ years working h African people in African communities and environments. To add balance that the interviewee sees both the good and the bad—the "downsides" of African people—they add the phrase about Africans that they have "a tremendous sense of corruption." The phrase also uses a biological metaphor, which alludes to our sense of smell" and the other senses that are biological adaptations and functions. This phrasing equates corruption as a biological component of what is means to be African. The acceptance of all the positive descriptions of African people in the beginning of the quote also requires that the listener to also accept the negative and colonially racists comments by the interviewee that Africans have a biological predisposition to corruption as well. These dualities of essentializing and making universal both the positive and negative attributes of African

societies' and African peoples only allows Africans to live within these extremes and cannot be considered to have the spectrum of human virtues and errors that are equated to European and Western societies'' and peoples'. These value statements are not based on extensive scholarly work on the issues facing African countries and communities, evidenced by the interviewee assertion about the desire to inform her/himself but lacking the capacity and opportunity to study and acquire more formal knowledge about African cultures and societies within which they work. Most striking has been the broad strokes and seemingly hyperbolic language used to discuss both the positive and negative aspects of African people that are not based on data or empirical work. Such comments were a common feature of all the interviews as interview discussed both what they loved about working in African along with its challenges. The level of comfort regarding their broad judgement statements about African cultures and people in either the positive or negative direction was striking and an aspect of all the interviews.

While the financial benefits and professional growth that becomes part of working in Africa and extracting data from African communities has been suggested subtlety in the previous quotes, one interviewee explicitly laid out the benefits of working in Africa as a Western scholar:

> "I just love development. I would be there now, except I have 10 kids. So we had to come here to be able to get the kids through school, otherwise I would still be in Africa. It's just so challenging doing development. So if you have a way to continue you do it. When I was there as an accelerated crop production officer, I had a bachelor's degree and like a
> $120,000 a year budget to do more or less what I wanted with it. It was a great situation, I would have kept going."

Many of the interviewees oscillated between exuberant and critical descriptions of the people, the environmental, and social climate of Africa. The "love of development" that was discussed in the quote is directly highlights the benefits and lifestyle of the Western researcher in Africa. With only a bachelor's degree, the interviewee was given a substantial budget to manage.

With only a bachelor's degree in the sciences from around the late 1970's and early 1980's, this interviewee was more than likely to have little to no training about ethical considerations in working with other cultures or issues concerning gender. Previous quotes support how past researchers did not even consider it necessary protocol to ask local communities for permission to do research their communities. The interviewee discussed both a "love for development" and "how challenging" it can be as well. One thing that was made clear throughout the interview was the joy and adventure of having a positon of leadership and authority while working in Africa that may not have been afforded a student with only a Bachelor's degree in the United States.

What also became apparent in the interviews was the shift in both the sciences and social sciences of viewing local and Indigenous communities as simply objects of study or research projects to viewing them as collaborators and co-creators of the research. The following quote embodies what three of the interviewees agreed upon regarding their approach to community involvement in their projects:

> "But I could also see that thing my father taught me, which was that if you have some information you could empower . . . empower local communities, so we started working together on problems they wanted to work on and then tackling and answering the questions together and collecting information together and trying to understand what it meant together and then talking about it together."

This quote shows the change in research approach from one that did not include the voices of the African community members to the inclusion of local communities in the research and a focus on "problems they wanted to work on." The wisdom of empowering the local community and the methodologies for doing so are framed as coming from their father, who is a White Westerner, and not from any of the African people that the interviewee interacted with while on the continent. One question that often arises when interviewees talk about community is who exactly is allowed a seat at the table of developing research questions, collection of data and

collaborative data analysis? A more expansive analysis of these questions will be addressed in the second theme, where we look at the role of African women in the work of the interviewees. The continued use of community in previous quotes gestures towards a truly inclusive demographic within the community that has the opportunity to work with CSU faculty, but I will show through later quotes that the works of Vandana Shiva (2005) and Wangari Maathai (2010) are not wrong in their assertions that women are often marginalized and rendered invisible within Western conservation research.

Throughout the interviews participants discussed their experiences with local community involvement in conservation efforts in Africa and I gained greater insight into the complex relationships among power dynamics, social hierarchies and governance surrounding community involvement in conservation efforts. The autonomy of NGOs, universities, and governments to operate together or independently of each other with a given local or Indigenous community elucidates the fragmented landscape of conservation work and the practical considerations for community involvement due to resource constraints. One participant said the following about the top-down nature of conservation work:

> "Sometimes it's [community development] kind of top down, in the sense that it comes from conservation groups who were first interested in-so community-based conservation emerged out of conservation and conservation was dominated by conservationists, who were natural [resource] scientists of one sort, who were interested in that biological diversity out there, wanting to save the elephants or the rhinos or something. And they realized that-and also the national park model was not working, because elephants can walk out of parks and people's maize fields and things like that. So there was this conflict intention, so community based conservation has been in place, you know, for 20 years or so and it's very different in different places. And sometimes it's bottom up, where it's actually community driven, usually it is not. Partly it's because it takes resources to make it happen and usually the communities themselves don't have that resource. So in comes NGOs. And so...NGOs have played a really important role I think in community-based conservation. They have almost taken the place of government, because governments are not working. And so, the governments can't protect resources, so you got these international NGOs like TNC [The Nature Conservancy], but many others as well, who are coming in and helping set up these community-based conservation projects. Now,

whether or not local people have a say, in that, also varies in place and is associated with what kind of NGO."

An abbreviated history of the evolution of community-based conservation was outlined by the interviewee and it was explained that conservation was historically dominated by conservationists, who were natural scientists. They cared about saving ecological systems and the animals in them, like elephants and rhinos, and the biological aspects of the problem. They were less interested in the social aspects of ecologies. It was acknowledged in the interview that previous models, which were sometimes top down, did not work and the national park model did not work as well. This is significant because the interviewee discussed the ways that the interactions between humans and animals continued even when physical boundaries and policies were in place to separate them. The newness of community-based approaches, since they have only been around for "20 years or so" means that they are also still establishing themselves and are "very different in different places." Conservationists assert the need for bottom-up approaches to conservation projects those approaches require financial backing that make them almost impossible to achieve. Lacking resources that would allow more community-driven projects means the void can be filled by international NGOs who can provide needed resources. They often take the place of governments since "governments are not working." Both the positive assertion that NGOs are good despite their top-down approaches that exclude local communities and the negative assertion that African governments are not operable aligns the interviewee with Eurocentric colonial epistemologies that position Africa and Africans as inherently inferior and the West as inherently superior. The quote makes apparent that although community-based conservation emerged out of the failure Western traditional conservation that focused on the biological aspects of conservation, conservation science today still struggles to finds ways to include the voices of African communities and implement projects that take into account the preferences of local communities.

Important questions about the complexity of the subject matter of community involvement include: What does it mean to collaborate with a community? How are notions of collaboration being transmitted to new researchers and academics? Who are the people most interested in collaborative practices in their research? This subject matter also led to some complex answers and synthesis of different ideas and interests within the interviewee answers. One interviewee discussed the necessity of paying more attention in science to the needs of the communities they are studying and attempting to collaborate with. All the women interviewees also commented on how they require their students to simply ask questions and get to know community members before engaging in research projects within African communities. One interviewee understood the top down approaches that happen within conservation sciences, but hopes that another approach will become the norm:

> "In the scientific world, especially when it's applied subjects like conservation and sustainability, I just think that we need to be much more respectful of communities and their ability to act and we need to support their actions, because that's really where the hope is. That's where the positive examples are at the local level and there are few international things that are cool and useful and they are important for sure, but there is just a lot of removal from where it's really happening . . . I really want science, a part of science, which is within this arena, to pay a ton more attention and be much more supportive and taking the mode of being in service to, rather than this top down expert approach.

The interviewee discussed the ways in which applied subjects, like conservation and sustainability, need to respect communities and their autonomy to decide how they live and how they navigate their own relationship with the environment. It was interesting to observe that almost all the interviewees mentioned that the questions I was posing had never been asked of them. They indicate that they are conversing with each other as colleagues about ways to change research practices. There seemed to be this internal dialogue among the interviewees regarding their personal ethics and opinions and the actual practices and policies in the field. One of these personal

accounts of community-based conservation is coupled with a discussion on the students who come out of the natural sciences:

> I felt the first time it happened, when I first went into a community and started asking what they wanted. I felt like a donkey in the desert coming to a waterhole. I was like 'oh my gosh' and people in the communities were going we have had these researchers here in the community for a long time and they always come and run away. They never tell us what they found and you are the very first one that has actually asked us. Thank you for that. And just that thank you, and that recognition for doing something that is basically moral and should be the way we operate. I would like to see that change. And the people that think they are core conservationists, tend to be more in the natural sciences, I think, and I think that is the way to do it. For example, when we run our fellows program and we have biologists come into our fellow's program and we tell them they have to take this approach; they have to talk to communities and they have to find out what the problems are and they have to address the problems of the communities. It's the biologists that make the biggest progress because they can't believe it. They are like, 'oh my god, of course I would talk to people, they would be the first people I talk to. I wouldn't just go out there and just look at the flowers. I would talk to people first. And of course I want to be useful.' So, it's really much more the paradigm that has forced them to think it should be this way and we really can break that box. We can. And you are one of those people."

The metaphor of the "donkey in the desert coming to a waterhole" describes the enthusiasm and positive affirmation for researchers about that engaging with a community and bringing back the analysis to them. The emphasis on the gratitude from the community was affirming for the interviewee and coincided with personal morals and ethics. This quote also demonstrates how students within the natural sciences can enthusiastically engage with local communities and hear their voices. Previous data in this chapter and along with my observations within academic and professional settings, suggest that the idea of the "biggest progress" being made by student researchers in the natural sciences may be an exaggeration.

The following quote from an interviewee helps elucidate the core of my findings that faculty members at CSU have an understanding about the need to change their epistemes to accommodate these new methodologies and practices that center the needs of local communities in their research. One of the reasons that researchers are willing to work with local and Indigenous

communities is that these communities have important Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. As an interviewee stated:

> "my perspective is that the local people know their local ecologies, especially the ones that have been there a long time and in some communities those are local people and here and in some other countries, there are no Native Americans anymore, although we could go find them."

The interviewee acknowledges that local people know their local ecologies. The use of the term "local" and the reference to "Native Americans" were somewhat confusing, because it demonstrates that local is often conflated "indigenous." Native American communities are Indigenous communities and it is often understood and perceived that Indigenous communities are those that have been the most untouched by modernity and connected to nature, thus vanishing (Deming & Savoy, 2011).

The relationship between Western science and Indigenous knowledges have been seen by the interviewees as inherently compatible, or at least as desirable. What remains unchallenged is the assumption that Indigenous communities will hand over their knowledges to Western researchers. The same interviewee from the previous two quotes, in relation to this question about the marriage of Western science and Indigenous knowledges responded:

> "I have been reading and haven't put it into practice really that you don't want to integrate or hybridize Indigenous and scientific knowledge, or rather there are streams that can flow next to each other and talk to each other, but that many Indigenous people want to keep their knowledge because some of it is sacred and they don't want to share it but also want to keep it whole in and of itself. So trying to integrate it is a violation of that knowledge and their rights to it. So I want to, in the future, be much more careful about thinking about that. I think I have been careful in the past, but I had always assumed that bringing them together was a good thing and maybe they are not in some cases.
>
> Thinking that through and asking people, maybe there is a part of society that says it's a good thing, but there may be a whole bunch of people who aren't talking to you because they don't want anything to do with you. So really trying to listen and the people who won't talk to you are really the most interesting. It's fascinating."

In this quote are the interviewee demonstrates an internal dialogue about moments when Indigenous people do not want to share Indigenous knowledges, it becomes much harder to accept those conclusions by researchers. Framing those people who do not want to share their knowledge as “the most interesting” suggests that the wishes of the researcher supersedes those of the Indigenous community regarding what is shared. The interviewee assume that bringing Western science and Indigenous knowledges together is a positive endeavor which indicates the kind of power Western researchers wield as they navigate African communities and systems where they have the most advantageous position regarding knowledge systems and production.

First Theme Discussion

The interviews show that there is a complex relationship between researchers and the communities in Africa within which they work. When analyzed in historical context, almost all the interviewees discussed the ways in which research methods and practices have changed since they first began their studies. Two of the interviewees acknowledge that progress is still necessary and many researchers understand that they cannot go into communities without permission and acceptance anymore. There are two worldviews being demonstrated through this discourse. From the perspective of interviewees, conservation sciences have seen a positive and substantial change. The quotes in the first theme pointed to a change in the practices of conservation researchers from not interacting or giving back to the African communities and ecosystems that were being researched regarding the data and knowledges being gathered to including the voices of African community members in all aspects of the research process. Interviewees as acknowledged that in spite of the shift from conservation to community-based conservation, research and NGO projects maintained their top down approaches resulting from a lack of resources on the part of African communities. The word *community* was used a lot in all the interviews, but what became apparent

is that community often did not mean nor include women. In the next theme, I will discuss how local and Indigenous women showed up in the interview data.

Second Theme: Role of Women

The role of women is the core theme of the interview data. This theme has been placed after the theme of community involvement to highlight the ways that the rhetoric around community and community involvement in conservation projects do not always translate into acknowledging the place and role of women within the community. This theme demonstrate the views the interviewees had about women and the role they play in research, in societies, and in cultures.

When asked about the role women and Indigenous knowledge play in conservation, there were variations in the answers:

> "It's imperative period. No it's absolutely imperative. I mean, usually it's these populations including women, who are living with issues of conservation whether it's elephants eating their maize or some other plant or animal interfering with their lives; they often bear the brunt of living with that, without necessarily getting any benefits from-so it often causes tensions associated with people in power who are trying to conserve those resources and local communities. So if in fact, you really want to conserve resources, whatever it is, you must include local populations, including women. Even though, in many parts of the world many women don't have the power [over] decision-making or use of those resources. But that's changing and under certain circumstances they do."

Here, the role of women in viewed as imperative and all interviewees made similar statements about the importance of women and their inclusion into research. The caveat given at the end of the quote that many women do not t have power over the decision making or "use of those resources" speak to the ways that the marginalization of African women within conservation research gets relegated to local communities and indigenous cultures outside the purview of Western researchers:

> "So talk about other, I was certainly an other. But they accepted me because I was there to learn. I said time and time again, 'you are amazing people, tell me, you know-not tell me but you know show me-it was very participatory, very-you know, I was collecting milk samples and things like that to look at nutrient content of milk and meat, well mostly blood, milk and blood. So there were, there were unique situations, because first of all they had to figure out that I was a woman, and then as time went on there was joking relationships with some of the herd owners. And then when I got married, of course then I became a real person, and I wasn't just a student. But being a student is very good, because you are there to learn regardless of where you are on the planet. But I did have run-ins, there was a woman. I have a picture on my wall of both she and I sitting together and she was my nemesis. I mean she gave me crap all the time, and she was very-she would just push me to the limit in the sense of what friendship means in this country and this culture is give and take. In the sense that it is a reciprocal relationship, where you expect-you know, you depend on your friends but they depend on you as well, and it's back and forth. In that culture, it was very ostensible. It was saying I won't be your friend until you show me what you're giving me, and fair enough, but it took me a while to figure it out. And she just gave me shit, you know time and time again. And teasing me and making fun of me-you know, 'I wasn't a real person,' and blah, blah, blah. I mean personally that was tough, but most of the time people were very kind, very kind, so you know there were personal challenges, like with her, and there were personal challenges just trying to get the work done in a logistical sort of way, but being a woman-um, again they had to figure it out first that I was, and then secondly they accepted me because I was there to learn. It was amazingly non-problematic for this society. You know, I have had men there tell me-they say, 'women are like donkeys here, they are beasts of burden,' and they cared how many children they produced and how much work they could do. So when my sister was there, she was very tall-big girl-and I remember this herd owner saying, 'I want to marry your sister,' and he already had four wives or so. And I go, 'you can't afford my sister, she's, you know-tell me how many camels? Tell me how many camels you're giving for her?' But it was because she was a big girl, you know robust. She was probably fecund, she could produce babies, and all this. And then of course when she heard that she said get me out of here."

Responding to the question about any experienced any hardships as a woman in conservation, the interviewee provides a story about her relationship with one woman that she had in the community that she worked in. From the researcher's perspective, the specific country she worked in has a culture that does not view a woman as "a real person" unless she is married. The interviewee reports she was better respected when she herself got married. Time and space often collided in the interviews as recollections came up in random configurations of memory and research practices that provided interesting perspectives on the questions asked. The story of one

indigenous woman's teasing and giving the interviewee "shit" transitioned into a recounting about how African men within the community she worked with viewed women as "beasts of burden" and were relegated to domestic work and producing children. These narratives of African women differ from the interviewees of herself as industrious and different, someone whose value came from doing research and collecting samples. What is striking about this story is the way that the interviewee assumed that her understanding about gender dynamics was accurate in ways that did not account for how the people themselves understood gender. The story about the sister who was seen as a "big girl" stands in contrast to the ambiguity surrounding the interviewee's own gender by community members. The interviewee had to contend with her own understanding of gender and gender roles in the African community and navigate how African viewed African women.

The relationship of Western women in the formation of their goals and ambitions in conservation research was not discussed by any of the interviewees of their own volition. The inclusion of any women, whether from the West or Africa, in the interview had to be prompted first by my questions. Note the way that the following interviewee does not mention her mother until we explicitly talk about women in our interview:

> "Well I have to start back with my mom. She is a scientist and very strong. And I didn't mention her in relation, when I was talking about my dad because I was talking about a specific thing that he did. But as my brother has taught me, moms are much more emotional and harder to talk about (laughs). So that's interesting. So yeah, I just have the example from a woman in my life, the most important woman in my life who was willing to speak her mind and gone into the scientific career and had children. And I thought wow, that was really interesting. And also was bedrock supportive, and my dad was too, of me. Throughout my career, because of the area that I am interested in, it tends to be a more feminine oriented interest, you know sort of working with communities, being interested in people having a voice, empowering voices. In the scheme of things, it fits better with that, I am now leading the center for collaborative conservation, we only have girls who work for us. We try to hire guys but when you are talking about collaboration girls are socialized from birth to do these. This is what we do. So throughout my career, colleagues and subject matter it has been more women that I have worked with professionally. But in the field, interestingly, it has been less so. For instance, I haven't taken up the approach that I am assuming you are and going into gender studies. I have been really interested

> in it but haven't so much. I was reflective this morning, I had a feeling you were going to ask me about this and I wondered how did it happen. A little bit is that when I first started I wasn't terribly knowledgeable about all the power dynamics in communities. So you walk into a community any place in Africa, and it's the guys that will walk up to you. The women are not allowed to talk to you in some places and in other places they are just too busy or whatever. So you have to make a very big extra effort to hear their voice and you have to do that for children and for old people and people that are sick and all those things. And then I started working in the world of wildlife and it was always the guys that herded cattle that knew the most about the landscape and that was always what I was interested in. So I ended up spending more time with herders and seeing how they perceive their landscaped. But I have had some students that are deeply interested in how do women look at the landscape different from men. So I have a real interest in that area, but I haven't really taken an honest stab at really focusing on that aspect and I think that is really important. Super important. Women are the conservationists of the world in fact, in some ways, in very important ways. It's interesting, I have always thought throughout my career, 'why aren't you in gender studies (annoying white woman voice), but no I haven't. Not as much and it's interesting. Certainly when I go into communities and get a chance to talk to women and I ask to talk to women, for sure. And sometimes I will meet women that are trying to herd cattle and getting told by the men that they can't and so I get some of the lunatic fringe women, that become part of what of what I'm doing. But I am not sitting with them talking about chickens and the environment around their place and wood cutting, and water, which tend to be closer to home and that they are socially, their role is to be in that sphere."

Even for the women who were interviewed, the connection between liberation and freedom of white women in academia here in the US and the fights for recognition and inclusion in their research communities don't seem to be obfuscated to the researchers. These disconnections between rhetoric and practice continues to play out in the interviews as the participants went through a process of extolling women, then marginalizing them and then once more recognizing that women play important roles in conservation and community work. The only mention of any woman a mentor was the above quote from the fourth interview and that was only after 30 minutes into the interview when I asked repeated questions about women. Most of the interviewees only mentioned male mentors as playing any significant role in their professional lives. The ways in which women, and particularly indigenous women are rendered invisible, objects of pity (the previous and following discussions of marginalized women), or a problem (the story of harassment

by an African woman in the second interview) in the lives of the researchers interviewed also play out in their research methodologies and practices. Invisible or marginalized women cannot take up roles as advisors and not be trusted to have accurate information.

One interviewee initially discussed being a fan of Wangari Maathai and considered her a wonderful human being, but in this exchange below a different relationship to Dr. Maathai is revealed:

> "O Have you read any of the books or followed the works of Wangari Maathai or Vandana Shiva?
>
> I [Interviewee]: Not Shiva, but I heard of Vandana. But actually, I think I had my class listen to one of her videos and I really like what she had to say. You're reminding me I should do that again. Wangari Maathai, yeah, how can you live in Kenya for over 20 years and not know about Wangari. I never met her, I spent some time with her daughter but I was just on the way to meeting her when she died actually. She was unbelievable, she was sort of 'What!' Incredible.
>
> O: She's awesome. An amazing human being.
> I: But she didn't know what she was doing in pastoral areas. She would come out and say that we should cover these in trees and she was totally wrong. Because the trees can't grow there, number one. And number two, there is a perfectly viable lifestyle that was there all the time, so she had her blinders too. And that's a little bit of why I ended up not meeting her. I was going tell her that, "Hey, what you're doing out there in that place is not going to work, number one. And number two, it's not appropriate for the culture. Why are you doing that? Because you're from the place with trees and you think trees are the answer. You're taking a big hammer and hitting the wrong nail with it. Anyway. Well that's my truth, that doesn't mean it's true."

In the exchange, the interviewee moves from saying that Wangari Maathai is "unbelievable" and "incredible" to asserting that Dr. Maathai "didn't know what she was doing in pastoral areas." The shift in tone and focus regarding missing a visit with Maathai because of her death to a more intentional unwillingness to meet her was instructive regarding how this interviewee felt about a noted indigenous woman scholar and activist in conservation work. Previous statements about the need to talk with community members and the importance of women shits dramatically to critiquing Dr. Maathai as someone who was "taking a big hammer and hitting

the wrong nail with it." Strikingly, this interviewee never critiqued any male colleagues or scholars in the same way she did Dr. Maathai. Neither did she ever talked about the sexism and negative experiences they had in the US or within academia, a surprising omission considering the male-dominated field of conservation science. . A few of the interviewees did, however, have stories about negative experiences or negative representations of African women in the communities' within which they worked.

The other consistent theme in the interviews was the ways in which African religions, cultures, and social norms were understood as the sole culprits in the marginalization of women. Religion was considered a significant factor in the integration of a Western researcher into a Muslim community. Yet the boundaries between what was and was not permissible was not always as solid as initially posited by the interviewee:

> "Well in Mali, many of the people we were working with were Muslim so we would not be working with women even today we would not be working with women. In other parts of the country, there were some parts that were Christian and there may have been one or two that had one of our tests on their farm. But it wasn't numerous. Probably the biggest contact was when we had a new variety of millet or sorghum we had to taste test it to see if it was acceptable on a local basis or not so then women would then get together, and organize something, then get together and do a trial more or less, for different varieties…. Probably the most amount of contact with women were female researchers that were on the research station that would interact with us trying to bring like a female perspective to what our research we were doing. They would travel with us, one is a sociologist and another one was a linguist, so they would travel with us to help us do this program better. So for example, we had one woman from the National Village Literacy, so she worked a lot with villages and villagers and helped develop a whole other approach to a village. So how you should go about going in to talk to village elders and trying to get consensus. A very valuable exercise and I don't know how Iwent 10 years without that. Because before that I never really thought about that it, or discovered it or valued it before the exercise."

The interviewee positions Mali as a Muslim country where they would not work with women thus would not be able to include their voices the research. Women could and did become taste testers for different seeds in the research and "the women would get together, and organize

something." What this language implies is that trials done by the women were not an important concern of the interviewee. The "female perspective" was brought by other women researchers and it was unclear if those women were African women or Western women. During follow-up questions, the interviewee indicated that the woman from the National Village Literacy project was an African woman who was important in developing relationships with village elders and "trying to get consensus." While the interviewee acknowledged the value of the work and the fact that ten years elapsed before any consideration about talking with villagers and village elders emerged, interviewees did not integrate these exercises in the research and instead was conducted by African women and student researchers engaging with villagers and village elders.

Interviewees' epistemologies caused them to hold one position. When questioned further about the role and future of women in conservation and land management work, their statements about African women become more nuanced and complex. Their agency could no longer be conceptualized as nonexistent:

> "I am trying to imagine what that might look like. I imagine a wife encouraging her husband to adopt that or going out into the fields and seeing it. Women don't stay inside the whole time, they go to work out in the fields. Often in Mali, it's not a strict Muslim country, so often in Mali the man may be Muslim, but not necessarily the women or children may not be. In that case, there might be more communication between husband and wife about new techniques."

Women's sphere of influence of women in the estimation of this interviewee is relegated to that of a wife, who may or may not be able to encourage her husband to adopt sustainable practices. There was also a shift from implying strict gender roles and norms of women in Mali to a more nuanced understanding that not all women may be Muslim in a relationship even if the husband is Muslim. The discussion about the role women may have in future research or the lives and roles of women who are not married, either because they were younger or older were not considered. Women researchers who had helped on previous exercises were also not considered

in this future. Neither were the voices of women were positioned as proxy to their husbands. Interviewees did not discuss allowing for including the voices of indigenous women nor the ethical implications of this glaring omission from their research.

Despite community involvement and the progress researchers have made in terms of including communities in all aspects of research projects, women are still considered marginal. They are too easily excluded from these "community-based" projects and research. Even for women researchers, African women do not seem to fall into the research interest and goals of those interviewed and the majority of the work coming out of the field of conservation. Consider the quote from an interviewee and the subsequent discussion of role that Indigenous women:

> "I mean one of the things that we have done that has been useful is interviewing men and women separately, and they often have very different views on what are the needs of conservation because women are often, at least in the populations that I work with, responsible for obtaining the resources or the foods to feed their children. So their needs, having to do with conservation, may be very different than the rest of their family. You know, the other gender. And so actually working with people separately is often useful, in terms of their needs and how to include them. They need to be included right from the beginning in terms of they are the solution not something that comes from top down, but ideas come from them initially about how to conserve. They know-they are living with these resources. They understand those resources, probably better than anybody else. Even though there might be scientific knowledge, so your question seems to be focused on those people. But the first step is how to include the conservationists in order to include those people, because they need to be there at the beginning, and if they're not chances of you being able to conserve a resource is probably limited, unless people are absolutely separate from those resources. Ways to include them, well, you get people at the table, as it were, or under a tree-that you are including those people in terms of solution making and solution building. But the other way, in terms of, especially women within their own societies they are considered second class citizens and because of the needs of women are a little different than men (pause) sometimes. So for instance, I work with livestock populations and for men, the big concern is to make sure their livestock populations still have the resources available so they can still produce. For women, it's really about putting food on the table, and so maybe the kinds of things that might involve them might be very different than involve men. It might be handicraft production or economic opportunities that are totally out of the main sphere of economic production of that society. But that allows them to maintain a flow of resources, economic resources, into the household. So you need to think of ways-first of all you need to think of the gender dynamics of that society and then ask them separately how they want to get involved in conservation or the benefits of conservation and it might be different. And it

> is often different. In East Africa, women have these micro businesses going on that men are not part of at all. That's an example of very different needs by different people in the same society."

The need to separate men and women, because they have different understandings and/or uses of resources. Among the people that the interviewee worked with, women's roles included ensuring children were fed which limited their influence or any concern for their perspectives. It was reiterated that people need to be included from the beginning of the work and that inclusion can happen at a table or under a tree. The interviewee discussed the need to talk to women and men separately, because the research interests of the interviewee were more concerned with the livestock and thus the exclusion of women is based on the research interests and not from any intentional desire to exclude. The inclusion of women, since they were interviewed in the research, but the separation of the genders in the interview process allows the actual data to be taken exclusively from the talks with men. The roles of the women are predetermined to be outside the scope of interests of the interviewee.

Second Theme Discussion

This theme shows that the interviewees understood any marginalization of women to be the result of religious restrictions and the cultural norms but never attributable on the conscious desire to exclude by Western researchers. Even though women were not part of the main research objectives of the Western researchers they discussed the ways that Indigenous women brought value to some of their work by communicating with villagers and village elders in the community. Another way women were discussed regarding their future in African countries through the boundaries of their social location as wives, and thus their agency and voice was bounded to convincing their husbands to adopt new ecologically sustainable techniques in farming and land management. It was not considered possible for those women to be considered leaders or have

influence outside of their role as wives. These restrictions were discussed by the interviewees as inherent to the roles and concerns of women, which were to put "food on the table" for their children. The discussions of Indigenous women were almost always positioned in roles or knowledges that were marginalized and small. Interviewees all gave various yet mutually aligned explanations that outlined how the work and knowledges that Indigenous women possess were not within the purview of their research questions. The ecological concerns and knowledges that were of most interest to the interviewees were held by Indigenous men who organically became the focus of their research. The interviewees did employ and work with Indigenous women and they often had the role of community liaisons or peripheral objectives, such as taste testers for different seed and grain variants. All the interviews discussed the ways in which Indigenous women should be considered in research stood in stark contrast to the actual research methods and practices that each of the interviewees employed.

Third Theme: Invested Ignorance

The third major theme that emerged from the interviews is an epistemology of ignorance, termed invested ignorance (Townley, 2011), which is "systematically produced and sustained to misrepresent reality in ways that not coincidentally sustain patterns of privilege" (Townley, 2011, p. x). The concept of invested ignorance in this context is also drawn on the work of Charles Mills on racial ignorance, where he argues that white people (or any other dominant racial group) have a vested interest in misrepresenting the world in ways that allow them to keep their dominant positions of power and privilege (Mills, 1997, 2007). Mills conceptualizes this misrepresentation of the world and the people in it, usually marginalized populations, as a kind of cognitive dysfunction that provides a mechanism of perpetual ignorance about social relations that would

challenge or elucidate the structures of domination white people (or other dominant groups) are engaged in, which makes it easier to continue and maintain that domination (Grasswick, 2016).

This theme addresses the ways in which the interviewees create a world that positions themselves, their fields, and their research as perpetual necessities and good while representing all negative aspects of culture, gender discrimination, and poor governance as rooted in Africa, it's people and structures.

While some interviewees were honest about the ways in which the sciences and academia as institutional structures have not acted in ethical or morally sound ways towards local and Indigenous communities, the fifth interviewee continued to show a vested interest in presenting the university and the research it produces as the standard for ethics and reliability. When asked what were the major tenets of his field/discipline, he immediately asked me to define those of ethnic studies. He informed me that this is not an easy question to ask someone. He finally answered as such:

> "I would say unbiased and reliable results that are applicable to farmers. That would be for what I do, a very important tenet. The university goal is to be unbiased, so you can buy Monsanto or another company and run your trials, but they are not unbiased. It's not until you put them through university trial or something else that they are unbiased. Being unbiased is one of the most important things and then being honest in your data."

The tenets of his field are "unbiased and reliable results" which refers to the research conducted by universities. Unlike companies, which have biased trials, the university trial is unbiased. This is the most important tenet in research for the interviewee and one only executed through the university system and the departments within it.

The interviewee also considered another tenet that he felt was important and unique about American universities:

> "Another that is often forgotten, in the United States, we share our information, our knowledge, our results willingly as early as we can. So if you're in my field and you

want to know what I'm doing, it's not hard for you to get to know what I'm doing. I'm at a conference here, seminar there, a whatever there. I am presenting my results. Other places say, you Americans are crazy. Knowledge is power, so why would you share that with someone else. If you are doing your research you should keep your doors closed, since you don't want anyone else to know. So that's one of the tenets of American science. We share our data and results, so by our sharing we all gain more than if we would have been close"

The sharing of data and information by researchers in the same field is lauded as a major tenet of American research institutions and science. Advantages are obtained by sharing the data and results within American science and it was something that the interviewee indicated was not shared or understood outside of the country. The adage that "knowledge is power," was used in the context that scientific data and research has inherent power that can be wielded and thus "Americans are crazy" to allow their data and research to be shared so freely.

Another key discovery from the interviews are the ways in which faculty members have to reconcile the epistemologies and practices they were trained in and the new that have emerged that are diametrically opposed to their initial training, research, academic mentors. In the following quote, the interviewee clearly posits an epistemological foundation of social Darwinism and eugenics in biological anthropology and provides an understanding of what the researcher must grapple with in terms of foundations of the discipline and emerging epistemologies that call for an understanding of culture and community:

"So, biological anthropology really comes out of the natural sciences and it's really looking at human variation, human-you can talk about adaptation being the core term in human biology-that all human biologists adhere to in the sense that homo sapiens-humans have adapted to all environments on this planet and a lot of biologists will look at how they are adapted biologically. You know, so if people who live in the Arctic and how they-people who live in the Arctic are better able to-it's this vasoconstriction and dilation of the flow of blood to deal with the cold, okay there's biology. Or high altitude and having a gene to deal with hypoxia or having large body size, or what do you call it...lung size...chest cavity to deal with it. So that's the biological part, but adaptation-once you get beyond fitness in terms of it meaning being able to move-basically procreate so the species is maintained is- we are way beyond that (laughs)- there are all these other aspects of adaptation that we do- so there's basically four ways that we adapt: one is

> through culture and behavior, that is the easiest, then we do it physiologically, either through short term adaptations like when you or I go to high altitude we adapt-it's called acclimatization, right. Then there is physiologically adaptation that occurs while you are growing in a place like high altitude, and then there is genetic adaptation and we haven't really genetically changed all that much in the last several thousand years. So, there is- you know, the easiest is behavior and all that, so you know, human biology is usually this physiological piece, short term and long term adaptation, and sometimes genetics. But in order to-so for a long time biological adaptation never paid attention to behavior or culture, and yet that is the easiest we do as a species. Anyways, adaptation is a key term underlying with Darwinian fitness and all that kind of thing and we bring that forth in terms of our understanding adaptation and how humans have adapted to their environments and that's what took me- I was interested to see how people were adapting in terms of their diet and nutrition to a very harsh, extreme seasonal environment. But the other part is looking at diversity, human diversity on the planet, and that gets into issues of ethnicity, and race and blood and all this kind of stuff. And then of course the other part of human biology is human evolution, and I was not trained in that area, but we do have people here that do that kind of stuff. So-and that's really looking at human adaptation and change to environments as we as a species came out of the trees and walked on the ground and that kind of stuff. Yeah, that's probably the basis on which people-it's not culture. Culture came-I mean for me culture, of course, is now paramount to everything I do but that's not the way that I was trained. "

The training of the interviewee was not in culture, which was true of all the interviewees. Yet the interviewee makes definitive statements about the cultures of Indigenous communities and Indigenous women with little empirical authority. The interviewee discussed physiological adaptations of human beings to different climates and a history lineage of biological anthropology. Though the interviewee did state that there has been little genetic adaptation in the human species, the concepts of Darwinian fitness and human adaptation still provide the foundational tenets for researchers trained in biological anthropology.

I asked the women I interviewed if they had experienced any barriers, discrimination, or prejudice by being women in a predominantly and historically male disciple and institution. This was one of the responses:

> "(sighs) Yes and no. I tend to work with people that I tend to trust and who appreciate interdisciplinary work, and a lot of the people who were ecologists were not trained to work with social scientists, whether you are a woman or not, so in that realm there is still this bias of not taking social science seriously within the, in fields of natural

> sciences, and I don't know if I were not a woman would they take it any more seriously. So, I don't know since I'm not-because I am a woman so I don't know that. So I don't know if being a woman on top of being a social scientists is sort of a double whammy for doing social science within an interdisciplinary framework, but with age comes a certain amount of wisdom, so I have actually decided I'm going to work with people who understand the world in a way that I do and I'm not going-to heck with those other folks, because I'm not out to change anybody's mind at this point and I can do amazing work with all kinds of people who understand the value of interdisciplinary work, but whether-either I'm just plain naive and have just ignored the woman piece, and I am sure there have been biases there towards me as a woman but I've just tended to ignore it and get one with my work. And so, I have never felt like I needed to call to question about somebody's motives about having me as part of a team or anything like that because I was a woman. I've been pretty- I've been in situations, I've been in meetings where it's clear that not only natural science [probably meant social science] but women aren't taken as seriously, but if I'm in-if I'm leading something, those people are not at the table. Right? So, it's worked out pretty well."

The interviewee has gained a position with her field and institution that she can chose who to work with and find individuals who align with her own appreciation of "interdisciplinary work." Yet even in the circles of interdisciplinary researchers there are many ecologists that were not trained in social sciences and thus have various biases against those fields of study. This led the interviewee to state that because she struggled with being a social scientist, she could not determine if any of those obstacles were related to the fact that she was a woman. This was echoed in the other interviews with women in this study. Most interviewees could see and discuss the marginalization and challenges faced by women in Africa, even without training in culture. However, they were much more tentative about examining their own roles as women within science and research. The interviewee above touched on this when she stated that there have been meetings with natural and social scientists and women have not been "taken as seriously.," She spoke to an active strategy regarding leadership positions where her voice could be heard and that would exclude those people who did not respect women. She did not seek to change the minds of others, and instead of engaging with those individuals who did not value women with Western institutions she wanted to create spaces for herself and others to work together and not be

marginalized or disrespected. None of the women who talked about the ways in which they navigate their gender identification in Western institutions afforded the same analysis or openness to Indigenous women in Africa. One interviewee stated that women who wanted to be cattle herders, which is a male occupation, were considered crazy and on the fringes of society. She was clear that societal fringes were not a place she wanted to be in because it would impede her research with male cattle herders and their relationships to the environment.

Third Theme Discussion

This theme builds on the previous two themes in elucidating even more how epistemologies of dominance and violence are foundational to Western science, research, and conservation. The role of Indigenous women in the previous themes all centered on the interviewee's understanding that their marginalization occurred because of their own cultures and religions and not by the Western researchers themselves. In this theme, the interviewees that were women discussed the ways in which they navigate their own institutions and gender identity. None of the interviewees discussed any explicit issues with being a woman in American society or academia. This points to an invested ignorance that allows them to continue to hold positions of authority within Western institutions of research, since they lead teams of researchers abroad for field work, have prominent positons in CSU academic departments and other national and international organizations. The theme of invested ignorance will be teased out more in the discussion chapter using other voices from women who discuss the discrimination and marginalization prevalent in Western academic institutions. These voices include Indigenous women who show that they are more than just mothers and care just as much about macro issues such as climate change and sustainable use of natural resources.

Poetic Transcription

Part of the journey of the thesis and the coding of the interviews included my realization about how many of the themes and epistemologies of the interviewee were imbued in the entire interview and not in separate snippets. What also became apparent was that who I was as a researcher—my corporeality—also played a factor in how the interviews progressed and those moments, silences, and interactions are harder to give weight to if the interview is not considered as a whole. In listening to the ebb and flow of the interviews, my own understanding and analysis of what was said, meant, and felt could be expressed through a more creative approach. In writing them as poetry and using the method of poetic transcription and analysis I provide another way to interpret and analyze qualitative data for the two interviews (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1994, 2000). I also seek to be transparent, honest, and reflexive that I do this research with a situated objectivity and I am affected and affect the entire process with my own assumptions, wants, needs, misgivings and feelings. I do not claim to be dispassionate or uninvested in this research or the interviews. In asking questions of researchers with over nineteen years of experience in the field, I hoped to glean information and insights about how to better advocate for conservation work that is decolonial. I also hold out some hope that I may find future mentors and collaborators. The level of pain, disbelief, and grief I have experienced throughout this process—those outlaw emotions that we never speak of (Jaggar, 2015)—comes not from a place of hate or unjustified anger, but from love; love for this planet, the human and non-human life forms that occupy all the nooks and crannies of this earth and all those erased and silenced in the hells created by climate change. The previous four themes outlined align with much of what was said in the two interviews. These poetic transcriptions can be read as a holistic view of the ways in which the above themes overlap, complement, and contradict themselves throughout the interviews conducted. There will be a

discussion that seeks to interpret them through a hermeneutical moment of interpretative freedom, which acknowledge that there is no singular interpreter or voice that holds dominance in the understanding of the poems (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1994, 2000). They were co-created with the interviewees and they will be co-interpreted with the readers of this thesis as well.

Poetic Transcription Interview 1

The Email:

I have begun my journey; I am scared and anxious I did not imagine doing this work in this way
Will I discover anything I don't already know? Will I be given hope for researchers and my topic? IRB has already started a bitter taste in my mouth
But openness and hope for white things and whiteness has long been my training first response and it begins

My title with all its length and jargon, so indicative of my own mind and speech shows itself to be a banner I am not sure I want or can wave in this land

"I'd be willing to sit with you, but worry that I would have nothing to say. My experiences with nature and people in Africa have little to do with impacts of women. I work with women as professionals and know that women are part of decision making directly and as part of family/manager/leader outcomes, but have never segmented gender interests as part of my work."

How do I respond, how should this voice be counted? The work must get done, but will this be the response to my thesis in general?

I stay professional and objective: I am called to allow all voices to be heard

"Though my overall thesis looks to include women, I understand that many in the field do not
segment gender interests and I am looking to understand the ways in which people currently do their research and then developing recommendations and strategies for the inclusion of women, if desired."

"Let's talk then."

The Interview

Apps downloaded, questions reviewed and practiced

The room is small and the world continues outside, but for a moment a bubble is created between another and I

Our own world in which to learn about the other

Again, hesitation that the word women in my title says so much about me, what I think, what I want

This preamble scares me, I have heard it often before an attack or dismissal or truth that is not easy to exhume or examine

I realize how much I ramble, how much I explain myself, word the question in different ways so I can be understood

But the more I am open, the more I show of a heart not predisposed towards hate or violence the mood shifts

Mentors are discussed, an African American man is said to be influential and I wonder was this said for my own benefit

My language cannot completely mask my corporeality, but I am left to wonder the acrobatics

of speaking to both skin and mind, episteme and body, simultaneously and yet wholly

dichotomous This work spanning years, countries, and lives is vast

I am envious of the access afforded to the few privileged

This is what academia was though men doing masculine

things One country takes precedence in the conversation

South Africa.

“I studied in South Africa during Apartheid there were some benefits to the system. They needed to control unwanted immigration. Yes, it restricted the movements of Blacks in the country as well, but it helped protect the country too.”

“Right?”

what is right or wrong, when did I enter into this space, how do I respond to this, I am bound as a researcher, a student, an interviewer, a human being to listen and it is nothing new to me . . .

But that word “right” -that conscious or unconscious request for my approval, my acquiescence, my complicity to this ideological domination

Is this what I signed up for, went back to school for; and I die

Die to certain hopes and aspirations that yes answers and allies are behind the increasingly high entry fee to epistemes, theory and praxis

-But I must continue

"What role do women pay in the future of conservation? What is the role of Indigenous knowledge in these fields?”

There are differences in the ways that men and women approach work; many of the African societies are dominated by men so they have been and are the key players in research engagement

What truth is created or revealed here, what mirror and reflection is being displayed…. My own and my African ancestors from Western canon or the heart of white society itself

Women researchers play a significant role in conservation work and I have worked with women researchers that have looked at aspects of gender.

To cleave off so many voices, lives and knowledges…. I wonder what thick walls we must erect to be so blind that we are not alone...separate...segmented...who can live, see, research through these broken and opaque lenses.

We wind to an end and I am suggested to contact and get some authors and books from the interviewee...so much has been written and already said. Learn and grown from the canon, be feed by epistemes that erase, assimilate and shit out blackness, women, me and you and know you have accomplished something...then you will truly be a researcher

This is the first, and I ask myself what have I agreed to, what have I done...what am I doing...what will I do with this

laid before me, bare and jagged are the epistemes I heard and knew from Namibian racists, South African PTSD victims of Black leadership, displaced Zimbabwean white farmers...they are human-yes

Pitiable and flawed-yes

but blind to so much and pushing against the rest of us...knowing and unknowingly asking us to be trampled and die in their footprints

Poetic Transcription Interview 2

<u>Hodi (Hello? /Anyone there?)</u>

I have memories of Swahili food and humid sweaty days in Mombasa

Messages from Kenya let me know that though I cannot be there now to call "Hodi" to

the

mothers, female elders, young women I will and know that I will talk to skin kissed by African

sun rays

Haraka Haraka haina

baraka (Rushing brings no

blessings)

<u>Karibu (Enter)</u>

I arrive a little later than I would like, but am prepared with questions and recorder in hand

Greetings warmed in the tangible exuberance of life; I remember those same gifts I doled out

when I returned from the continent

I am excited for what this may bring!

No guard, no barriers or pretense I am interviewed about my own work

Notes taken as I speak, though I am here also to take a story why should I feel any unease at

having my own thoughts and ideologies recorded

Henrietta Lacks I have not forgotten you

Who am I and what terms have I brought for consumption

Assimilation

I feel connected though

The energy, the tone, the relationship to nature, space and people at an early

age I am holding out hope for my other questions

Bridges are being built and I am anxious to meet in the middle; be able to touch the other side

Like hauntings, women adorned in the rich soils of various lands stand as shadows and

sentinels We call their fingers, their toes, their lips

But their names are hewn from body, from spirit

We stand at the feet of Darwin's tree, evolution not allowing me and mine to reach the heights

of Eve's fruit

So, we bend down to take that which is discarded,

overlooked Some too bitter, others too sweet

Yams and greens are our yin and yang

The old ask the young for their hands, "Do this work"

"But how can we manage, we don't know the way there and home

again" Ant queens sending out surveyors and collectors

Birthing Epistemes molded in white

clay Trophies I see, in deep caverns

deep Inkwells for colonial scripts

There is no life or breath outside the catacombs of whiteness

The words are so sweet, so longing of truth that together we fertilize seed

We bear the same tattoos of peace, branded in experience with baobab

irons Siku ya wafu-American gods have cursed me with unrequited

dreams

I must live for them to survive, must work for them to

play And they must play

So, we all

continue Go na

le diposto?

Pula

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the three major themes that came out of the interview data: community and collaboration, the role of women, and invested ignorance. I also presented poetic transcriptions of two interviews. In the final chapter of the paper, I will do an analysis of the themes and how the findings of the study help provide some insights and answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter I analyze the themes presented in Chapter 4 which include community and collaboration, the role of women, and invested ignorance. Regarding the use of poetic transcription, I lay out its usefulness for qualitative methods and this study. The significance of the findings to the research questions will also be discussed. Finally, I provide reflections on the work and the directions of conservation sciences practices with the Global North and Global South.

Findings & Conclusions

Based upon the findings of the study, a few conclusions have emerged as important. . I discuss each of the three themes presented in the previous chapter and how they relate to the purpose of this study. It is not only important to provide an epistemological critique of community-based conservation for Western researchers, especially those who desire to improve the moral and ethical practices of the field. The communities in Africa and across the globe who may also benefit greatly since they may not be familiar with the underlying epistemes informing the research questions, praxis, and community interactions of Western researchers. These three themes provide context for how the findings speak to an epistemological critique and understanding of community-based conservation.

Community and Collaboration

The first theme in the study findings was community and collaboration. The definition of community-based conservation "includes natural resources or biodiversity protection by, for, and with the local community," (Otto et al., 2013, p. 7). This definition asserts a potentially top-down approach to community-based conservation that makes decisions about an entire community or population based on the sole authority of one person, the Western researcher. However, the data

suggests that how the local community become incorporated into researcher's work varies. The current practices in community-based conservation (also known as community-based natural resource management) were developed out of local community protests through the increasing realization of Western conservationists that ecological conservation and management could not happen outside the purview of cultural and community concerns of those populations living within or near vulnerable ecosystems (Guha, 1989; Peters, 1991; Büsche et al., 2012). The interviewees for this research discussed how in spite of the domestic and global critiques of conservation, their earlier graduate work did not consider their impact on local communities and focused only on ecological factors and data. This view is clearly expressed through how researchers discuss not ". . . giving back to the community." Interviewees expressed consensus suggesting that they all believed communities have rights that ought to be included in the research process in conservation sciences. Key questions they agreed upon included the implementation of such practices and the specific epistemic tenets guiding such researchers regarding how to approach and interact with local communities are the key questions. One interviewer explicit stated that "in the scientific world, especially when it's applied subjects like conservation and sustainability, I just think that we need to be much more respectful of communities and their ability to act and we need to support their actions." Such conclusions are acceptable depending on the definition of community that researchers use for the implementation of their work. What became apparent in discussions about community was the very general and universal understandings about community used defined from a Western perspective that did not delve into the diverse ways local communities defined themselves; nor did interviewees consider the diverse identities of individuals that make up a community. Thus, assumptions about the inclusiveness of the term community are assumed by the interviewees instead of empirically validated. Interviewees did not include women in their

conceptualization of community, nor were terms like African or Black mentioned. Interviewees also never discussed nor exhibited deliberate practices that sought to include diverse voices within community-based conservation. This explicit silence regarding women's participation in community-based conservation research speaks to the epistemological violence perpetuated by Western sciences that marginalize and/or erase African and Indigenous women from Western scientific discourse and praxis (Shiva, 2005; Jaggar, 2015).

Another component of community-based conservation research and collaboration regards who the type of researcher that comes to work with a community. What understandings of community, Indigenous cultures, and women's issues do Western researchers bring with them into their community-based work? What became apparent from the interviewees is that the applied sciences, like conservation and sustainability, did not provide researchers with any training on how to work with communities and cultures outside their own. Women researchers in the Global South (Shiva, 2005) have been explicit in their long-standing critiques of Western and American environmentalism and conservation, and have discussed that these are inadequate and harmful to communities and marginalized populations in the Global South, such as the role Monsanto has played in overwhelming the seed market with patents and lawsuits, which pushed out Indigenous farmers and Indigenous seeds.

One interviewee took a lesson from their father's own environmental conservation work in the U.S., saying that "if you have some information you could empower" others. While at face value this position seemed laudable, they used this idea to justify their presence and the introduction of Western scientific understanding of nature to communities in Africa. Western science does not particularly empower women and Indigenous communities, and researchers who have sought to empower African communities often do more harm than they expect (Gupa, 1989;

Shiva, 2005; Cavanaugh & Himmelfarb, 2015). Thus, understanding the impact of your epistemic foundation becomes an important way to minimize harm and bias against local communities in field work.

Another interviewee acknowledged a feeling that "Americans and our society was setup so that we really [are] very distant from our environment and I wanted to work with people who really understood their environment." This idea about working with people who "really understand their environment" is pervasive in the conservation sciences. It speaks to a prevalent problem in Western sciences where Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies about nature and ecologies are appropriated without much accountability regarding the ethics of such appropriations. Even as Western researchers are willing to admit that they are not as connected to the environment as local and Indigenous communities, they still insist on making recommendations or creating restrictive environmental policies and rules about how indigenous people should interact with their very own ecologies. The findings in this study point to an epistemological understanding by Western researchers as inherently knowledgeable about these local ecologies in spite of their own sense of distance from the environment. They also assume t that local and Indigenous communities should listen to them despite their lack of connection to these local communities and their ecologies. Such assumptions also demonstrate the way researchers uncritically see their own personal goals, objectives, and desires in their research as justified and acceptable through their framing in Western scientific and community-based conservation field work. These personal goals and desires were expressed by one of the interviewees who stated he had "a bachelor's degree and like a $120, 000 a year budget to more or less do what I wanted with it. It was a great situation, [and] I would have kept going." The interviewee did not express any moral or ethical conflict with his personal desires to do what he wanted within local communities, nor with the fact that as someone

with only a bachelor's degree he was given a huge responsibility that affected the lives of many regarding the research that he conducted in Africa. While the interviewees were keen on making observations about the corruption of governments or local officials of African countries, or about the way indigenous women experienced religious or cultural marginalization, they were less likely to problematize their own privilege, power, and epistemic violence against indigenous women and people. Interviewees were clear about the benefits to working in Africa where they acquired certain authority and power that they wielded both subtly and explicitly in different contexts and in ways that helped advance their own careers. They were less clear about how to examine their positions of power over indigenous communities and how these might influence their practices in field work and with local communities.

The Role of Women in Community-based Conservation Research.

These forms of power within the rhetoric of community-based conservation in African communities is most clearly evident in the next theme the role of women. Epistemological violence was prevalent throughout the interviews that were conducted and aligned with much of the literature review that spoke to the objectification, marginalization, and erasure of women within Western epistemes.

One interviewee alluded to the lack of culpability on the part of researchers in the marginalizing and erasing indigenous women in Western conservation practices by stating:

> "the women are not allowed to talk to you in some places and in other places they are just too busy or whatever . . . And then I started working in the world of wildlife and it was always the guys that herded cattle that knew the most about the landscape."

The interviewee is clear that researchers are at fault when women were not included because they may refuse to work with researchers or they just did not have a place in the researcher's ecological interests and questions. The interactions between epistemology and

practice are displayed as the same interviewee continued to talk about their work and interactions in the community, recounted the following story:

> " . . . and sometimes I will meet women that are trying to herd cattle and getting told by the men that they can't and so I get some of the lunatic fringe women, that become part of what of what I'm doing. But I am not sitting with them talking about chickens and the environment around their place and wood cutting, and water, which tend to be closer to home and that they are socially, their role is to be in that sphere."

Although the story clearly demonstrates how women in the community were involved in cattle herding, the researcher justified the marginalization of their voices and exclusion of their practices in their own research by placing the blame on African men, who characterized such as women aberrant. The interviewee then used Western epistemes of gender to discuss the way Indigenous women are boxed into the domestic sphere right after discussing an example of women who do not fit into those stereotypes. African women are rendered incomprehensible and invalid if they do not fit within Western epistemologies, which view African women as "less than" and insignificant (Gupa, 1989). This investment in fictional narratives about the roles of African women and their exclusion from community-based conservation field work is evident in the research done by the interviewees, as women have no voice or presence in their work. All moral or ethical blame for the marginalization of African women was placed on the women themselves, religion (often Islam), African cultures, and African men. Such an epistemological stance is antagonistic to the work of women from the Global South, such as Oyewumi (1997) who demonstrated that gender formations where African women were subordinated emerged from Western colonial impositions of gender norms onto West African gender realities. Conservation science researchers who impose their own gender epistemologies about the inferiority and inherent subordination of African women align themselves with colonial epistemologies and practices that continue to marginalize these women. Shiva (2005) has made significant contributions to this

discourse on colonial impositions by Western researchers in her examination of the invisibility of women within Western research epistemes and practice. Her work elucidates the ways in which their labor and the significant and mutual role women in the Global South play in the protection, conservation, and maintenance of the environment is obscured. If conservation sciences present themselves as working towards the reduction of ecological degradation and the sustainable utilization of natural resources in Africa, their continued marginalization and erasure of African women who make up half of the population renders their research practices questionable along ethical line and potentially unjustifiable.

Invested Ignorance

One of the key conclusions that came from the findings is that the exclusion of African women was not passive or accidental but intentional and deliberate by the interviewees. This exclusion becomes a form of epistemic violence termed invested ignorance. Invested ignorance speaks to the systematic reproduction of misrepresentations of reality that allow individuals with privilege and power to keep those positions without decentering their power and privilege (Townley, 2011; Mills, 2007). Invested ignorance is a form of epistemic violence, which is defined in this study as the practices of dominate groups "to accord epistemic authority to themselves and withhold it from subordinates by constructing stigmatizing stereotypes or subordinates" (Anderson, 2017). The findings show that the researchers within conservation sciences accorded to themselves epistemic authority on conservation practice in Africa and definitions of community within community-based conservation that exclude women. External markers of epistemic violence allow dominant groups to promote characteristics they assume they exhibit that are evident among subordinated groups, such as African women (Addelson 1983; Shapin, 1994). All the interviewees demonstrated awareness of the global discourses where women are no longer

understood as second class citizens but as important partners in their work and in scholarly fields that have historically been the domain of heteronormative, white men. However, those understandings are often only applied to Western women and not to women in the Global South. The interview data found that Western science and research promoted a valued position of Western women vis a vis African communities, African women, and indigenous knowledge.

One of the epistemological tenets of conservation sciences discussed by an interviewee was unbiased, reliable, and shared research data. The claim that conservation sciences are unbiased stood in contrast to comments made by all of the interviewees that they do not include women in any meaningful way in their community-based research. This view by Western researchers exemplifies invested ignorance because while the interviewees were willing to discuss historically unethical and immoral actions by Western conservation science researchers, they remained invested in viewing Western sciences and researcher practices as inherently necessary in the Global South. The epistemological belief that the West has a right or responsibility to work and "save" African ecosystems and peoples was not developed merely through scientific inquiry or even from the voices of African people themselves. Those epistemes were birthed from the same womb that produced colonial and imperial governance of African countries and communities. Thus these idealized epistemic beliefs held by Western researchers about their own ways of knowing and seeing others leads to a blindness about their overall impact that perpetuates invested ignorance.

One interview discussed the epistemological tenets of social Darwinism and Darwinian fitness as foundational for current Biological Anthropologists. Social Darwinism has been used to justify the inherent subhuman mental and physical traits of non-Western and nonwhite people (Halliday, 1971; Degler, 1991; Paul 2003). An important question raised here by this epistemic

assumption is: what does Darwinian fitness allow us to know and imagine about African communities and African women within conservation sciences? Social Darwinism's epistemological tenets reify European ancestry as the epitome of human evolution and ascribes subservience and weakness to women and those populations with no European ancestry as compared to their European and male counterparts. The implications for local African communities, Africans, and African communities are extant. One of the prevailing question presented in this research asks s why are African women so marginalized or rendered invisible in Western conservation sciences and research. This question was especially relevant to me as a researcher whose over four years in Africa were always buttressed by the significant contributions of African women to whatever success my work had.

The findings of the thesis not only elucidate the ways in which the interviewees operate with an invested ignorance when it comes to the inclusion of African women in their community-based conservation science research and projects in Africa. These findings also demonstrate how Western conservation researchers operate from a political unconscious that allows them to continue epistemological and methodological legacies of local and global inequalities for women while proclaiming their research is unbiased and their methods respectful of local communities and Indigenous knowledges (Harding, 2006). This complex coupling of rhetoric that espouses the positive role Western science and researchers have in African communities and ecosystems with practices that leave African communities and ecologies disadvantaged, plundered and dedeveloped went unacknowledged by the interviewees (Harding, 2006; Shiva, 2016). The belief that "real science" cannot have a political unconscious because Western science is devoid of political, social, or cultural features, thus can be universal and reliable within both a local and global context, are epistemic tenets that allows such research practices to continue. These beliefs also do not critically

question way why African women are not present in their research Responses to the interview questions very clearly found the rationale for the exclusion of African women as part of religious, social, political, and gendered biases of the Western researchers. Accordingly, Western science does not provide a directive that women be included in research and explicitly creates epistemological violence, invested ignorance, and practices, exclusion of women in research, and is self-contained in ways that prevents any form of self-reflexivity (Anderson, 2017). Harding (1998) called for a form of self-reflexivity among Western scientists, termed robust reflexivity, that requires Western researchers to understand that they exist within a local knowledge system, "developed from a determinate location in contemporary social relations and available discursive resources," (p 20). As such, Western science and researchers must have the same critical standards of analysis and scrutiny that they ascribe to Indigenous knowledges and other local knowledges, such as those of women. Western science must also "understand itself as shaped by social, historical conditions, just as it does the epistemologies and sciences it examines. And yet it must nevertheless be able to provide plausible evidence for its claims," (Harding 1998; p 21). The answers to why women were not included in the interviewees' research and projects were all based on conjecture and social, historical, racial, ethnic and gendered biases and not on the same empirical data they use to evaluate Indigenous epistemologies and practices. In order for the interviewees and other researchers within conservation sciences to truly be inclusive, respectful, and truthful about working with local and Indigenous knowledges and communities in Africa, they must adopt an epistemological and methodological framework that incorporates robust reflexivity towards their own research questions and practices.

The demographic survey conducted for this study showed that all interviewees had mothers with equal or higher levels of educational attainment than their fathers. Yet in discussing mentors

or the influence of women have in their lives, none mentioned any women, Western nor African. One interviewee mentioned their mother after I began a line of questioning that asked them to discuss how women have played a role in their research. The invested ignorance of the interviewees not only marginalized African women and their role within communities and natural resource management. They also marginalized the Western women in their own lives. This form of epistemic violence is demonstrated not as only in the research and views about African communities of the interviewees, but in other aspects of their personal and professional lives that render Western and African women marginal and silent.

Poetic Transcriptions

In analyzing the data for this research with the goal of developing themes, it became apparent that for me as a writer there was some dissonance between understanding the epistemological foundations of the interviewees and the qualitative method of breaking interviews up into codes and quotes. Concern with perpetuating epistemological violence and against the interviewees, I sought to incorporate a qualitative method called poetic transcription that allowed for the respectful inclusion of the entire interview (Glesne, 1997; Richardson, 1994, 2000). Poetry is a medium that has been used by feminist and Indigenous communities as a viable, important, and necessary mechanism of communication, analysis and knowledge transmission (Lorde, 1984; Deming & Savoy, 2011). In using these poetic transcriptions, my aim was to illuminate how even beginning with my initial inquiry emails I sent to potential participants I was locked into a system that was adversarial to my thesis title and subject matter.

Often, in soliciting interview participants I had to assure researchers that "they did have something to say" on the topic of women in conservation sciences. The interviewees questioned me about my own position regarding the questions I posed to them, which is not often a component

of Western research. I understood from a feminist and Indigenous perspective that in research I am first and foremost a human being and that I must position myself as such with those I interview. I shared my own stories about my journey regarding research on women and in conservation. As I revealed more about myself and my own humanity, interviewees became more comfortable with me, and opened up more with their answers. Poetic transcriptions allowed me to capture how interviews are not just about what the interviewees say but was also the verbal and non-verbal relationship and space the interviewer and interviewees create together. The first poetic transcription showed how I was constantly asked to affirm the epistemological tenets and practices of the interviewees:

> "I studied in South Africa during Apartheid there were some benefits to the system. They needed to control unwanted immigration. Yes, it restricted the movements of Blacks in the country as well, but it helped protect the country too."
> "Right?"
> what is right or wrong, when did I enter into this space, how do I respond to this, I am bound as a researcher, a student, an interviewer, a human being to listen and it is nothing new to me . . .
> but that word "right" -that conscious or unconscious request for my approval, my acquiescence, my complicity to this ideological domination

Aside from capturing their words and ideas through the interviews, I also had to analyze how I was positioned along with how I positioning myself during the interview. In what community was I being considered an insider and outsider, and what within the tenets of conservation sciences allow for such understandings of Apartheid and other practices that subjugated African communities?

The second poetic transcription also helped to elucidate that the interviewees are just as complex and non-linear as the stories and interactions they have had with African women during their research. The quotes from the various themes give specific examples of key epistemes and practices by the interviewees that speak to the research questions asked in this thesis. The poetic

transcriptions seek to show that the words and thinking of interviewees are more than just snippets; it is an attempt to honor their complex humanity as well. During the interviews, it became apparent that most of them had not been asked questions that allow them to articulate their field's epistemologies or why they do not include women in their own research. Thus, they had to navigate developing their own thoughts and opinions about the epistemological tenets of their fields and cultures. As such, the second poetic transcription helped show that researchers did grapple with having experiences with African communities and African women that transgressed the epistemological tenets of their fields and cultures, and navigated in and out of the two throughout the interviews. Through discussions of research practices, it became clear that invested ignorance is a prominent form of epistemic violence perpetuated by all of the interviewees, because regardless of their personal interactions with African women, those same women were rendered invisible or silenced in their research and field work.

Answering the Research Questions

From the themes discussed in Chapter Four on findings, I can answer the research questions that I proposed in the beginning of this thesis. Those questions were:

RQ1: What are the epistemological foundations of Western Conservation research and practice?

RQ2: How do those epistemologies inform Western community-based conservation projects and practices in Africa?

RQ3: How are Indigenous women and their epistemologies viewed by Western community-based conservation projects and practices? Is there a need to decolonize Western community-based conservation projects and practices?

For the first research question, a critical review of scholarly literature alongside interviewee responses suggest that the epistemological foundations of Western community-based conservation

research practices are positivism, Western hegemonic masculinity, colonialism, and imperialism. Many Western researchers have no critical or thoughtful answer to the question of why they are working in countries outside of their Western homelands. Many express a sense of entitlement towards working in countries in the Global South, towards assuming they should be respected by Indigenous communities, and towards having their recommendations about culture, religion, and ecosystem conservation adhered to and followed. The interviews demonstrate how some participants held distinctly troubling understandings of history where they become apologists for such events as the Apartheid regime as a justified practice. Even for those who did not go so far as to justify oppressive governments such as Apartheid, participants did discuss the ways in which their own research interests and concerns undercut the realities of the communities within which they worked.

This leads to my second question about how those epistemologies factor into the community-based practices of Western researchers. All the interviewees and much of the literature coming out of community-based conservation discussed that women are not considered important factors in their research. While researchers discussed the importance of including women, in their research and writing both Western and indigenous women are still accorded little to no consideration. Thus, this begs the question: how can one do community-based work and only consider one portion of the community? And subsequently, how can community-based research be ethically conducted without including women? An important irony here that seemed lost on many of the interviewees is that it has only been through feminist and feminine advocacy that women's voices have slowly gained a foothold in the field. When community-based conservation does include the voices of women, it does so in a similar manner as first and second wave U.S. feminists who privilege the voices of women from certain racial groups and classes. Many of the

interviewees have students that they ask to interview women and community members during field work.

Yet none of those findings are given any space in the scholarship or factored into the success and outcomes of the project.

Another important finding coming from the interviews, which is an unspoken norm in the scholarly literature as well, is the disconnect between local and international NGOs and academic researchers from university and colleges. Instead of collaborations between the two, it is common to find that ownership of land and animals, access to Indigenous populations, and professional concerns about who gets the credit for research and discoveries are all inhibit the collaborations between university researchers and local or international NGOs. Evident in my own work in Africa, it is common for universities, government agencies, and religious organizations to establish their own separate entities in a local community, and only work with a select group of individuals. These individuals are often those who are most receptive to working with foreigners, who speak one or more Western languages, and who conform to Western heteronormative genders and sexual identifications. In a similar manner, community-based conservation research follows a pattern where they assert the importance of community work but only actually work with a handful of individuals, usually men. This has led to questionable efforts in ecological conservation regarding community-based work, especially when we understand that conservation efforts require engagement with all individuals within a given community considering their connected to the land in some way. If only one group is targeted and educated, with no consideration to women or others who are marginalized, then the success of the efforts are highly unlikely.

The need for community-based conservation to decolonize their research practices arises from and builds on discussions about the epistemic foundations of conservation science and the role of women within it. The interviewees all discussed how women and Indigenous knowledge are important, and need to be respected and considered while doing research. Indigenous knowledge is often used and commodified for the benefit of Western universities, NGOs, and corporations and there are many discussions in the West centered on the "usefulness" of Indigenous knowledges to Western success and capitalism (Adams et al., 2007; Cavanagh & Himmelfarb, 2015). Indigenous women in the Global South are often used in particular ways, while still being kept at the periphery of the research interests and questions from Western institutions. All of the interviewees and many others in the field as well, discuss the ways in which African cultures and religious practices are to blame for the lack of "access" and inclusion of Indigenous women in their research. The realities and contradictions of such statements are contradicted by the interview data that clearly lays out their own exclusionary practices and epistemic blind spots. The same interviewee that discussed the oppression of Islamic religious customs also noted how it had been a woman researcher who initiated the practice of talking with local elders and acted as the conduit for such practices. Later in the interview, this interviewee also stated that just because the women are Muslim does not mean they only stay in the house. However, this same interviewee could not see any role for these women past trying to convince their husbands to change nor did they see these women as having any access to power or significant ecological impact.

The senior researchers interviewed discussed the ways in which they use their students to do the gender work they are "unqualified" or uninterested in doing. What may be unclear to them is how they perpetuate colonial practices by sending young white men and women to countries in

the Global South without much training or experience regarding how to contextually understand gender. These observations and finding from both the research interviews and the literature review point to the need for a decolonial epistemology and praxis to be implemented in community-based conservation projects. Potential ways to achieve this decolonial process will be discussed in the recommendations portion of this chapter.

Researcher Reflections and Recommendations

> "So if we're really ready to talk about the future, perhaps we should begin by admitting that we're out of time. We black people have always been out of time. Time does not belong to us. Our lives are lives of perpetual urgency. Time is used to displace us, or conversely, we are urged into complacency through endless calls to just be patient. But if past is prologue, let us seize upon the ways in which we're always out of time anyway to demand with urgency freedom now."
>
> Brittany Cooper, "The Racial Politics of Time" 2015

Brittney Cooper's powerful quote underscores that sense of urgency I feel that has resultedin this thesis. I do not share this work easily with my Western counterparts because their often willful and unconscious ignorance about the realities of life that many human, animal, and plants experience in the Global South. This sense of urgency has become part of the truths that I hold for myself as I engage in conservation work.

During a poster presentation at the Colorado State University Graduate Student Showcase in 2016, someone approached me about my work and emphatically said "we need researchers like you who can bridge the gap between international organizations, academia and local communities. You should think about being a consultant to governments or NGOs and help them in implementing better conservation projects." His supplication that I work to translate between African communities and Western conservation science asked something untenable of me. It is clear to me that the person doing the asking did not understand that his supplication was enveloped in a Western episteme of "Missionary" work that harkens back to the colonial trappings of

Christian proselytizing in non-Western contexts. I mused about his request for a long time and it has led me to a number of truths. It has also led me to make some recommendations for community-based conservation science. Regarding these truths, I have concluded that a first and important truth is that the work I envision myself doing in the future does not involve educating Western researchers about the important of women in all aspects of research and conservation work.

I will not be a bridge for those who would willfully and ignorantly traverse continents and ecosystems in the name of a dubious "science".

In another such incidence, I presented some poems about my research at the graduate student showcase at Colorado State University, I was approached by one of the professors in the audience. He wanted to hear more about my work and I shared why I wanted to research the inclusion of African women in conservation projects in Africa. The professor then asked me about what my future plans and I informed him that I would not be working with Western institutions or NGOs that my work focused on collaborating with local communities. He then spent a significant amount of time making a case for why my research and perspectives were needed by Western institutions and NGOs. He insisted that if I really wanted to make an impact, I could become a consultant for international organizations and bodies. I have seen too many people of color relegated to this status of becoming a nursemaid for Western imperialistic and colonial practices in ways that further harm local communities. It is not my wish to spend my time, energy, or research being a bridge or consultant for Westerners.

Another truth that I must contend with in my recommendations is that, as Cooper's epithet points out, we are out of time. Scientific research across the globe continues to elucidate the fact

that the global ecological impact that humans have on the environment are enormous and have disastrous effects for all of us who live on this planet. While the supposition that the planet is big and robust has some merit, it certainly does not follow that humans as a species can continue to do what they will to the environment, to living organisms, and non-living organisms. Western epistemes of conquest position Westerners and their work in extractive ways in the Global South.

This leaves the burden of creating viable futures for humanity and the planet on the shoulders of people within the Global South, the Indigenous populations despite being erased and non-existent in the futures of Western societies.

I must then recommend to Indigenous communities and myself:

1) That we disengage from the futile work of convincing the West, with its possessive investment in Whiteness and its invested ignorance, that we exist and that we matter. As Toni Morrison suggests, we must imagine for ourselves a future and collective collaborations amongst ourselves outside of the "White Gaze". Much work has been done by Indigenous people and indigenous women in an attempt to make the systems governing their lives better.

My recommendations to Western researchers in community-based conservation science include:

1) Western researchers, and community-based conservation researchers in particular, must stop encouraging Indigenous Peoples' to engage with them in systems of power that do not recognize the conservation and natural resource management knowledges and practices of African women. Or the humanity of the people they call to "collaborate" with them.
2) Western researchers at CSU and all other Western academic institutions, NGOs, and corporations must decolonize their epistemes, their research practices, and their

methodological approaches. They must disengage with the Global South until they can unearth for themselves the epistemological tenets upon which they stand and willingly throw away all those epistemological tenets that have led and continue the destruction of this planet and all non-white people who live on it. There is no one single way to accomplish this but there is much work by indigenous people imploring the West to navigate themselves back home to an epistemology and praxis that connects them back into the circle of life we all live within on this planet. One method to recommend is the reading of non-Western research on topics of interests. Non-Western authors should also include the research of Indigenous women as well.

3) Western researchers must break away from green colonialism and green imperialism and let go of the idea that they are necessary in the ecological work of the Global South. The interviewees that I talked to all explicitly or unconsciously discussed the fact that they are needed in the communities that they work within in Africa. They truly believe they have something of value that must be understood and adopted by people within the Global South.
4) Resist casting Indigenous people as the problem to the environment and ecological conservation. Instead, consider the macro-level structures and entities in the West that are complicit in the creation of spaces of ecological destruction. Unveil the way these Western structural relationships ensure the inability of the poor and disenfranchised from having any tangible or social relationship to the ecological space in which they live. Brittany Cooper points this out in her TED talk:

> "Professor Sharon Holland asked: What happens when a person who exists in time meets someone who only occupies space? These racial struggles are battles over those who are perceived to be space-takers and those who are perceived to be world-makers. Those who control the flow and thrust of history are considered world-makers who own and master time. In other words: white people. But when Hegel

> famously said that Africa was no historical part of the world, he implied that it was merely a voluminous land mass taking up space at the bottom of the globe. Africans were space-takers. So today, white people continue to control the flow and thrust of history, while too often treating black people as though we are merely taking up space to which we are not entitled. Time and the march of progress is used to justify a stunning degree of violence towards our most vulnerable populations, who, being perceived as space-takers rather than world- makers, are moved out of the places where they live, in service of bringing them into the 21st century."
>
> https://www.ted.com/speakers/brittney_cooper

As Cooper suggests, the colonial past of Western epistemes positions Westerners as masters of time and history, which has been carried over in Western conservation sciences. African communities, and especially African women, are marginalized into epistemological position of space-taking and incapable of affecting history or human progress, which in this context refers to ecological conservation practices. There is no justifiable reason for Western researchers to engage in conservation policies, research, and projects within the Global South in overseer positions of power and judgmental authority.

Westerns Should Focus Work on the Global North. The question must be asked why researchers do and citizens from the West continue to engage in conservation work in the Global South? What history is being reified and what histories are being erased when we engage in such practices? In fact, there is much work that needs to be done, and can only be done, by those within the Global North. It is imperative that university researchers, NGOs, governmental employees, and employees of corporations to fight for the rights and protection of all life on this planet from pro- and non-democratic governments and capitalist and non-capitalist multinational corporations. Western science need not replace Indigenous and local understandings of nature and our relationship to both the animals and the stars. Western science can, however, be useful though combating the oppressive and environmentally destructive practices perpetuated by governments and corporations birthed in the Global North. The reality is it is Western countries and corporations cause the greatest and most significant ecological destruction on this planet. The consequences of these

practices and policies have diminished the joy, happiness, longevity, and quality of life for all of us.

There is a need for people within the Global North to take up their portion of the burden that has for too long been put on the backs of the poor and disenfranchised, and do work that supersedes their own personal interests and concerns. Instead of using power, access, and academic knowledge to continue perpetuating the neoliberal capitalist order, Western researchers and project managers could use all their advantages to change the biggest purveyors of ecological destruction. An important example of this work is the Native American teen named Xiuhtezcatl Martinez who, in collaboration with 21 other children aged 9 to 20, filed a lawsuit against the United States. These indigenous youth state that the actions taken by the U.S. government, such as support of fossil fuel production and development, infringes on their constitutional rights since there is no future, or not a happy one, due to climate change. This type of acknowledgment of how governments and institutions play a significant role in creating the conditions for a nonviable future for indigenous youth is a wonderful example of ways Westerners can hold their societies and macro-structures accountable.

All the questions and criticisms I have asked of Western institutions and researchers are ones that I myself must contend with and answer. It might be asked how have I decolonized my own epistemologies and praxis. What am I doing to continue the critical analysis of my own epistemes and practices so that I am operating in understanding, respect, and egalitarianism and not colonialism and imperialism? One way I engage with these questions is by centering love in my life and my work. I have taken love as my epistemological foundation, the cornerstone of my praxis, and the lens through which I view all living and non-living beings on this planet.

Centering Love: A Future for Community-Based Conservation

"To open our hearts more fully to love's power and grace we must dare to acknowledge how little we know of love in both theory and practice"
--bell hooks, 2000;

xxix I often say that love is not something that many Americans know about, myself included.

I was introduced to aspects of love through individuals who either were not American or had strong cultural, spiritual, or ideological connections to communities outside the U.S. It was not until I went to Africa that I was confronted by my own warped notions of love that I used to interpret other's the actions, motives, and gestures. It was only then that I was disabused of those corrupt and broken notions of love rooted in pain, shame, anger, bitterness and historical amnesia. Similar to how I have grown and experienced such a positive impact from love on my personal and professional life, I recognize that love can be the epistemological foundation for the long term and sustained change in behavior and outlook by anyone concerned about the environment. I turn to love as my recommendation for rebirth as an antidote to the death of current Western epistemes and practices necessary for the collective work towards change.

All of the interviewees that I talked with expressed some sort of appreciation for the work that I am doing and for me as a person. In that context, I see them not as villains in this narrative or enemies to ecological restoration and conservation but as individuals still locked into systems of power and domination. The profound silence the interviewees had around issues of Western causes and perpetuations of climate change and ecological destruction spoke to a "self-protective silence and denial [that has] kept too many Americans from knowing who 'we the people' really are, and have kept a language of possibility impoverished," (Deming & Savoy, 2011; 316). Thus, I do recognize that there might be some desire on the part of those in conservation to change. Part

of the implementation of epistemologies of love and love as a praxis is the recognition that the Western world attempts to control the lives and movements of human beings, animals, plants or non-sentient beings.

Conservation then must not become the preservation of an ideal, romanticized, and untouched landscape as natural and right, since there have been very few spaces on this planet where humans live that have not been managed and maintained by human beings. When this has been done in ecological mutualism, Indigenous respect for places the management led to enhanced biodiversity has been extensive (Deming & Savoy, 2011). An episteme of love allows us to look at history and nature with healed eyes and vision, so instead of the false notions of wilderness that make up the history of conservation efforts in the Americans and abroad, which are considered spaces without humans or human contact, it becomes possible to see that there are histories and world-making impacts by all people on this planet and not just by White/European societies (Guha, 1989; Deming & Savoy, 2011).

Love also does not seek to make idols and mystic sages out of women and Indigenous communities and their knowledges. The practice of marginalizing African women and Indigenous communities by only seeing these through a lens of historical mysticism and spiritual connection to nature that locks them into a fictive historical past, and not part of a present or future of their own creation. Joseph Bruchac wrote in his journal detailing the relationship that American Indians have with nature and the false narratives that Western society creates about First Nations that "people are not icons and we humans are never more than one step away from every other part of creation," (Deming & Savoy, 2011; 218). These words not only elucidate that we are truly connected across race, ethnicity, sexuality and culture and that t we are also connected to all other living and non-living creations on this planet as well.

Doing away with images of the Indigenous people as grand sages operating outside the realms of logic and reason decenters those who ascribe to invested ignorance about the inferiority of Indigenous people. The practices and beliefs of indigenous people are rendered mystical, and thus inherently antithetical to contemporary realities, to rational thought, and to critical discourse. This is part of a practice of being loving-knowing ignorance, which is defined as "an ignorance of the thought and experience of women of color that is accomplished by both alleged love for and alleged knowledge about them," (Ortega 2006, pg. 57) that many of those in conservation hold as they create terms and categories for Indigenous Ecological Knowledge. Such a lovingly, knowingly ignorant practice acknowledges Indigenous knowledge and the people who hold them from a privileged position that sees Indigenous Ecological Knowledge as outside the authority and characteristics of the dominant groups epistemologies.

Wangari Maathai addressed the ways in which people would often ascribe to her work some religious or spiritual connotation, as a form of hermeneutical violence against her, and asserts for herself that:

> "I wasn't motivated by my faith or by religion in general. Instead, the motivation came from thinking literally and practically about how to solve problems on the ground. It was a desire to help rural populations, especially women, with the basic needs they described to me during seminars and workshops," (Maathai 2010; 41).

The quote, which is found in the introduction of Dr. Maathai's second book, *Replenishing the Earth* (2010), sets a definitive statement that her work should not be considered useless or historically recycled cultural practices. Her practice of planting trees was born from understandings of ecology and the socio-economic needs of vulnerable groups, women, and rural communities. In this light, the legitimacy of arguments against the practices and policies of women and Indigenous people are rendered damaging and untrue. These understandings and appreciations

of both women and Indigenous communities only can be respected if love is the foundation of hearing and seeing each other.

Love is not born in lies and fear, but is birthed through flesh and spirit. Love requires that those within the Global North are able to look back and see the truth of history so that they may understand what is really needed to create a different future. I believe that in order for American academic researchers and citizens to understand and build the capacity to love people and creation on other continents across the globe, they must contend with the realities of their history with First Nations here in America. This is often uncomfortable and many professors and students within academia default into states of stagnant guilt and shame about the pass as a mechanism of keeping it at a distance, but:

> "in order to understand history and be able to exorcise the past, we need to relieve this history in flesh and spirit. We need to reenact all the misunderstandings, confrontations, and contradictions, all the suffering and havoc brought about by the so-called discover of this continent by Europeans [….] The 'Discovery of America,' or the more sensitive phrase, the 'Encounter of Two Cultures,' is a mere euphemism for genocide, ethnocide, and ecocide that were the direct result of the invasion and conquest of the Indies," (Deming & Savoy 2001; 236).

This call is for a thorough cleaning of an infectious wound that has not healed. If we are not willing to truly examine and treat the wound of our past on this American soil and the soils of other lands across the globe, "a great many of us [would] remain wounded in the place where we would know love," (hooks 2000; 233). We are all marked by our wounds, but as hooks suggests they need not to scar us for life.

Most of the people in conservation work either love the ecosystems or the people whom they are studying, but it is an arrogant and oppressive love that sees them as objects to be used by those in power. Love does heal and love can truly change everything about how conservationists

see and interact with ecosystems and people in the future. Though seemingly ephemeral, "no matter what has happened in our past, when we open our hearts to love we can live as if born again, not forgetting the past but seeing it in a new way, letting it live inside us in a new way," (hooks 2000; 209). And this is of paramount importance to the issues of conservation and climate change, because no one can opt out of addressing the issue

I have sought to demonstrate the need for love to be centered as the epistemological foundation of Western conservation practices because it is love that lets us see ourselves, others, and history clearly. It is love that heals and creates the possibilities of brighter and equitable futures for all of creation this planet. In order for Western conservationists to center love, there is a need to destroy the epistemological tenets of colonialism, imperialism, misogyny and invested ignorance that currently hold up the field of conservation. This is something not for women or Indigenous people to lead researchers in the field on a retreat or workshop to move towards, but is a personal and intimate journey, both personal and professional, that those in the Global North must do themselves, for themselves and for the rest of us.

A Final Statement: About Heartbreak and Healing

I entered into this research with the optimism and anticipation that I would be able to add my voice to discourses and fields within both the sciences and social sciences that sought new perspectives for nagging problems we have carried from the past alongside solutions on how to work across barriers to address global issues. The reality has been that I have seen my own voice, corporality, and work digested and shut out by Western epistemes and society, like many other women, queer, and Indigenous people before me.

I have immersed myself in my research and not only looked at peer-reviewed journal articles and books published by prestigious publishing houses, but documentaries, news stories,

and the stories told to me by people on the African continent during my time there. Wangari Maathai has received a Nobel Prize for her work and been accredited advanced degrees with Europe, and still she is not viewed as a canonical author on conservation efforts with Africa by Western researchers within Colorado State University. Western science and culture continues to ask those who are marginalized and oppressed to use their voices to give recommendations to dominant institutions and structures, having us believe that we can only affect change in service to Western institutions and structures. If I am to truly be a researcher that does not turn away from the data and the stories of those past and present, I must acknowledge that I hold not exalted position within academia or the U.S. and I cannot be convinced that I will be listened to when so many others have not been.

Another observation gathered from an analysis of my interview participants is how I was perceived and positioned through the interviewees eyes. I felt like I was assumed to be aligned with the position of Western science and research because of my dress, speech, and position as a graduate student researcher within the university. Discussing my past research and experiences within the sciences also positioned me differently than researchers with a social science background. I felt that my corporality was also viewed hegemonically by interviewees who asked me about my research based on assumptions that I would care more about race than gender. This form of epistemic blindness negates my work, the positions of importance that women hold in my life and research, and my understandings when viewed through such biased lenses. The themes and epistemological tenets discussed in this research are important to examine because they dictate how the interviewees see the women in their own lives, the African women in the communities they work in, and researchers, like myself, from other disciplines and fields within Western academia.

The topic of this thesis was not chosen because I simply like the subject matter or I was looking for a niche that would allow me to develop a novel research agenda and a long career in academia. This thesis emerges from listening to the voices of humans and non-human species across the globe who have been impacted by the harsher weather patterns and climate conditions, the depletions of natural resources, and the pollution of ecological spaces. When I learned that there was a field called community-based conservation and its counterpart, community-based natural resource management, I thought that I had finally found a community of like-minded people with whom I could work towards changing the negative impacts Western societies and sciences have had on humans, non-human species, and ecosystems across the globe.

Sadly, that has not been the case and I have come to the realization that I have spent significant amounts of time, effort, spiritual, and emotional energy trying to find a place in a system and society where I do not belong.

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