PRODUCING, MAINTAINING AND RESISTING COLONIAL ECOLOGICAL

VIOLENCE: THREE CONSIDERATIONS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM AS ECO-

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Title: Producing, Maintaining and Resisting Colonial Ecological Violence: Three Considerations of Settler Colonialism as Eco-Social Structure

Although rarely included in environmental sociology, settler colonialism significantly structures eco-social relations within the United States. This work considers the range of environmental practices and epistemologies influenced by settler colonial impositions in law, culture and discourse. In this dissertation I also introduce the term colonial ecological violence as a framework for considering the outcomes of this structuring in terms of the disproportionate impacts on Indigenous peoples and communities.

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To my goddesses, gods, guides, and ancestors.

Dá fhada an lá tagann an tráthnóna.

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CHAPTER I

CENTERING RELATIONS AND SPEAKING TO SOCIOLOGY ABOUT

SETTLER COLONIALISM AS ECO-SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Anyone who spends a good deal of time reading the work of Indigenous authors or listening to Indigenous speakers cannot help but take notice of the importance that is placed on relationships. While the term Indigenous is broad and covers hundreds if not over a thousand unique groups within the United States alone, this emphasis on relationships, while not universal, is a significant common thread that informs Indigenous thinking, research, and activism. The relationships stressed by Indigenous speakers is not simply a relationship between individuals, although these are important, but the relationships that people have with the land, their ancestors, future generations, as well as other species, and spiritual beings (e.g. Simpson 2004, Wilson 2008, Coté 2010, Smith 2012).

In this dissertation I am guided by that attention to relationships in a number of significant ways. First, the relationships between societies and the environments that sustain them—or what might be called eco-social relationships—are at the core of my thinking and concern. I acknowledge that these relationships are varied and complex. Internationally, nationally, and from community to community, differences in cultural norms and values influence ideas, policies and interactions with the natural world. Despite this diversity, it is becoming increasingly clear that the dominant mode of eco-social relations, typified by a high reliance on petro-technologies and international commerce, is taking an unprecedented toll on the environment. Understanding contemporary ecological crises such as global climate change requires a clear understanding of the social and cultural conditions which inform environmental values and practices.

Developing such and understanding has been the aim of my career thus far as an interdisciplinary environmental studies student. For this dissertation project I am drawing together research from Native studies, sociology, geography, history, philosophy, literary analysis, cultural studies, and theatre, to name just a few of the more significant disciplines where I have encountered important and insightful work that has shed light on my questions and informed my analysis. For reasons that I explain in detail a bit later, I crafted this analysis in a way that speaks specifically to sociologists working in the United States. Some may consider this a move toward disciplinarity, but what I see myself doing from a relational perspective is closing some of the distance between these various disciplines in hope that we might develop a deeper understanding of each other's work and apply that understanding to the entwined goals of social justice and ecological well-being.

To be sure, these are lofty goals, and I'm not all that certain they can be achieved within a system that is so profoundly marked by settler-colonial ideologies and constraints. The question of the academy as a place for change has often weighed heavily on my mind, and I find myself aligned in many ways with Taiaiake Alfred (2012) on this issue. Alfred claims that, "it is impossible to Indigenize the academy, because the academy is the academy" but "you can carve out spaces in the institution" spaces to work in and inhabit; these spaces, however, are impermanent spaces. Alfred is speaking of course about the role of Indigenous scholars within western institutions, but I believe his analysis may also hold true for any person trying to assert Indigenous perspectives and critiques within academic spaces. Critical perspectives are permitted, tolerated, and even occasionally celebrated within the academy, but ultimately they are in a tenuous position to the extent that they conflict with the implicit and explicit goals of the institution. Nevertheless, the academy is a place of profound connectivity

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and exchange where powerful relationships can be built. Alfred says "you can't Indigenize the academy, but you can create very effective spaces to mobilize Indigenous people as decolonizing agents." For myself, as a person working outside of Native Studies and largely with non-Native students, I have endeavored to create relationships that mobilize people who are invested in ecological well-being to more fully understand how settler colonialism is an impediment to that goal. Watching the academic and activist trajectories of my students and peers I am given some small measure of hope that these entwined goals are now more than ever a driving force in the daily lives of more people and that these individuals recognize and demonstrate a commitment to building better relationships with people and place.

Why sociology?

Like many people who feel disconcerted by the current state of affairs, I spent many years pondering the causes of environmental declines, and attempting to resist them. That inquiry and resistance began long before I arrived at the University of Oregon, and my work as a PhD student has been a continuation of that process. I chose the Environmental Science, Studies and Policy program because it was explicitly interdisciplinary, a place where I could bring together my concerns about culture, social interaction, emotions and policy, and a place where I could further engage in active solidarity participation and learn more about the specifics of solidarity with Indigenous peoples in Oregon and Northern California.[1] While diverse experiences have informed the development of this project, which, although engaging in concepts from across many disciplines, consists of three articles tailored for publication in sociological journals. Why sociology? Simply put, I decided to publish

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[1] I am not an enrolled member of any tribal nation or community. My known ancestors are from Algonquin, Breton, Irish, Norman, and Wendat peoples.

in sociology because the analysis of settler colonialism and Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism is lacking in the U.S. branch of this discipline and ought to be developed, especially in the sub-field of environmental sociology.

Because all of the United States is Native land structured by settler-colonial law, policy and practice, environmental sociology must contend with settler colonialism. As a system, settler colonialism is primarily invested in the ongoing appropriation of Indigenous land and resources by and for the benefit of the settler state; as such, settler-colonial appropriation plays a major role in determining the uses of land, the disposition of resources, and even the identity of places (Basso 1996; Coté 2010). In short it is an eco-social structure as much as it is a political structure, and as an eco-social structure, settler colonialism generates and maintains enduring and widespread inequalities. Without attention to the immediate and long-term impacts of this social structure on Indigenous peoples as well as settler organizational, interpersonal, cultural and discursive practices that maintain eco-social arrangements sociology is missing a vital part of the contemporary social world.

Although sociology has a robust analysis of myriad social inequalities, including well-developed analyses of race and ethnicity in particular, engagement with issues of settler colonialism and/or with Native communities are minimal. Critiques of the Northern / Eurocentric bias in sociology, such as those levelled by Bhambra (2015) and Connell (2007) demonstrate the need for increased attention to not only the perspectives of people occupying social locations outside of those commonly centered, but also attention to the processes and connections of social relations which have created the current conditions in the case of the United States; this would most certainly mean attention to settler colonialism. This gap is apparent in

both the published U.S. sociology literature and in the status of contemporary U.S. Indigenous research and researchers within the American Sociological Association.[2]

Furthermore, the published U.S. sociology of Indigenous peoples that does exist tends to replicate what scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) describe as "At risk-ing / Asterisk-ing Indigenous peoples." This term suggests the diverse techniques through which "Indigenous peoples are counted, codified, represented, and included/disincluded by educational researchers and other social science researchers." These practices render Indigenous peoples "as 'at risk' peoples and as asterisk peoples," in other words, as people who are both pathologized and marginalized in the discourse (p. 22).

To support this claim, I conducted an analysis of the *Social Science Citation Index*. Although not comprehensive, the *Social Science Citation Index* contains "3,000 of the world's leading social sciences journals across 50 disciplines." Using data from the *Web of Science*[3] (*WoS*) *Social Science Citation Index*, consisting of all English-language journal articles published between 2006-2015 with the topics Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or American Indian, I conducted a keyword co-occurrence analysis to assess the major themes circulating in U.S. sociology of Indigenous peoples. While keyword analysis is not as nuanced as other more detailed forms of analysis, keyword data allows for visualization and analysis of how major concepts are presented and connected within the literature, or ignored altogether.

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[2] On average ASA hosts one Indigenous-themed panel every two years, and as yet, there is no research section committed to either Indigenous issues or to settler colonialism.

[3] While *WoS* is a U.S.-centered database, and U.S. sociology generally is critiqued for having a decided North American focus this is not an issue in the case of my research since my goal is a consideration of how U.S. sociology attends to or fails to acknowledge Native peoples within U.S. borders.

My analysis indicated the relative paucity of research on these groups as well as the hyperabundance of medical- and risk-associated discourses within the social science literature regarding Native peoples in the U.S. This finding is consistent with Tuck and Yang's claims. In sociology, the underrepresentation of Native peoples in the literature is stark. Of the n.=35,332 sociology articles available through *WoS* for this time period, n.=76 were relevant to this research (apx. .215%). Despite this, sociology is not a peripheral subject in the search results (Table 1).

Table 1:
Search Results Top 20 WoS Categories

CATEGORY	N. of ARTICLES
Pub. Env. Occ. Health	834
Anthropology	250
Psychology Clinical	194
Substance Abuse	187
Health Policy Services	189
Social Work	124
Psychology Developmental	109
Education and Ed. Research	98
Family Studies	96
Psychology Multi. Dis.	94
Health Care Sci. Services	84
Sociology	76
Nursing	75
Medicine General Internal	70
Psychology Social	73
Pediatrics	55
Oncology	51
Women's Studies	50
Social Sci. Interdisciplinary	49
Ethnic Studies	47

Sociology Keyword Co-Occurrence Network
Search Terms (American Indian, Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian) and United-States
removed as verticies
Working with the largest connected component
Average Degree = 9.93207547
Closeness Centralization = .34158482
Betweenness Centralization = .27233538
Degree Centralization =.10858704

Table 2: Keyword Density for top 10 keywords in the 2006-2015 No Med. data
Total Keywords n = 286
Articles n= (with keywords)

KEYWORD	Cluster	Closeness	Betweenness	N. of Articles
Risk	63	.487085	.266397	10
Race	57	.471429	.279828	11
Identity	40	.429967	.100783	8
Health	37	.414443	.076088	6
Community	32	.391111	.097116	4
Adolescents	32	.429268	.063927	5
Children	29	.370787	.057547	5
Politics	28	.417062	.075517	4
Culture	27	.411215	.079612	4
Rates	26	.383721	.045633	3

Even after removing all medical fields and subfields from the model, "risk"

remains a central keyword in social science research (Table 2), and is largely

connected to keywords that suggest the pathological or criminal (e.g. in sociology

common co-occurring keywords include crime, health, behaviors, substance abuse,

and delinquency). Perhaps more stunning than the presence of "risk" within these

models is the marked absence of keywords reflecting concepts central to many

Indigenous people's understandings of their own current conditions, most specifically

"colonialism", "colonization", and/or "genocide" (Smith 2006; Alfred 2009; Smith

2012; Tuck and Yang 2012; Coulthard 2014).

The ego network for the term colonialism for instance indicates diverse

usages, still attention to colonialism (as determined by keyword usage) is minimal. Of

all the articles in the data set only nine contain the keyword "colonialism" and none

use the word "genocide." This is not to suggest that individual articles do not mention

or perhaps even structure their arguments around these issues to varying degrees, but

that the network reveals a system of presenting and organizing research about Native

peoples in ways that accentuate medical, individualistic, and ahistorical approaches. These ways of thinking, by virtue of their erasure of colonial genocide, are complicit with the very problems they seek to address through the intellectual reification of the Indian as problem.[4]

This pattern of keywords suggests a general social-scientific orientation toward pathologizing discourses. I acknowledge the deep need for work exposing the conditions experienced by Native communities, but also the need to question any research which erases or minimizes the significance of context in creating and maintaining those conditions—in particular, the context of colonial occupation and ongoing legal and social practices which marginalize Native peoples.

This is not to suggest that no useful engagements with settler colonialism have occurred in U.S. sociology. Some of the most high-profile engagement with settler colonialism on the part U.S. sociologists has occurred in the relatively recent exchange between Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2015), Erich Steinman (2015), James Fenelon (2015) and Eduardo Bonilla Silva (2016).

In her analysis, Glenn suggests that settler colonialism as a "framework for analysing and understanding race and gender in America will have certain advantages over other frameworks, most specifically in the strength of its historicity and in a fuller incorporation of the role of Native Americans in how racism and gender oppression have developed and continue to operate" (p. 69-70). But she also raises several unanswered questions about how settler colonialism as a framework might speak to or work in conjunction with other analytical frames such as internal colonialism or racial formation. Glenn's work in some ways reads as a response to

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[4] A more complete analysis of this data is in process with co-authors Jacob and Gonzales.

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Erich Steinman's (2012) work which clearly suggests that the particular forms of power Indigenous peoples in the U.S. contend with are not adequately captured by frameworks such as race and ethnicity, in part because Indigenous peoples in the U.S. have a distinctive legal status, yet at the same time Glenn seems confident that a certain amount of compatibility between frames is possible. Steinman's response (2015) again reiterates that too much attention to race and ethnicity in the case of American Indian peoples may be undesirable since this may contribute "to the naturalization of the processes through which indigenous people have been constructed as members of a racial or ethnic group" rather than as citizens of unique native nations (p.219). Fenelon's response on the other hand suggests that relying "on settler-colonial frames can lead to denial of genocide as racism" and can "obfuscate racial genocides against Indigenous peoples" (p. 239).

Part of what makes this exchange remarkable is that it demonstrated the relative "newness" of this area of inquiry within the U.S. sociology of race and ethnicity discourse and elaborated on the enduring question of whether settler-colonialism should be understood as a product of racialization, a producer of racialization, or if it is indeed a separate issue, albeit one with clear connections to the racial projects that constitute the central focus of sociology of race and ethnicity.

Environmental Sociology and the Study of Environmental Movements

As a scholar of the environment, my focus at this moment is less on the question of how settler colonialism and theories of racialization intersect, and more firmly connected to processes of territorial dispossession, resistance, and land-based collective identities. Still, the distinctive historical relations, as well as legal and political status of Native nations which may make race and ethnicity inadequate frames for considering settler colonialism, are the same distinctions which, to my

mind, makes the current analyses of environmental practice and environmental inequality incomplete.

Although environmental sociology is now a well-developed subfield with robust considerations of environmental values (e.g. Buttel 1987; Dietz, Fitzgerald, and Shworm 2005), behaviors (e.g. Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; Xiao and Hong 2010), and the structuring influence of capitalism on these (e.g. Foster 1999; York 2006), it is still only beginning to scratch the surface of environmental inequalities (e.g. Szasz and Meuser 1997; Pellow 2000; Pellow and Brehm 2013), and the emotional and cultural aspects of environmental actions (e.g. Boykoff 2005; Norgaard 2006; Carfagna et. al 2014; Kennedy, Cohen, and Krogman 2015; Norgaard, Reed, Bacon 2018).

At the intersection of environmental sociology and the sociology of collective behavior, studies of environmental movements have offered some of the most sustained insights into pro-ecological social organizing and behavior, while also raising important points regarding ideological differences and inequalities, two issues which are essential points of connection for thinking about the relationship between settler colonialism and the environment (Buttel and Flinn 1978; Kleinber, McKeever, and Rothenbach 1998; Rose 2000; Mix 2009; Alkon and Agyeman 2011). As a result, this body of literature has been of special interest to me in part because I believe that there are important distinctions between largely white-led environmental movements ranging from liberal to radical, environmental justice movements and Indigenous-led movements for ecological protection. Understanding these differences through attention to settler colonialism would generate a more comprehensive environmental sociology.

The environmental movement, particularly in the United States, is generally thought of as a long-lived social movement that began around the 1960's—often linked with the publication of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring—which was formalized by the time of the first Earth Day in 1970 (Dunlap and Mertig 1992; Mitchell, Mertig and Dunlap 1992; Devall 1992; Brulle 2000; Rootes 2004). The current U.S. environmental movement consists of an array of social movement organizations diverse in their assessments of ecological problems, their tactical orientations, and their ideological and epistemological foundations.

This diversity has attracted significant scholarly attention. In the early 1990's, sociologists expressed considerable surprise at the proliferation of environmental movements (e.g. Dunlap and Mertig 1992; Mitchell, Mertig and Dunlap 1992; McClosky 1992). Some expressed concern that diversity may lead to fragmentation while others suggested that a diverse movement may also provide social movement resiliency (Dunlap and Mertig 1992). Although some may feel environmental movement diversity is a new feature, a product of the movement's increase since the 1960's, multiplicity has existed throughout U.S. environmental history, as Dr. Dorceta Taylor (1997) illustrates in her concise history of how race, class and gender have shaped the development of environmentalism in the United States.

Indeed community-level anxieties about environmental inequality have a lengthy history, but these concerns only became formalized as "environmental justice" in the 1980's (Bullard and Wright 1992; Bryant and Hockman 2005; Faber 1998). This social movement has inspired significant production of theoretical and empirical analysis in both the social sciences and humanities. Taylor (2000) suggests that part of the success of the EJ movement has been its capacity to evoke "salient

master frames," which rendered the movement attractive to those who were already mobilized around "rights, racism, and justice".

Still, I contend that although environmental justice in its earliest formulations included references to Indigenous peoples, in general there has been minimal engagement with issues of settler colonialism as environmental or with Indigenous peoples' movements to defend land and water within environmental sociology. David Pellow's (2016) work on Critical Environmental Justice (CEJ) seemed to promise a shift in this area, but as yet a focus on settler colonialism and Indigenous environmental justice remains under theorized in U.S. sociology.

CEJ as an alternative approach to the traditional Environmental Justice Paradigm (EJP) is promising however since there are good reasons to question the suitability of the EJP in relation to Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism. Still, there are of course some important similarities between Indigenous-led environmental movements and EJ movements. Indigenous movements, like EJ struggles, tend to be local and grassroots (Taylor 1997; Peña 2005; Pellow and Brulle 2005). Epistemologically, EJ activists and Indigenous-led environmentalism, tend to question an overreliance on Western science and expand the way science is understood and put to use in environmental litigation. This is done particularly through attempts to deploy local and/or traditional ecological knowledge and occasionally through the incorporation of community-based sciences with mainstream / academic science (Peña 2005; Pellow and Brulle 2005; Hoover 2017). Furthermore, by explicitly linking systemic inequality to environmental harms, EJ activists and academics echo some of the concerns raised by Indigenous-led environmental movements.

Still significant differences exist. One of the most obvious is the distinctive

legal positions and approaches which typify various environmental movements. While reform environmentalism tends to rely on the public trust doctrine and the generation of protective acts (McCloskey 1992; Brulle 2000; Rootes 2004), EJ movements emerge from a context of civil rights struggle, and draw on civil rights law in support of their resistance to toxic waste citing, illegal dumping, and other forms of environmental inequality (Cable et. al. 2005; Gordon and Harley 2005; Brulle and Pellow 2005). Neither of these approaches appropriately engages the distinctive legal and political situations of Indigenous peoples in the United States.

While U.S. law primarily works to ensure the continued presence and hegemony of the settler state, legal challenges still constitute an important element of Indigenous environmental movements. Legal decisions pertaining to Indigenous rights over the last 60 years have fundamentally shaped—and been shaped by—Indigenous resistance. Although tribes utilized legal challenges long before the 1960's, those rulings, even when they favored tribes, tended to be ignored at local levels (Nesper 2002; Coté 2010). But, with the growing push for self-determination, and with the inspiration of civil rights successes, Indigenous legal challenges in the 1960's began to be increasingly coupled with direct action (Deloria and Lytle 1984; Nesper 2002; Coté 2010; Steinman 2015). For those with federal recognition, treaty rights and litigation surrounding these rights have played an integral role in challenging the state's environmental management practices, especially in cases where state management conflicts with treaty-reserved rights. Furthermore, tribes and tribal governments represent a "formalized position for ongoing political negotiation with the...government on behalf of Native peoples," much of which has taken place

through legal challenges (Clark 2002; 413).[5]

Bringing an Analysis of Settler Colonialism into Environmental Sociology

The centrality of land and territory in settler colonialism quite simply cannot be ignored. Even in the race and ethnicity debates the issue of land is raised time and time again because it is unavoidable in conversations about Indigenous peoples. For this reason alone, it is surprising how slow an analysis of settler colonialism has been to percolate into environmental sociology. Scholars like Julia Cantzler and Kari Norgaard have demonstrated a lasting commitment to making inroads in this area, and their work comprises a significant portion of environmental sociology focused on Indigenous peoples within the United States[6]. Cantzler's (2007) analysis of the Makah whaling conflict raised important concerns about the ideological and "moral" conflicts between pro-treaty and mainstream environmental groups. She has also contributed to comparative analyses of environmentally-centered conflicsts between Indigenous peoples in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand (Cantzler 2011). Norgaard's work –along with her various colleagues-- has expanded the research on food sovereignty (Alkon and Norgaard 2009; Hormel and Norgaard 2009) and drawn important connections to the sociology of the family (Willette, Norgaard, and Reed 2016), emotions (Norgaard and Reed 2017) and race and gender (Norgaard, Reed, and Bacon 2018).

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[5] In cases where indigenous peoples lack legal standing in the settler-state, or in cases where that legal standing fails to provide adequate protection, international legal doctrines such as the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and International Labour Organization's Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples provide additional frameworks for the pursuit of justice (Westra 2008).

[6] Outside of environmental sociology, James Fenelon and Erich Steinman have been consistent contributors to thinking about the live of contemporary indigenous peoples in U.S. sociology.

This project aims to contribute to the work these scholars have begun by bringing analyses of settler colonialism into the sociological discussion around environmental practice and environmentalism. These three articles demonstrate that within the United States, settler colonialism structures a wide range of eco-social relations. Since the United States as a nation is the product of settler-colonial occupation, it stands to reason that all environmental policy is predicated upon and structured by settler-colonial values and laws. Beyond simply suggesting that settler colonialism is an eco-social structure at the level of policy however, my dissertation work looks at other social registers in which settler colonialism influences eco-social relations including media framing of resistance, colonial attitudes within environmentalism, and the potential reconfiguration of eco-social thought and action through solidarity.

In the first article, "Settler colonialism as eco-social structure and the production of colonial ecological violence," I demonstrate some of the ways that settler colonialism continues to structure environmental practices and epistemologies. By looking closely at the institutional practices of state actors, and at the cultural practices of mainstream environmentalism I demonstrate how U.S. eco-social norms emerge from and promote settler-colonial projects. I also introduce the term colonial ecological violence as a framework for considering the outcomes of this structuring in terms of the impacts on Indigenous peoples and communities.

In the second article, "Dangerous Pipelines, Dangerous People: Colonial Ecological Violence and Media Framing of Threat in the Dakota Access Pipeline Conflict," I use content analysis of local media coverage of the Dakota Access Pipeline and resistance to that pipeline to demonstrate how news media supports the settler colonial state and encourages the production and maintenance of colonial

ecological violence by depicting Indigenous resistance as "dangerous" and anti-American while largely describing militarized policing and inherently colonial resource projects as "safe" and "beneficial".

In the final article, "'Who had to die so I could go camping?': Settler Colonialism, Colonial Ecological Violence, and Settler Reflections on Solidarity and Place," I analyze the way non-Indigenous identified participants in Indigenous-settler solidarity think about their relationships to place and to the environmental movement. Drawing on interviews with solidarity participants, this article suggests that participation in solidarity with Indigenous peoples has a strong influence on participants' sense of place, their conceptions of the meanings of places, and their willingness to identify with (though not necessarily their willingness to participate in) environmental movements.

CHAPTER II

SETTLER COLONIALISM AS ECO-SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE

PRODUCTION OF COLONIAL ECOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

In the United States, settler colonialism structures political and social life

through the ongoing appropriation and occupation of Native land, and is culturally

enforced through practices that actively obscure or erase Indigenous peoples—an

effort to complete via ideological and cultural means the work of earlier failed

attempts at total physical genocide (Wolfe 1999; Couthard 2014; Fenelon and Trafzer

2013; Tuck and Yang 2013).[7] Simultaneously subject to erasure are the processes of

settler colonialism itself (Wolfe 2006; Veracini 2011). Yet, settler colonialism

pervades contemporary U.S. society, functioning in politics, law, education and

culture. Indeed, its traces can be found across all levels of analysis from the

international to the interpersonal, thus there is ample reason to consider settler

colonialism's influence over a host of social and political institutions. However,

because settler colonialism's fundamental goal is the ongoing appropriation of

Indigenous land and resources by and for the benefit of settlers it is an especially

important lens for thinking about the relationships between a society and the biotic

world where that society relies upon, or what I will call eco-social relations

(Coulthard 2014; Norgaard, Reed, and Bacon 2018).

Looking at a few highly illustrative examples of state power and the

development of settler-colonial resource management policy, as well as at the settler-

colonial culture which pervades U.S. environmentalism, I will demonstrate that settler

colonialism is an eco-social structure which produces / maintains drastic and enduring

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[7] The economic partner of settler colonialism in the U.S. is capitalism and there is much work needed
to tease out how settler colonialism and capitalism support and structure each other particularly in their
conflicts with traditional Indigenous socio-ecologies.

inequalities between settlers and Native peoples. This structure disrupts Indigenous

eco-social relations[8], and in so doing produces what I call colonial ecological

violence[9], which results in particular risks and harms experienced by Native peoples

and communities. [10]

Settler colonialism in U.S. environmental sociology

While the concept of settler colonialism occupies a relatively robust position

in anthropology, geography, and history, as well as in Canadian and Australian

sociology, U.S. sociology has only begun to grapple with the concept relatively

recently (e.g. Steinman 2012; Steinmetz 2014; Glenn 2015; Fenlon 2015; Bonilla-

Silva 2016; Cantzler and Huyhn 2016; Norgaard, Reed and Bacon 2017). Throughout

U.S. sociology, deep and sustained sociological engagement with contemporary U.S.

Indigenous life has been uncommon.[11] This is apparent in both the published

sociology literature and the status of contemporary U.S. Indigenous research and

researchers within the American Sociological Association.

Within the environmental sub-field, studies of particular tribal conditions and

conflicts have laid essential groundwork for drawing connections between the

practices of settler-colonial states and institutions and the structuring of eco-social

relations (e.g. Norgaard, Reed, Van Horn 2011; Cantzler 2007; Deutsch 2017). More

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[8] When I refer to Indigenous eco-social relations I intend this term to be closely aligned with what is often called Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) but with an added emphasis on the social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of human-nature relations (which are also inherent in TEK, but tend not to be emphasized). I also include other forms of eco-social relations which may not be strictly "traditional" by some definitions (see Simpson 2004; Whyte 2013; Whyte 2016).

[9] While I began developing this concept in 2013, it first appeared in print as part of a collaboration with Dr. Kari Norgaard and Ron Reed (2018).

[10] While I see the wisdom in avoiding damage-centred research, I cannot ignore the very real risks posed by land occupation and ecological degradation. I believe this term will complement works by Fenelon (1998), Smith (2004), Coulthard (2014), and Brooks (1998) whose writings have demonstrated connections between land, settler colonialism, and violence.

[11] Outside of demographers —who have long seemed interested in sizes of Native populations—some clear exceptions exist (e.g. Fenelon, Steinman, Cantlzer, Snipp, Jacob, and Norgaard).

broadly, Dorceta Taylor's (2016) analysis of the rise of the U.S. conservation

movement has provided important insights into how race, class, and gender inform

the development of U.S. environmentalism, while also considering settler colonialism

as part of conservation's eco-social project. Other recent publications have aimed to

tease out the relationship between settler colonialism, decolonization and

environmental justice (e.g. Clark 2002; Cantzler and Huynh 2016; Pellow 2016). [12]

Settler colonialism and eco-social structure

While it has been clearly demonstrated how racism, sexism, capitalism and a

host of other forces structure eco-social relations, especially the generation and

maintenance of inequalities through the disproportionate distribution of

environmental benefits and burdens (e.g. Taylor 2000; Taylor 2016; Brulle and

Pellow 2006), I contend that these structures are themselves—in the U.S. context—

tied to settler colonialism. Since the wealth and power of the U.S. as a state is

grounded in the ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands, I consider settler

colonialism—though always in connection with other forms of domination—the

primary force shaping eco-social relations in this country. [13]

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[12] Though not working in the area of environment, the scholarly exchange between Glenn (2015), Fenelon (2015), and Bonilla-Silva (2016) which moved the conversation about settler colonialism forward in the area of race and ethnicity scholarship, necessarily addressed issues of eco-social relations demonstrating the centrality of this issue in settler colonialism and scholarship aimed at explaining this structure. Glenn's (2015) attention to the imposition of cultural values that transform land into property, and Fenelon's (2015) important interventions regarding issues of homeland defense, territoriality, and the colonial-capitalist exploitation of land and labor stand out in this regard.

[13] There is a need for work analysing how the settler-colonial structuring of eco-social relations impacts inter-group relations in the United States. I do not simply mean between Native groups and environmental organizations, nor even between Native peoples and settlers, but more broadly. I believe that settler colonialism plays a role in structuring other forms of hierarchical social relations within the U.S. Just as scholars like Coulthard and Fenelon have drawn ample connections between settler colonialism and capitalism, I would suggest that since settler colonialism is a system which imposes and naturalizes various other systems of power –class, race, heteropatriarchy—it is a structure that ought to be included in all intersectional analyses (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013).

Settler colonialism and elimination

Scholars in both Native Studies and Settler Colonial Studies have given special attention to settler colonialism's aspirations of self-supersession by which the division between colonizer and colonized is effectively erased from public consciousness, conferring "native status" upon the settler population and state (Veracini 2011). This is a process Wolfe describes as "In accordance with these aspirations, Native Americans in the United States have been subjected to numerous attempts at elimination.[14]

The first and most obvious of these are the attempts at physical elimination through genocide. This includes massacres (e.g. Wounded Knee, Sand Creek), and the less well-known practices of sterilization (Lawrence 2000, Torpy 2000). Through programs of assimilation, the U.S. government attempted to culturally eliminate Native Americans. A clear example of this is the boarding school system which explicitly sought to, in the words of Richard Henry Pratt, "kill the Indian to save the man" (Jacobs 2006). Politically, policies of termination sought to eliminate Native peoples as unique political groups (Fixico 1986). At the same time, socio-cultural norms tend toward the discursive elimination of Native peoples and the erasure of settler colonial processes (Table 3).

Generally, U.S. culture and education, through dual processes of under-representation and misrepresentation, generate and reproduce a public lack of understanding about both Native peoples and the processes of settler-colonialism

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[14] I wish to acknowledge that extensive work in the area of tribal self-determination which is in many respects still accelerating. Nothing in this paper should be understood as ignoring or contradicting this, but rather as an effort to call attention to how settler colonialism has in many ways attempted to impede Indigenous life, rights, and sovereignty (Deloria and Lytle 1984; Smith and Warrior 1996; Brunyeel 2013).

(Shear et. al. 2015; Johnston-Goodstar and Roholt 2017). The bulk of the dominant culture's knowledge about Native peoples comes from sources that are not Native-made, and reflect neither Indigenous epistemologies nor realities (Leavitt et. al. 2015; Fryberg 2008).

TABLE 3: Settler-colonial elimination projects

Form of Elimination	Examples
Physical / Genocide	Massacres Forced / Coerced Sterilization
Cultural / Assimilation	Boarding schools "Indian offences"
Political / Termination	Ending political status Voiding / Not affirming treaties
Discursive / Erasure	Underrepresentation Misrepresentation

These forms of elimination inscribe themselves on the land and fundamentally inform perceptions of place. Ways of relating to place and environment contribute to social identities and cultures; simultaneously they are informed and constrained by sociological processes (Coté 2010; Smith 2012; Berkes 2012; Norgaard and Reed. 2017). If you live in the United States ask yourself these questions: Whose traditional territory am I living on? How many federally recognized tribes are in my state? What are their names? If you are like the majority of people I've asked over the years, you struggled to answer. Indeed, I have met very few people who can easily name the traditional peoples of the land they live on. Fewer still know the treaty, treaties, or acts of Congress which enabled their town or city to be developed. This substantial knowledge gap, even among highly educated people, is consistent with settler-colonial goals of erasure.

Interpersonal / organizational culture and practice: settler colonialism and U.S. environmentalism

Even deeply committed environmentalists with a stated commitment to place often have difficulty when it comes to questions that touch upon the settler-colonial structuring of those very places they are committed to. This results not only from wide-spread erasure but also from the settler-colonial roots of U.S. environmentalism.

Mainstream environmental movements—particularly those with wilderness, conservation, preservation, and reform frameworks—are epistemologically bound up with settler colonialism. They rely on Western science and law as their foundation for identifying and addressing environmental concerns, and in general exhibit no explicit concern for social justice, nor any acknowledgment of Indigenous peoples as contemporary members of the world, but rather frame their arguments around generalized human mismanagement of the Earth's natural resources. Thankfully this is changing, albeit slowly. Yet, consider this type of phrasing, common across a wide range of environmental discourses, which lays the blame for environmental crisis indiscriminately on all humans: "Few problems are less recognized, but more important than, the accelerating disappearance of the Earth's biological resources. In pushing other species to extinction, humanity is busy sawing off the limb on which it is perched" (Miller and Spoolman 2012, 48). Or, "[T]hus human beings are now carrying out a large scale geophysical experiment of a kind that could not have happened in the past nor be reproduced in the future. Within a few centuries we are returning to the atmosphere and oceans the concentrated organic carbon stored in sedimentary rocks over hundreds of millions of years." (McKibben 2011)

A closer look at statements made by foundational figures in these movements further demonstrates the presence of settler colonial tendencies inherent in each

group. Histories of U.S. environmentalism often begin with the conflict between conservationists and preservationists. While these two approaches to the environment differed in important ways, both were deeply entrenched in settler-colonial ideologies and practices. The conservation movement emerged within a discourse of nationalist expansion and white racial decline (Cronon 1996; Dunaway 2000). Advocates of this position promoted deeper incursions into Indigenous lands while also calling for responsible management of resources. Influential conservationist Madison Grant was deeply committed to both the conservation of land and to pseudo-scientific forms of racism which advocated the conquest of the continent by the "Nordic type". Grant's (1933) position regarding Native peoples may be summed up by his claim that "no one who knew the true nature of the Indian felt any regret that they were driven off" (164).

The stamp of settler colonialism is also apparent on the programs and discourses put forth by the preservationists. The U.S. movement for preservation emerged within the cultural context of developments such as transcendentalism which embraced a spirituality that encouraged wonder at and care for creation (Brulle 2000). Much of the work of the preservation movement centers wilderness, an idea which itself is the product of a worldview alien to Indigenous peoples whose homes are the very places the term is now so emphatically attached to (Cronon 1996; Spence 1996). One of the dominant figures of this movement is John Muir, who remains well known for the critical role he played in promoting the preservation of so-called wild places. What is less acknowledged is the way his work encouraged members of settler society to venture out into places they had not previously gone, further displacing Native peoples (Spence 1996). Also less acknowledged is that Muir was an active participant

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in discourses which romanticized Native peoples at some moments only to demean and dehumanize them at others. In *My First Summer in the Sierra*, Muir writes:

> How many centuries Indians have roamed these woods nobody knows, probably a great many, extending far beyond the time that Columbus touched our shores, and it seems strange that heavier marks have not been made. Indians walk softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than the birds and squirrels, and their brush and bark huts last hardly longer than those of wood rats, while their more enduring monuments, excepting those wrought on the forests by the fires they made to improve their hunting grounds, vanish in a few centuries (Muir 1911, 73).

This quote, while on the surface relatively benign compared to the words of Grant, is similarly steeped in the idea of inevitable erasure of Native peoples.

Lesser-known, but highly influential in his time, Samuel Bowles also contributed to the settler-colonial character of the wilderness preservation movement. In *The Switzerland of America: A Summer Vacation in the Parks and Mountains of Colorado*, Bowles (1869) proclaimed, "We know they are not our equals [and] that our right to the soil, as a race capable of its superior improvement, is above theirs; … let us act directly and openly.... Let us say to [the Indian] ... you are our ward, our child, the victim of our destiny, ours to displace, ours to protect" (124).

Contemporary mainstream environmentalism bears the lasting impressions of these origins, and over the years each generation has contributed to the settler-colonial character of the movement. In general, U.S. environmental groups have tended to be oblivious toward Native peoples and/or settler-colonialism, or have drawn upon perverted images of an "ecological other" via tropes such as the "noble savage,"

which has deep roots in the work of early environmentalists and depends upon the limited knowledge of the settler populace regarding the real lived experiences of Native peoples (Smith 2012; Leddy 2017). The pattern of discounting Indigenous epistemologies and practices is visible everywhere in environmentalist discourse, though perhaps it is most starkly evident in Aldo Leopold's famous claim that "[t]here is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it" (Leopold 1987). Published in 1949, in *A Sand County Almanac*, this claim entirely ignores millennia of Indigenous land tenure, as well as the social and cultural ethics of Indigenous peoples regarding the treatment of the land.

Equally troubling are the assertions of later scholars who acknowledge the existence of Native peoples but have difficulty recognizing the intense coloniality of their claims-making. Consider Roderick Nash's (1985) contention that "the gospel of ecology should not be seen so much as a revolt against American traditions as an extension and new application of them—as just another rounding out of the American Revolution" (179). In this essay, Nash claims that America is inherently about expanding the provision of liberty to various groups of people, and that ultimately it would be in keeping with this tendency to extend rights and liberty to the environment. While Nash does not completely ignore the existence of Native peoples, he does not acknowledge that the continued existence of the United States represents not a provision of liberty for Native peoples but rather an ongoing settler-colonial occupation of Indigenous territory with increasing incursions into that territory. This type of assertion continues into the 21st century. In a 2014 opinion piece published in the *Los Angeles Times*, Nash writes "[w]hen we go to designated wilderness we are, as the 1964 act says, 'visitors' in someone else's home. As such there are house rules to be followed." This statement is particularly interesting since Nash is by no means

talking about the human beings whose homes the U.S. government was literally redefining with the Wilderness Act (Spence 1996). Like Nash, Bill McKibben also writes in detail about the American "National Project" and the American Revolution in *The End of Nature* (2006) and in *Eaarth* (2010), but in neither book does he actively engage in any analysis of settler colonialism, or contemporary Native peoples[15]. In *Eaarth*, McKibben does make a passing reference to "the decimation of the Indians" but nothing more (118).

Alternatively, U.S. environmentalists have a strong tendency toward the haphazard taking up, misattributing, and misappropriating of Native ideologies and practices. Evidence of this trend can be found throughout a wide range of cultural productions generated by the wilderness, preservation, and deep-ecology frames. A famous example is Gary Snyder's use of "Coyote", and the elevation of this trope by figures central to the development of Deep Ecology such as Bill Devall (1980). While Snyder does credit Warm Springs people as the source of his knowledge about coyote, the poem itself, and the deployments of the trope within deep ecology thereafter, do more to elevate a particular form of spiritually eclectic settler environmentalism than they do to acknowledge Indigenous peoples. In the settler-colonial context, these usages of Native stories, symbols, and images serve to obscure both the historic events related to colonization and the ongoing occupation of Native lands.

While these practices are mobilizing for some, the cultural productions and discourses described above also suggest the way settler-colonial interests and perspectives have structured the environmental movement. Mainstream

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[15] Since the Dakota Access struggle, McKibben has been more active in talking about Native peoples, but it is a sad comment on the state of environmentalism that it took such a massive act of resistance to awaken anything more than romantic nostalgia for Indians in the environmental community.

environmentalisms' public and political discourses frame environmental problems as a human-versus-nature conflict. These discourses impose a particular vision of eco-social relations broadly on all human beings. Namely, these discourses suggest that all humans (or at least those who do not identify as environmentalists) participate in eco-social relationships based on appropriation and exploitation, in which the ecological drivers of identity go unnoticed and are taken for granted. Such assertions disregard the vast differences between human communities with respect to both decision-making power and eco-social norms.

State Power: U.S. settler-colonial environmental practice and policy

Although the particulars of settler-colonial eco-social structuring differ from place to place, and have shifted over generations, ultimately the pattern remains: settlers expropriate land and resources from Indigenous people, disrupting Indigenous cultures, economies, and conceptions of kinship and personhood (Baldy 2013; LaDuke; Cotè 2010; Norgaard and Reed 2017). Settler-colonial impositions cannot be sufficiently understood as the result of a particular episode, or single set of practices relegated to the past—such as the Dawes Act, or the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from Yosemite National Park—but are instead a set of ongoing and unequal conditions which have informed a myriad of settler approaches to environment within the US, ranging from the most callously exploitative to the most ardently preservationist (Wolfe 2006; Taylor 2016; Holleman 2017).

This eco-social structure relies on forces of both cultivation (programs, policies, and discourses promoting settler expansion) and discipline (organizations which generate and enforce prohibitions on land access and use) which shape eco-social relations in ways that meet settler interests at the expense of Native peoples. One example of this is the history of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), which

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has received some detailed analysis by legal scholars (e.g. Newell 1997; Shepherd 2001). Established in 1902 as a response to increased settler demands for water, the Reclamation Service was charged with developing and maintaining water projects in the west (Newell 1997). While the BOR facilitated increasing colonial occupation and land-use conversion throughout the west by providing access to heavily subsidized water, irrigation projects serving Indigenous peoples remained under the control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The water projects undertaken by the BIA were often never completed, and to make matters worse, the BOR actively "sought waters that were potential sources for Native American projects, in order to lay claim to those waters before BIA could begin projects" (Newell 1997)[16]. Not only did the BOR appropriate water resources for settlers at the expense of Indigenous peoples—a hydro-colonization—but they also play a pivotal role in the development of large dams which continue to wreak lasting devastation on Indigenous eco-social relations.

The BOR is just one example of how settler-colonial state interventions continue to structure eco-social relations. Similarly, the U.S. Forest Service's role in prohibiting culturally specific land management practices (Norgaard, 2014; Baldy 2103), state government policies that attempt to limit treaty-guaranteed rights to hunting, fishing, and gathering on ceded territories (Whaley and Bresette 1994; Nesper 2002), and the decision to place particularly polluting military installations or waste disposal facilities in close proximity to reservation lands (Hooks and Smith 2004) all demonstrate the way state power facilitates the dispossession of Native peoples and the disruption of Indigenous eco-social relations. These patterns of

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[16] Although tribal water rights were upheld in the 1908 ruling *Winters v. United States*, enforcement has been irregular, and the BOR has repeatedly undertaken projects harmful to Native peoples.

practice all disproportionately benefit settler institutions while burdening Indigenous peoples.

Colonial ecological violence

What I have presented above comprises only a tiny fraction of the myriad ways contemporary eco-social relations within the United States are subject to the structuring force of settler colonialism. But what of the outcomes for Native peoples? To answer this, I find it useful to consider again the many forms of elimination deployed in the U.S, and to think about how each has a connection to questions of environment (Table 4). As the table suggests, the mechanisms of eco-social disruption are numerous: land is redistributed, privatized, polluted, and renamed with generally no input or consent on the part of the original inhabitants; the value of places and beings are redefined by the culture of the colonizers. These contribute to an array of harms, and can emerge from either ferocious cruelty, characterized by "emotional and celebratory assaults on the body," or through callous cruelty, which is bureaucratized and distant (Collins 1974).

TABLE 4: Examples of eco-social aspects of elimination

Form of Elimination	Eco-Social Examples
Physical / Genocide	Poisoning of food/water Taking of water
Cultural / Assimilation	Disruption of ecological knowledge The Dawes Act and loss of tribal land holdings
Political / Termination	Post-termination land losses Loss of usufruct treaty rights
Discursive / Erasure	Renaming of culturally significant places Repurposing of culturally significant places

Contemporary forms of land management, such as the development of the BOR described above, do the work of eco-social disruption without the explicitly stated intent to commit violence, yet with highly destructive results for Native communities. By foreclosing the possibility of relationships with and responsibilities

to ecologies, land management under settler colonialism contributes to physical, emotional, economic and cultural harms. I contend that these eco-social disruptions generate colonial ecological violence, a unique form of violence perpetrated by the settler-colonial state, private industry, and settler-colonial culture as a whole.

While some scholars have understandably focused on genocide and ecocide in their analyses of the relationship between native peoples and environmental practice (e.g. Grinde and Johansen 1995; Brook 1998), I would like to offer "colonial ecological violence" as a term that allows for a broad analysis of the diverse ways settler colonialism disrupts Indigenous eco-social relations, and generates specific risks and harms for Native peoples and communities.

A case for ecological damage as violence: Native claims about land, identity, and life

To understand the equation of eco-social disruptions with violence it is vitally important that scholars take seriously the words of Indigenous scholars, activists and cultural producers who for generations have expressed the central importance of land in their identities and lives (e.g. LaDuke 1999, 2005). All around the world, Indigenous people have given voice to the critical relationship between themselves, their people, and their land. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) describes how Western conceptions of space have contributed to the mischaracterization of Indigenous peoples, and have transformed Indigenous conceptions of space not only through the ferocious violence of removal and ecological damage, but through the renaming of places. Smith writes:

> Renaming the land was probably as powerful ideologically as changing the land… newly named land became increasingly disconnected from the songs and chants used by indigenous peoples to trace their

histories, to bring forth spiritual elements, or to carry out the simplest
of ceremonies (54).

This focus on place renaming as colonial ecological violence is echoed by Indigenous scholars in Canada and in the U.S. (Coté 2010; LaDuke 2005). In *All Our Relations*, LaDuke (1999) presents case after case of Indigenous peoples explaining the value of land and the need for ecological integrity. One especially clear articulation of this comes from a 1997 interview with Lennie Butcher (Anishinaabe).

They cut down all the trees, the fir trees, all of them, and then they say
we can't practice our way of life. All these plants are given to us as
medicines from the sweatlodge, and this is who we are. We are this
land and everything that comes from it (134).

If sociology attends to narratives like this, it becomes clear just how firmly enmeshed identity is with eco-social relations, and highlights the significant risk posed by eco-social disruption.

Colonial ecological violence, slow violence, and public health

Currently, there is a robust analysis of Native health, welfare, academic achievement, etc. which fails to account for the role of eco-social relations (Bacon, Jacob and Gonzales in preparation). Ultimately this lack of attention generates work which pathologizes Native peoples (Tuck 2009). Given the centrality of land in producing wealth, health and cultural identity it stands to reason that a body of literature dedicated to crises such as Native suicides or addiction which does not acknowledge the ongoing appropriations of Native lands, or the disproportionate ecological burdens born by Native peoples cannot adequately account for the causes of those crises.

Attention to colonial ecological violence then may be an important frame for

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bringing together analyses of Native health with environmental sociology. Because the concept of colonial ecological violence is broadly defined and flexible, there is room within the concept to consider both spectacular forms of violence—the obvious and often instantaneous episodes of damage—and slow forms of violence which occur more-or-less invisibly over long durations of time (Nixon 2013).

Certainly there must be attention paid to the ferocious and spectacular assaults on Native people through environmental damage. Some examples include the forced removals of peoples from their homelands, as well as instances when war was overtly waged on Native peoples through direct assaults on the environment, such as the wilful destruction of bison herds, and the more recent shows of militarized force in the service of extractive industries such as the conflicts over the Keystone XL and Dakota Access Pipeline. Yet, while these examples and others like them surely have enduring cultural, economic, and social impacts, as well as far-reaching historical roots, spectacular instances of violence are not the full story. There ought to be attention to the long-term implications of such violences and attention to instances of slow violence: the poisoning of communities, the economic and health repercussions of resource depletion, and the emotional and identity impacts of desecrated sacred sites, to name but a few examples.

Thankfully, some scholarship generated in the area of mental health research further demonstrates the logic of understanding eco-social disruption as a form of violence. Consider Brave Heart and DeBruyn's (1998) study which asserts "historical unresolved grief … has created intergenerational trauma" among Native peoples.[17]

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[17] Intergenerational trauma itself is initiated by spectacular and traumatic episodes (e.g. genocide, forced removal, interpersonal violence) yet the pernicious effects of this trauma passed on to future generations might be thought of as a form of slow violence to the extent that it is the ongoing long-term effects of events and processes no longer apparent yet undoubtedly harmful.

This trauma and related patterns of self-destructive behavior, have been linked to "conflicts between American Indian traditional cultural values, practices, beliefs and those of the majority culture" (Whitbeck et. al. 2002). Since a strong component of many Indigenous cultures is a robust relationship to place (LaDuke 2005; Berkes 2012) it serves to reason that forced removals, settler resource appropriation, and the ecological damage perpetrated by U.S. settler colonial society contribute significantly to the "conflict" between "traditional cultural values" and "those of the majority culture" that Whitbeck et. al. (2002) describe.

While the emotional impacts of ecological damage are not the explicit focus of most mental health research on American Indian and Alaska Native communities, a relationship between eco-social disruptions and negative emotional impacts can be extrapolated from some of those studies' results and recommendations. For example, in a study of 287 American Indian adults, Whitbeck et. al. (2002) noted that although the stress of cultural conflict is correlated with depression, participation in cultural activities is correlated with prosocial behaviors, and those who participated in cultural activities showed resistance to the "psychologically harmful" effects of discrimination. Some examples of cultural activities from the study include ricing, spear-fishing, hunting, sugaring, and berry picking. Ongoing ecological decline and/or further settler-colonial appropriation imperils these cultural activities. As such, how could ecological damage not be a threat to Indigenous wellbeing?[18]

The connection between land loss and negative health impacts is also supported by a quantitative study of 354 Native adults from across the US. In this study, stress related to land loss or land-based micro-aggressions (such as colonial renaming of

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[18] Ecological damage, taken to extremes, is clearly a threat to the well-being of everyone alive but in this case I am pointing to the loss of culturally important sites and species which people from the dominant culture might not notice the loss of or feel imperiled by regardless of actual risk.

important sites) significantly contributed to negative health outcomes. The authors state "our findings suggest that historical traumatic land-based assaults may make much more than a modest contribution to mental health risk" (Walters et. al. 2012).

In a study of mental health among Lakota men and boys, Brave Heart et. al. (2012) explore the role of collective historical trauma in the lives of contemporary Lakota men. Although the article primarily focuses on how shared histories of violence, sexual abuse, and poverty contribute to increased rates of suicide, addiction and depression, the loss of land figures prominently. One respondent states "I think losing the land was the most traumatic." The authors go on to illustrate that the loss of the buffalo and land traumatized Lakota peoples (particularly men) not only because it resulted in a loss of traditional ways of life, but because such a loss is perceived as a failure to uphold the sacred responsibility Lakota people have to the land.

This sense of failure not only generates the despair described by Brave Heart et. al. (2012), but also drives active resistance to settler-colonial disruptions of Indigenous eco-social relations. Although colonial ecological violence has separated many people from their sacred places, distorted the history of land-tenure, and brutalized the ecology that upholds all life, there are many Native people who resist these forces which continually degrade the environment. But this resistance requires Native peoples to take great risks in their attempts to fulfil their responsibility to defend their land, water, and non-human relatives (Norgaard 2014; Norgaard and Reed 2017).

Those who attempt to meet their eco-social obligations often find themselves in direct conflict with well-armed and well-funded forces who seek to exploit the natural world. Protecting the sacred is criminalized under settler-colonial law, and those who fight back against colonial ecological violence are often threatened, attacked, and

imprisoned. Nevertheless, Indigenous peoples continue to oppose colonial ecological violence ideologically, culturally, and materially. Clear evidence of this resistance has been presented in the recent cases of open opposition to Keystone XL, Oak Flat, and the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Beyond protests, Native peoples also resist colonial ecological violence through numerous initiatives and activities, including efforts to maintain traditional practices. This too is often criminalized through restrictions on hunting, fishing, gathering, and burning. This criminalization of traditional practices is widespread as, Leaf Hillman (Karuk) explains:

> In order to maintain a traditional Karuk lifestyle today, you need to be an
> outlaw, a criminal, and you had better be a good one or you'll likely end
> up spending a great portion of your life in prison. The fact of the matter is
> that it is a criminal act to practice a traditional lifestyle and to maintain
> traditional cultural practices necessary to manage important food
> resources or even to practice our religion (qtd. Norgaard 2014, 23).

Lennie Butcher shares a similar experience. As an Anishinaabe man who hunts and gathers in his traditional territory, Butcher has been repeatedly arrested for violating the settler-colonial laws imposed upon him. Butcher says "I wasn't born to be rich. I was born to live a good life …I hunt all over. I don't believe the white man has the right to stop us" (qtd. LaDuke 1999, 133).

Through their resistance, Native peoples have called attention to settler-colonial land management as an attack on Indigenous peoples. For example, Chief Caleen Sisk of the Winnemem Wintu has described dams as "weapons of mass destruction" (qtd. Bacher 2014). Like numerous tribes in the west, the Winnemem Wintu have survived not only waves of intense state-sanctioned physical violence and

land appropriation, but also the disruption of their sacred relationship with the river and the salmon. The ecological damage created by large dams disrupts the physical, spiritual, economic and emotional health of Indigenous peoples and represents an insidious yet ever-present form of colonial ecological violence.

The concept of eco-social disruptions as violence against Native peoples is nothing new, since Native people have long been making these types of claims, but I hope that the term "colonial ecological violence" will provide sociologists with a useful framework for considering the various harms and risks that settler-colonial norms and practices regarding the environment generate for Indigenous communities.

Moving forward

There is a need for more sociological research that considers settler colonialism and colonial ecological violence, not just by environmental sociologists but by the discipline more broadly. For example, sociologists interested in violence and intergroup relations might develop a rich analysis of what drives the perpetration of colonial ecological violence. Although industry and government have the most power in performing acts of colonial ecological violence, everyday practices and settler-colonial cultural norms also contribute. How might this be linked with other analyses of culture, power, and violence? For example, there is a robust literature addressing the connections between hegemonic masculinity and violence within the U.S. As such, it would be worthwhile to consider how in the United States, particular forms of ecological practice are simultaneous displays of hegemonic masculinity and settler-colonial domination.[19] Similarly there is ample room to consider how white

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[19] Some studies already suggest this connection without explicitly considering the relationship to settler colonialism (e.g. Bell and York 2010; Miller 2004)

supremacy and settler colonialism co-author various practices and ideologies regarding land-use.

Given the settler-colonial structuring of U.S. environmentalism there is also a need for research into conflicts and solidarity between Native peoples and non-Native environmental movements. Although the need for collaboration between people concerned with ecological health may be greater than ever, contestations persist between Indigenous peoples and environmental movements.

Indigenous-led movements and settler-led movements for environmental protection have experienced the most direct conflicts around issues of hunting, fishing and gathering rights. In her work regarding the Makah whale hunt, Charlotte Coté (2010) notes, "whaling opponents generated a discourse against Makah and Nuu-chah- nulth whaling that overlooked and ... discredited the cultural significance of our decision to revive our whaling practices" (165). Like during earlier anti-sealing and anti-fishing protests conducted in part by animal rights activists and deep ecologists, the exercise of treaty-protected rights generated sometimes violent rhetoric and actions. Members of Greenpeace openly contested the authenticity of Native people who would engage in commercial hunting or fishing (Cantzler 2007). Similarly, in the Wisconsin struggle over spearfishing, anti-Indian rhetoric often contained elements of environmentalism which depicted Native peoples wishing to exercise treaty rights as cultural impostors who would destroy the ecology of the north woods (Whaley and Bresette 1994; Nesper 2002). Despite this, we have witnessed increasing collaboration particularly around climate change and pipeline resistance (Lipsitz 2008; Grossman 2017). Scholars interested in environmental movements could develop a robust literature addressing the challenges and outcomes of these solidarity efforts.

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What I have suggested here are just a few of the possible directions scholars could take in bringing the theory of settler colonialism to bear on our work in environmental sociology. In truth the possibilities are far more numerous. Steinmann (2012) contends that sociology's "inattention [to settler colonialism] reflects limitations of the existing conceptualizations of both the nature of power and domination in the United States and of political power and contestation more generally" (1074). This is certainly true with regard to our thinking about the environment. As rich as environmental sociology's analyses have been around issues of capitalism they have yet to adequately address the appropriations of land and resources which allowed capitalism to take root on this continent. Work in the areas of environmental, climate, and food justice will also gain from a more rigorous grappling with questions of settler colonialism.[20]

Just as the introduction of the New Ecological Paradigm revolutionized sociology as a discipline, encouraging a fuller consideration of the natural world as a salient feature in social life, so too will attention to settler colonialism enrich and strengthen sociology's understanding of eco-social relations, the environmental challenges we face, and the possibility for sociology's contribution to eco-social transformation.

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[20] While advocating for sociological work in these areas I acknowledge that this work is well-underway in other disciplines such as geography (e.g. Grossman 2017) and is especially well developed in Native Studies (e.g. Alfred 1999; LaDuke 1999; Baldy 2013; Whyte 2016)

CHAPTER III

DANGEROUS PIPELINES, DANGEROUS PEOPLE: COLONIAL ECOLOGICAL

VIOLENCE AND MEDIA FRAMING OF THREAT IN THE DAKOTA ACCESS

PIPELINE CONFLICT

In August 2016, international attention turned to an encampment of Dakota

people and their allies situated on the plains of North Dakota near the Standing Rock

Indian Reservation. Their stated primary goal was the protection of Lake Oahe, the

source of tribal drinking water, from a proposed pipeline which they considered a

serious threat not only to the waters of Oahe, but to the Dakota people and the planet.

Although large-scale Indigenous-led mobilizations in the United States are not

entirely unprecedented, the flurry of media attention, police activity, and public

discourse which ensued was truly historic (e.g. Lipsitz 2008; Grossman 2017).

Understanding the events surrounding the resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline

(DAPL) requires an acknowledgement that much of the activity at Standing Rock as

well as the larger public, police, and media response to it, are tied to the ongoing

occupation of Dakota lands and the ways in which politics and sociocultural life

within the United States are structured by settler colonialism.

Resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline may be thought of as an

environmental mobilization, or as part of the burgeoning global mobilization for

climate justice, but it is also (perhaps primarily) part of a long-term Indigenous

resistance to the settler-colonial appropriation of territory and the ecological damages

inflicted on that territory by settler practices and institutions (LaDuke 1999; Simpson

2004; Norgaard 2014; Cantzler and Huynh 2016).

Taking the No DAPL movement as a case study, this analysis considers how

discursive frames in the local print media mobilizes discourses of risk and security in

ways that contradict or attempt to invalidate Indigenous responses to actual or potential ecological harms. Drawing on theories of settler colonialism, as well as on studies of social movement framing, and the rural sociology of resource conflict, this article considers how media narratives contribute to—and in rare instances resist—the production of colonial ecological violence.

Settler colonialism and eco-social relations

While Indigenous peoples in what is now called the United States have been participating in distinctive eco-social relations with their homelands for many generations before settler arrival, settler colonialism now constitutes a dominant structure in determining the shape of contemporary relationships between peoples and the land they live on. Scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2013) assert "[s]ettler colonialism is different from other forms of colonialism in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain" (5). This particular type of colonial occupation insists upon the "invisibilization" of its own history, structures, and dynamics (Wolfe 2006; Veracini 2013).

Settler colonialism structures eco-social interactions within the United States. At the most fundamental level, settler colonialism requires the appropriation of land and resources by the settler state and population (Alfred 2009; Tuck and Yang 2013; Coulthard 2014). This appropriation is an ongoing part of day-to-day life (Coulthard 2014). Simultaneously, settler forms of eco-social relations are validated and valorized, while traditional forms of Indigenous eco-social practice are denied, degraded, or criminalized (LaDuke 2005; Baldy 2013; Norgaard 2014).[21]

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[21] Consider for example the way dam construction, the installation of federal management, and the criminalizing of traditional burning have altered the ability of Karuk peoples to access their traditional foods (Norgaard 2005).

Especially relevant to our understanding of the No DAPL movement is the way settler colonialism's ongoing appropriation is coupled with increasing ecological degradations and encroachments. These types of encroachments are often a direct violation of treaty-reserved rights and the federal trust responsibility (Deloria 2006; Cantzler and Huynh 2016). State-sanctioned resource extraction practices such the Dakota Access Pipeline project provide a starkly obvious example of this tendency (Geisler 2014). Environmental and resource policies such as those that enabled the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline appropriates the wealth of the land for private settlers and / or the settler state, while simultaneously inflicting disproportionate harms on Indigenous peoples (Brook 1998; Geisler 2014; Cantzler and Huhyn 2017).

Such disproportionate harms have been alternately referred to as environmental racism, environmental injustice (Cantzler 2007; Cantzler and Huhyn 2017), ecocide (Brook 1998) and colonial ecological violence (Norgaard, Reed, and Bacon 2017). In all cases, sociologists have compellingly demonstrated that the environmental burdens experienced by Native peoples in the U.S. both emerge from and constitute significant forms of inequality. In studies of the long-term impacts of dam construction in the Klamath River Basin, Norgaard and colleagues demonstrate both the settler-colonial impetus for the projects in question and the subsequent disruption of eco-social relations between Karuk people and their salmon fisheries. These disturbances have led to increased rates of heart disease and diabetes among the Karuk while simultaneously interrupting a number of traditional social and cultural practices (Alkon and Norgaard 2009; Willette, Norgaard, and Reed 2016; Norgaard, Reed and Bacon 2018). In an analysis of toxic military wastes, "Treadmill of Destruction" theory posits that the pollution generated by the U.S. military within

U.S. borders tends to disproportionately expose Indigenous peoples to the most dangerous forms of military wastes. (Hooks and Smith 2004). The authors demonstrate that the geospatial patterns of their findings cannot be accounted for simply by a combination of capitalism and racialized housing markets (which tend to be the dominant frames of environmental justice research), but rather that the disproportionate toxic exposures experienced by Native American communities are instead more closely connected to Randal Collins' (1974) concepts of ferocious and callous cruelty. Their findings illustrate a pattern of exposure which reflects a callously managed legacy of ferocious violence—the direct military enclosure and repression of Indigenous peoples, as well as an ongoing callous or bureaucratized violence through which toxics are disposed of or left behind in close proximity to reservation sites. Their contributions are substantial for understanding the distinct feature of military-generated environmental harm within a settler-colonial state and for thinking more broadly about ecological degradation as a specific form of violence committed against Indigenous communities.

Colonial ecological violence is a useful theoretical lens for considering the events at Standing Rock. This theory asserts that the disruption of Indigenous eco-social relations is a form of colonial aggression which occurs across a range of levels—physical/material, cultural, political, and discursive. As such it can be usefully applied not only to analyses of the disproportionate environmental burdens faced by Native peoples, but also contends that disruption of eco-social relations by the settler-colonial state and their patrons in private industry constitutes a specific type of collective violence which has physical, cultural, and psychological dimensions. The connection between ecological degradation and the repression of Native peoples has been articulated across generations in various forms by Native

activists, scholars, and artists. Perhaps one of the best known of these is Winona

LaDuke, whose works have repeatedly asserted the importance of ecology in

Indigenous people's lives (LaDuke 1999; LaDuke 2005). Similarly, scholars such as

Kyle Powys Whyte (2016) Vine Deloria Jr.(2006) Leanne Simpson (2004) and Keith

Basso (1996) have highlighted the critical role of place in shaping Indigenous

identities and cultural practices. Scholars in the fields of public health and psychology

note the importance of environmental access and environmental health in maintaining

the social, psychological and physical well-being of Native people (e.g. Duran and

Duran 1995; Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998; Simpson 2004; Wilson 2005).

In his work connecting toxic waste disposal with ongoing genocide, Daniel

Brook asserts that "[f]ighting for environmental justice is a form of self-defense for

Native Americans" (1998:111). This claim is borne out by other studies such as

Cantzler's work on the Makah whaling controversy (2007) and her later work

analyzing the Boldt decision (Cantzler and Huhyn 2017). Both of these analyses draw

on ideas of colonialism as well as on the Principles of Environmental Justices to

highlight the persistent presence of environmental conflict in Indigenous political and

legal struggles for ongoing survival.

Media framing at the intersection of environment and identity

To understand the way media framing of the DAPL contributes to colonial

ecological violence, it is necessary to consider the research on framing with regard to

both minority group protests and environmental issues (e.g. Mastro and Stearn 2003;

Mastro 2015). Perhaps the most pronounced body of analysis on the topic of media

framing and environmental crisis has been around climate change framing, which is

informative for this research given the repeated climate concerns raised by the

opposition to DAPL. Although climate change has been a well-reported topic of

concern for decades, political action to stem the impacts of climate change has been minimal in the United States, and studies suggest this is linked at least in part to the patterns of media coverage which effectively sow doubt about the quality and consensus of climate science (e.g. Boykoff and Boykoff 2007; Carvalho 2007; McCright and Dunlap 2011; Jang and Hart 2015). Simultaneously, the mutually constitutive nature of media discourse and ideology gives media particular power in "allowing or disallowing other social actors to advance their ideological standings" with regard to climate (Carvalho 2007:225). Other analyses of climate change coverage such as work by, McCright and Dunlap (2011) suggest, "the industrial sector and the conservative movement… defend the industrial capitalist order from critique by denying the significance of problems such as climate change" and this is proliferated in part by media discourses (p. 155).

The role of media framing at the intersection of Indigenous protest and environmental practice has received much less attention (especially in the United States), though the framing of Indigenous-led protest broadly is suggestive of a tendency toward emphasizing disruptive protest tactics which may ultimately re-inscribe settler narrative conventions of Indigenous peoples as inherently confrontational toward the dominant culture (Wilkes, Corrigall-Brown, and Meyers 2010; Wilkes and Corrigall-Brown 2012). The process of accentuating stories or episodes that depict Indigenous people as hostile, is a practice that resonates with settler identities and collective memories of territorial conflict, a topic attended to further in the next section of this study.

Analysis of American Indian movements and movement framing indicates that American Indian social movement organizations are "typically small, and lack... significant resources, a structural deficit that include[s] easy access to media

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attention" (Baylor 1996:241). Baylor's analysis of American Indian protest coverage during the 1960's and 1970's suggests that "[u]nique attributes, details, and other important substantive points possessing little drama are likely to be sacrificed on the altar of media related methods of constructing news and audience ratings" (Baylor 1996:251). For this reason, Baylor contends that the choice to use confrontational tactics for coverage is a risky one since although the coverage may come, but the framing is likely to fail in conveying significant features of the political/social contestation. Similarly, the work of Canadian scholars demonstrates the tendency of media coverage to focus attention on disruptive First Nations protest tactics, potentially increasing the media bias against First Nations collective actions (Wilkes, Corrigall-Brown, and Meyers 2010; Wilkes and Corrigall-Brown 2012). In the case of Indigenous protests in Brazil, scholars suggest that mass media and social media attention increase the efficacy of protests with regard to leveraging public support for Indigenous claims. These scholars also acknowledge the costliness of confrontation for Indigenous peoples (Hanna, Langdon, and Vanclay 2016).

Collective identity, memory, and settler-colonial framing

Collective identities and memories play a significant role in forming community responses to actual or perceived environmental threats (Wulfhorst 2000; Messer, Shriver and Adams 2015). In some cases, these collective memories and identities generate powerful resistance mobilization, though in other cases, they can promote quiescence despite reasonably apparent environmental risks (Messer, Shriver and Adams 2015). Social narratives and media norms pivotally inform the development and maintenance of these identities and memories (Oliver and Meyers 1999; Messer, Shriver and Adams 2015). In the case of Indigenous peoples and colonial ecological violence, while resource appropriation and ecological damages

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happen at a material level, there are also important discursive features guiding political mobilization and decision making.

Discursively, colonial ecological violence is produced and sustained through separate but related framing practices of erasure and/or misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples on the one hand, and the proliferation of settlement narratives that naturalize—and even romanticize—processes of settlement on the other. Erasure is a central component of settler colonialism. Erasure describes a process whereby the settler-state, through various forms of political, social, and legal interventions, attempts to eradicate Indigenous peoples, or at the very least to severely limit Native sovereignty, and prevent the larger settler society from knowing too much or thinking too deeply about the continued existence and resistance of Native peoples (Wolfe 2006; Brunyeel 2007; Klein and Schiffman 2009; Tuck and Yang 2013; Couthard 2014).

In popular culture and in news media, this practice emerges through two primary mechanisms: first, through largely ignoring or simply failing to comment on the contemporary existence of Native Americans, and second, through presenting Native Americans predominantly as historical and static caricatures. Considering the first mechanism of erasure, surveys of mass media clearly illustrate the statistical underrepresentation of Native Americans in the U.S. (Fryberg 2003; Mastro and Stern 2003; Mastro and Behm-Morazwitz 2005; Fryberg & Townsend 2008; Tukachinsky, Mastro and Yarchi 2015; Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez and Fryberg 2015). For example, an analysis of twenty years' worth of prime time television portrayals notes "Native Americans face an unprecedented form of invisibility on television, often entirely absent from the TV landscape. Across the most recent content analyses, Native Americans (approximately 1% of the U.S. population) are found to represent

between 0.0 and 0.4 percent of the characters in primetime television" (Tukachinsky et al. 2015:5).

At the same time, studies from a wide range of disciplines highlight the chronic misrepresentation of Native peoples in which Indigenous people are portrayed almost entirely as mascots or as historical figures in the cultural imagination (e.g. Weston 1996; Tan, Fujiyoka, and Lucht 1997; Farnell 2004; Leavitt et. al. 2015). Misrepresentation and limited frames persist in news coverage as well. Mary Ann Weston's (1996) analysis *Native Americans in the News* tracks the shifting frames of media coverage which ultimately tend to portray Native people in dichotomous ways, either promoting an image of the "noble savage" or depicting Indigenous people as ferocious and violent. Weston also notes the emergence of the "degraded Indian" frame wherein Native Americans are rendered objects of pity due to their degraded conditions. This last frame is similar to Tuck and Yang's (2013) assertion that academics and the media tend to pathologize Native people by consistently describing them as "at risk."

Alongside these practices of Indigenous erasure and misrepresentation is the simultaneous proliferation of settlement narratives that naturalize and even glorify colonial settlement. Such narratives are pervasive across media types. Culturally, narratives of settlement constitute their own genres of film, literature, and art (Dunaway 2000). These narratives are also deeply woven into U.S. historical and political discourses. Regardless of media type, settlement narratives, like all aspects of settler colonialism, are inherently connected to a set of environmental values and practices.

Within the United States, narratives of history—political, social, and environmental—centrally convey the experiences and epistemologies of those most

invested in the generation and maintenance of the colonial project. In particular, frontier / soldier / cowboy strains of identity emerge not only in the popular culture through media and cultural productions (both the historic and contemporary), but are also part of the identities taken up by numerous people living in what might be thought of as the American West. For example, interview participants reveal personal attachments to these identities in academic studies of extractive industries (e.g. Miller 2004; Bell and York 2010; O'Shaughnessy and Krogman 2011). These identities also present themselves in studies of adaptations to new economic and ecological relationships in the face of environmental degradation (Anahita and Mix 2006) suggesting the profound tenacity of this set of identity tropes.[22] These identities are not only reproduced in narratives, but they are also publicly commemorated in events ranging from national holidays like thanksgiving, to local celebrations of "pioneer days," and "cowboy days" which are widespread. Commemoration actively reasserts the cultural value placed on the events and discourses of settler colonialism (Schwartz 1982; Olick 1999; Kurtis and Yellow Bird 2010).

In the case of colonial ecological violence, by consistently ignoring or invalidating Indigenous people's histories as well as their contemporary claims, the settler-state and settler society more generally encourage the continued appropriation of resources without attention to the numerous legal, political, and cultural concerns of Native peoples. Alternatively, when the Native population in a particular place is too numerous to be ignored, erasure and misrepresentation must exist alongside other means of claim invalidation. Misrepresentation, erasure and claim are all evident in

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[22] These persistent frontier narratives and tropes are also closely connected to certain gendered practices and assumptions. This connection suggests not only their centrality in rural white masculinities (the setting for many of these studies) but also that the dominant narrative of identity itself, at least in the American West, may be wed to romanticized notions of colonial supremacy and ecological conquest.

the ways news media framed both the Dakota Access Pipeline itself and the No DAPL movement's actions and assertions.

Methods

Colonial ecological violence is built in to the day-to-day social and political lives of those in settler states as the relationships between people and environment in these states are informed by the rhetorics, logics, and material conditions of settler-colonialism. To answer questions about how media framing of Indigenous-led movements may contribute to or resist colonial ecological violence, particularly in light of how media contributes to collective identities and collective memory, I have chosen to focus on local media coverage of the Dakota Access Pipeline from January 2015- March 2017.

The Dakota Access Pipeline case is relevant not because it is in any way more paradigmatic of colonial ecological violence in the United States than any number of similar disputes occurring around the country, but because this ongoing political and legal battle represents the most visible and hotly contested case of Indigenous-led political action in the United States at this time. It has generated considerable media coverage when compared with other disputes and has also stimulated intense debates across various levels of U.S. society in ways that other cases of contemporary conflicts between Indigenous peoples and the settler state (e.g. Oak Flat, Mauna Kea, Shasta Dam) have as yet failed to do.

In selecting the specific media outlet to analyze, I opted to focus on print media because print minimizes the possibility of transcription errors which might occur in television or radio transcripts, and because newspapers include letters to the editor and other forms of opinion writing, which can provide additional insights into

the rhetorical treatment of Indigenous-led movements and Indigenous peoples generally. I also chose to focus primarily on the local media coverage, which I believe has the most salience for contributing to the collective identities and memories mobilized in this conflict. For a local news source, I chose *The Bismarck Tribune*. This choice was made for two reasons. First, *The Bismarck Tribune* is the largest print news outlet in North Dakota and is therefore likely to have the biggest media impact within the state. Secondly, the entirety of this newspaper is available through searchable databases such as Lexis-Nexis which makes it easy to obtain articles; this ease of access not only benefits my research but also allows other researchers to acquire the complete data set with minimal effort. [23]Utilizing the search term "Dakota Access" I acquired a total of 839 unique articles from *The Bismarck Tribune.* Initially obvious was the tremendous upswing in coverage around August 2016 (Figure 1).
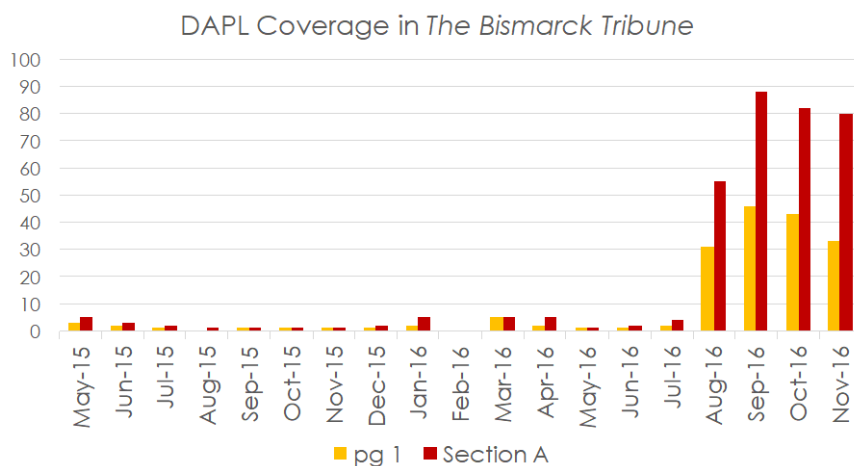
Figure 1: DAPL Coverage over time

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[23] For comparison I also occasionally reference national coverage to give some sense of this conflict's depiction more broadly In particular I reference the coverage in *The New York Times (NYT)* which has some of the most extensive national coverage of the pipeline (159 articles), and is widely read.

I proceeded to line-by-line code a sample of 50 articles drawn from local media across the time period of the data set with a dozen theoretically motivated codes (e.g. activism, agriculture, colonialism, economy, environment, regulation, treaty). This list of codes was further developed throughout the coding process. During this initial coding I observed a consistent focus on the related issues of risk, safety, and security. Based on this finding, I generated a catalog of commonly used terms related to risk. I call this set of codes the *general risk codes*.[24]

With these codes as a refinement tool, I then limited the data set to news coverage containing one or more of these codes (n=706). This data set was them examined for particular types of "risk" and "safety" discourse. Ultimately depictions of risk could be described as either environmental risks or people-as-risk.[25] [26]. I assessed the number of articles containing "risk" code types, as well as their distribution in section A and on the front page of the paper (Table 5, Figure 2).

THE BISMARCK TRIBUNE	
Articles about Dakota Access Pipeline	N =839
Percent on front page	37.78
Articles containing a risk theme	706
Percent on front page	39.23
Percent of front page DAPL coverage containing risk theme	87.38

Table 5

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[24] General risk codes: risk, threat, safe, hazard, damage, destroy, danger, dangerous, secure, security, safety, defend, protect

[25] Common terms identified within the "people-as-risk" frames: violent, violence, attack, assault, weapon, crime, police, law enforcement, sheriff, arrest, criminal

[26] Common terms identified within the "environmental risk" frames: pollution, pollute, leak, spill, contaminate, climate change, blowout, toxic, global warming, contamination, poison

Percentage of Coverage Containing Risk Codes
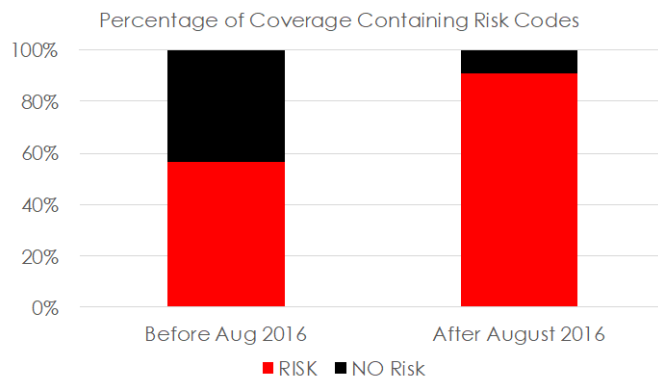
Figure 2

What follows is a close reading of passages from across the spectrum of risk frames used in *The Bismarck Tribune* during the January 2015-March 2017 coverage of Dakota Access.

Findings

Shifting Frames

Based on qualitative coding I find that the media coverage of the Dakota Access Pipeline can be divided into three stages. I label these stages: *lawsuit/regulatory*, *protest-as-risk*, and *protest-as-pollution*. This division is grounded on the persistence of particular tropes that dominate each time period.

During the *lawsuit/regulatory stage*, the earliest subset of the data, news coverage focuses on the ongoing multi-state permitting process occurring in Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota and South Dakota, as well as on legal conflicts between Energy Transfer Partners—the parent company for the Dakota Access Pipeline—and landowners, who along with the support of environmental organizations (e.g. EarthJustice) launched a litigation-based resistance to the proposed pipeline. The time period for this phase of coverage ranges from January 1, 2015 through July 31, 2016. This early media attention to the development of the Dakota Access Pipeline was

concentrated in local news sources: while this period received no coverage in national sources it was covered extensively by *The Bismarck Tribune* (73 articles).

In August 2016, a major shift in coverage of the Dakota Access Pipeline occurred. During this shift *The Bismarck Tribune* coverage becomes increasingly focused on Standing Rock and the water protector camps established near the Missouri River. This is also the time period where the Dakota Access Pipeline becomes national news with *The New York Times* picking up the story. It is during this phase of coverage that the question of pipeline safety largely fades out of the local media coverage, and is replaced with concerns over public safety which predominantly center on framing the DAPL resistance as criminal, anti-American, or terroristic. This trend persists, and to a certain degree overlaps with the final stage which I call the *protest-as-pollution stage*, when media attention shifts to the evacuation order and subsequent bulldozing of the pipeline resistance camps.

In this section I will consider the major discursive frames presented in each stage of news coverage. Throughout the dataset, the frames of risk, safety, and security recur with different meanings attached to each concept depending on the speaker and the era in which the content occurs. In general, the stages I've identified each contain a number of unique discursive frames. Many of these attempt to invalidate or limit Indigenous claims, such as frames which trivialize the risk presented by the pipeline, or those which attempt to vilify or criminalize Indigenous resistance to Dakota Access. These tropes are presented alongside (or within) more common practices of settler-colonial erasure of Indigeneity, such as a general failure to address treaty law or the federal trust relationship in any substantive way. At the same time the discursive frames deployed in the media coverage of the DAPL conflict also demonstrate the way concepts of threat and risk are mobilized in the interests of

state actors and private industry, and to the detriment of both individual actors and tribal nations.

Media Framing: Questions and Assurances

During the earliest round of media coverage, issues of "safety" were prevalent in *The Bismarck Tribune*. The discourse about "safety" during this time frame almost exclusively refers to either questioning or touting the safety of the pipeline itself. The N=54 news articles published during this period grant landowners, particularly farmers and ranchers, room to express concern over how the proposed pipeline might impact their crops and the future value of their land. These concerns however are typically paired with industry and government claims which together constitute an "official" discourse that attempts to allay fears, typically through a barrage of technical assurances. In these types of articles, Indigenous issues are essentially absent, and the conversation pivots on economic risks or rewards even when the environment is involved.

A prototypical example of this type of coverage is the January 17, 2015 article "Official: Proposed pipeline would boost economy, be safe." In this article a number of landowners express their hesitations about the proposed pipeline project. Agriculturalist Orrin Geide states: "[w]e have two wells on that section and I'm not hooked up to rural water …So I'm a little concerned about if they have a leak contaminating our water source." The article then supplies a refutation of this concern. Energy Transfer Partners Joey Mahmoud claims, "[t]here's not a minute that goes by that this pipeline will not be evaluated, controlled and reviewed to make sure it is operating in a safe condition …We pay top dollar, and we try to work with landowners." This article comes during the initial regulatory decision rounds in South Dakota which pre-date North Dakota's regulatory process. The publication in the

Bismarck Tribune of this article and ones like it, which consider the regulatory

proceeding of Iowa and Illinois, serves to prepare the citizens of North Dakota for

their own round of talks, but the lack of attention to Indigenous peoples suggests both

a standard settler-colonial approach, and a serious oversight given the status of tribal

nations and their legal role in the permitting process.

In May 2015, when regulatory proceedings began in North Dakota, the news

coverage continued to follow the pattern laid out in the initial coverage of the

lawsuit/regulatory stage. A May 24th article titled "Landowners wary of huge pipeline

project" provides readers with comments from a number of concerned parties. These

comments are somewhat more ambiguous than those in the South Dakota case, but

also include lawyers who are working on behalf of the landowners suggesting a hotter

level of contention between the company and the ND residents. Despite that, the

comments of the lawyers and the company almost seem to echo each other and the

focus continues to be largely economic. Attorney Matt Kelly: "[w]e're not against the

line…Our big thing is we want to write the best easement that's ever been written in

North Dakota to protect the landowner." This claim is immediately followed by vice

president of engineering for Energy Transfer Partners Chuck Frey stating: "[w]e want

to work with each of the landowners as best we can to have the least impact on their

land and on what they use the land for" (Dalrymple 2015a). This article is lighter on

technical specifications, but includes references to "state-of-the-art safety features"

and the economic importance of the project overall. As in the earlier regulatory

coverage there are no comments from Indigenous people nor any reference to

Indigenous concerns. This is where a consideration of Indigenous media becomes

useful for contextualizing patterns of erasure. The lack of news coverage regarding

Indigenous resistance to the pipeline is not a result of inaction on the part of Native

peoples. Indeed, as early as March 2015, Indigenous media was reporting tribal opposition, well before large-scale on-the-ground resistance took place.[27]

On March 30th 2016, in a pair of front page articles, one titled "Pipeline's crossing raises concerns" and the other "Sioux spirit camp to protest Dakota Access Pipeline," *lawsuit/regulatory stage* local news coverage contained the first hints of opposition from Standing Rock tribal members. The first article includes both non-Native landowners voicing concerns, as well as tribal archaeologist Kelly Morgan who expressed trepidation about "how low oil prices, struggling and failing oil companies and a dwindling workforce might affect control and cleanup response to spills." Morgan further asserted, "Standing Rock Sioux Tribe is against any and all pipelines going across the water…We can live without oil, but we cannot live without our water .... We know that pipelines break; we know there's spills." As in the case of framing landowner concerns about pipeline safety, this article too follows the pattern of risk assertion followed by official claims of pipeline safety (Holdman 2016a).

The second article is by far one of the most unique for several reasons, First, it is one of the few articles in the regulatory coverage phase that mentions protest. Second, it allows people to express their concerns about the pipeline as a significant risk without immediately rebutting those claims with some form of official discourse. In fact, this article quotes only Indigenous community members. The claims asserted in this article are regulatory in nature, and point to the specific concerns of Native peoples, not only with regard to water safety, but also with regard to protecting sovereignty. For example, the director of external affairs for Standing Rock says of the pipeline: "It's within 1,000 feet of the reservation, but it completely ignores the

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[27] "Meskwaki Nation Opposes New Pipeline Threat That Could Rival Keystone XL" *Indian Country Today.* March 16, 2015.

existence of a tribal nation…We're hoping to get the information out there that a tribal nation is put at risk for the interests of big oil and the state of North Dakota" (Donovan 2016a). This quote is significant in that it raises the critical issue of the tribe's government-to-government relationship with United States, a status that should prioritize the needs and interests of the Standing Rock Sioux over and above the interests of North Dakota (Deloria and Lytle 1984).

This framing, which suggests Indigenous peoples have legitimate concerns about the safety of the pipeline, and are not themselves posing a public safety risk is short lived, persisting in only two more articles—one on April 15th (Donovan 2016b) and another on July 29th (Holdman 2016b). The July 29th article is near the end of the *lawsuit/regulatory phase*, and it echoes the pattern established throughout this stage of coverage with one significant difference—in this case, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and not Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), are the ones to defend the pipeline. Following the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' decision to grant water crossing permits to ETP, the Standing Rock tribe filed a lawsuit with the support of attorneys at Earthjustice. Then Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault II asserted that a DAPL spill would "constitute an existential threat to the tribe's culture and way of life." The official response in this case came not from ETP, who could not be reached for comment according to the article, but from the Corps' Omaha District spokeswoman Eileen Williamson, who claimed "that the agency's review of the pipeline found 'no significant impacts to the environment or historic properties'" (Holdman 2016b).

Media framing from dangerous pipelines to dangerous people

After the permitting decision and resulting lawsuit, the on-the-ground resistance to DAPL intensified. During the increasingly vocal opposition of the

Standing Rock Tribe and the escalation in the size of the resistance camps, the media dramatically shifted its framing of the pipeline. The story went national for the first time in August, and framing was no longer centrally about the pipeline, but rather about the opposition to the pipeline. Questions of pipeline safety began to diminish and were replaced by frames relating to the safety (or lack thereof) of the water protector camps themselves.

Consider the first *NYT* coverage of the DAPL conflict. "Tension on the Plains as Tribes Move to Block a Pipeline" was published August 23, 2016. The article begins by framing Indigenous people as "streaked in yellow and black paint" on a "new kind of battlefield, between a pipeline and American Indians who say it will threaten water supplies and sacred lands" (Healy 2016). While this framing acknowledges the ecological risks motivating tribal response, it also plays on culturally available tropes of savagery and Indian warfare. The article goes on to provide ETP's assertion that the DAPL project "will infuse millions of dollars into local economies and is safer than trucks and train cars that can topple and spill and crash and burn," as well as Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier's claim that "he had received reports of weapons and gunshots around the demonstration, and that protesters were getting ready to throw pipe bombs at a line of officers standing between a rally and the construction site" (Healy 2016).

Although these claims of pipe bombs were unsubstantiated, attempts to depict the water protectors as violent circulated in both the national and local media ushering in the *protest-as-risk* phase of coverage. In *The Bismarck Tribune* on August 17th a front page article effectively reframed the DAPL resistance as criminal: "Kirchmeier said the protest has become unlawful as a result of criminal activity. He said his officers have been threatened and heard gunshots. The agency has gotten reports of

pipe bombs, assaults on private security personnel, fire-works and vandalism"
(Donovan 2016c). Over the next several days *The Bismarck Tribune* published front
page articles that referred to reports of weapons on the site (Smith 2016; Grueskin
2016a), though a separate article contended "The Morton County Sheriff's
Department said in a statement on Aug. 19 no weapons were seen" (Grueskin 2016b).
Allegations of weapons, though generally unsupported, reemerged throughout the
active phases of No DAPL encampment.[28]

By August 20th then North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple issued an
emergency declaration for southwest and south central North Dakota, effectively
solidifying the official frame through which the pipeline resistance would be viewed.
The coverage produced in the next few months demonstrates that the circulation of
unsubstantiated claims, the Governor's declaration and the media's interest in this
particular frame, prompted Dakota people and their allies to expend energy and media
time defending themselves rather than promoting their cause or keeping the burden of
proof on ETP to demonstrate that they had properly engaged in meaningful
consultation with the tribe, or completed an adequate environmental impact statement.
Throughout this phase of coverage, comments about pipeline safety are repeatedly
reduced to a one- or two-sentence explanation of the resistance: sentences such as
"[T]he Standing Rock Sioux and other Native American tribes fear the pipeline could
pollute the Missouri River and harm sacred cultural lands and tribal burial grounds"
appear in many articles with little/no focus on environmental risk (Figure 3).

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[28] Sept. 30th article, "They have every right in the world to protest, but I don't think violence and weapons are the answer," said Stevens, adding he believes he saw a protester carrying a pistol recently" (Grueskin, Holdman, and Emerson 2016). Similarly an October 28th article titled "Authorities investigate reports of shots fired" (Holdman 2016c).

Risk Types in the Coverage of DAPL
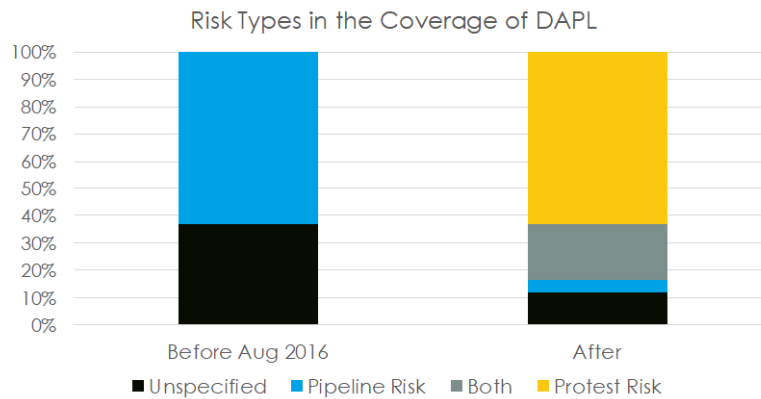
Figure 3

In many cases, there are articles framed entirely around the dangers posed by the water protectors with no mention at all of the pipeline as a potential risk. The differences in framing between various media sources become especially pronounced after the incident in which a private security used attack dogs against water protectors. In the local media, the first reports of the event frame the event as a one-sided attack (Ekroth 2016a). They write "[t]hree private security officers at the site were injured by protesters… One of them required hospitalization. Two security K-9s were also taken to veterinarians to be treated for injuries." This article goes on to report that "[w]itnesses…say they saw protesters climb onto vehicles at the construction site and beat on them, trying to break the windows." This framing remains dominant in follow up reports, though some acknowledgement is made of injuries experienced by tribal members and allies.

Significantly, this incident is used to restate the ETP "commitment to safety." But safety in this phase takes on new meanings and coverage frames the state and the pipeline company not only as arbiters of pipeline safety, but of public safety as well. ETP's presence in the media had waned some since the U.S. Army Corps permitting, but in the wake of the declaration of emergency and the highly controversial use of attack dogs on No DAPL participants, ETP resurfaced vocally in the media. In a

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September 5th article, Vicki Anderson Grenado, a spokeswoman for Energy Transfer

Partners, asserted "[w]e are working with law enforcement to ensure that all offenders

are arrested and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law….safety is ETP's top

priority and the company is committed to having the appropriate safety measures in

place" (Emerson 2016a). During the next few days, local media published more

articles and letters which add to this framing, including one authored by Ron Ness,

the president of the North Dakota Petroleum Council.

The letter by Ness (2016) is an especially vivid example of how the post-dog-

attack coverage opens a space for industry to frame itself as not only safe

ecologically, but invested in public safety and the rule of law writ large, claiming

> Protesters and parties to the lawsuits have effectively declared that the
>
> laws of their states and the United States do not work for them, and are
>
> now attempting to assert themselves against those laws both in the
>
> courtroom and in public protest. There was a time and a place to
>
> discuss the merits of this pipeline project. The rules matter. It is
>
> beyond time to allow construction to continue

But more interesting is the colonial tone of his claims making, which combines

deployments of nationalism with attempts to frame the resistance to the pipeline as

lawless, while conveniently ignoring the unique concerns and status of Indigenous

peoples. His article draws on pro-American sentiment promoting DAPL as a project

that provides an "invaluable American-produced natural resource." Then Ness claims:

> Native American groups and their environmental activist allies are
>
> attempting to roll back progress of the pipeline through illegal
>
> occupation of construction sites, intimidating and threatening law
>
> enforcement and construction workers, shutting down public

highways, and demonstrating in front of public buildings. Despite the

fact that these groups did not take part in the review process of the

project, including three public hearings held in North Dakota by the

Public Service Commission

This statement is in an epic erasure of history, treaty law, and government-to-government relations. The term "illegal occupation" alone is shocking if one has any knowledge of the processes that enabled the creation of Unites States, which has been fundamentally shaped by practices of settler occupation. Furthermore, Ness asserts that DAPL is safe—or at least desirable—by comparing it to the Garrison Dam. He writes "[t]his is a state-of-the-art infrastructure project that is arguably the biggest North Dakota infrastructure project since the Garrison Dam." On the surface this may not seem like an especially controversial statement, but from a perspective that takes colonial ecological violence into account, the Garrison Dam, part of the Pick Sloan Act, was a project that fundamentally harmed Indigenous peoples for the benefit of settlers (Geisler 2014; Lawson 2001).[29]

Media Framing: People as Pollution

Another significant shift in the risk/safety discourse began in early December. The vague paternalism that had been an undercurrent of the earlier coverage which suggested that water protectors did not realize the dangers they were creating was amplified by news of a large winter storm likely to strike the area[30]. At the same

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[29] Three Affiliated Tribes lost over 152,000 acres of their reserved lands, over ¼ of their total land base, as a result of Garrison Dam (Lawson 2001 p. 59).

[30] On a number of occasions police / government actions in opposition to the No DAPL movement were framed as for the good of the protestors. Consider for example Col. John Henderson, Omaha district commander's claim that plans to evict camps were because "I am genuinely concerned for the safety and well-being of both the members of your tribe and the general public located at these encampments" (Donovan 2016d).

time, in the wake of the early U.S. Army Corps' December decision to not issue water-crossing permits to ETP, there was coverage that continued to frame the water protectors as inherently dangerous and threatening to the community. On December 5, an article covered the development of a group committed to "[p]roviding 24-hour support to local businesses." The group is described as a "consortium of pro-law enforcement and pro-community groups" (Grueskin 2016d). While extended conversation about the pipeline as an environmental hazard became virtually non-existent[31], this combination of open hostility[32] and paternalism fuelled the lead-up to the final shift in framing which ultimately portrayed water protector camps themselves as a major threat to the environment as a source of pollution.

This suggestion came in a few forms. First was the suggestion that delaying the pipeline put the environment at risk because "more Bakken crude will continue being shipped by rail or truck" while "winter weather in North Dakota made those methods riskier than shipping by pipeline." Declaring that "[i]f this pipeline was up and flowing today, that oil would be moving safely and consistently to market without any interruption" (Dalrymple 2016).

There were also suggestions that the water protectors' discourse was a source of "pollution" to the "legitimate concerns" of the tribe. On Dec 20th Rep. Kevin Cramer is quoted as saying "the causes they [the water protectors] promote, such as ending the use of fossil fuels, undermine the tribe's original arguments: protecting Missouri River water and sacred artifacts. The legitimate questions ... have been greatly diluted" (Smith 2016c).

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[31] Some of the only substantive engagements with environmental concerns comes from a letters to the editor (e.g. Wood 2016; Kreps 2106)

[32] No DAPL movement discursively likened to 9/11 terrorists (Smith 2016b) Suggestion that federal government has abandoned ND to "lawless" "radicals" (Emerson 2016b).

The more explicit focus on protests as pollution began in early January, first with an article focused on conversations between tribal leadership and camp leadership around the issue of potential flooding and clean-up plans. "'Because of this risk of flood, we're worried about what's going to be left at the camp,' said Tribal Chairman Dave Archambault II. "What we want to do is make sure none of that waste gets into the Missouri River'" (Holdman 2017). This concern about clean-up logistics was misappropriated by pipeline proponents in the weeks leading up to the forced evacuation.

A January 21st letter to the editor attempts to use the risk of trash in the river as a reason to have the National Guard "go in and arrest who is left, then whoever is, and has been arrested, should be made to go in and tear down, drag out and clean up the mess before the snow melts and it floods, thus contaminating our river" (Johnson 2017). Similarly, in response to the Trump decision to ignore Obama's call for a more robust environmental impact statement, Gov. Doug Burgum "welcomed the decision" and said he "wants to work with the tribe to move people and camping supplies before a potentially dangerous flood that could cause an 'environmental or human disaster'" (Grueskin 2017). The coverage contains multiple examples of Burgum's continued concern about camps as a "public safety, and…environmental disaster"; similar levels of concern about the pipeline as a potential threat to the environment and the public are not expressed.

Discussion

The eco-social relationships central to settler-colonialism are embedded in environmental practices and in the collective identities / memories of settlers (e.g. such as those expressed in commemorations of colonialism, and affinity with frontier identities). The media plays a crucial role in maintaining these identities and

memories. Media framing of Indigenous-led resistance to environmental damage, such as the opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline, can contribute to colonial ecological violence, or support those who are resisting ongoing episodes of settler-colonial appropriation, depending on the frames deployed and packaging of media relevant to these events.

In the case of local media coverage of the Dakota Access Pipeline conflict, media framing of risk mobilized and naturalized existing narratives about settler-colonial dominance over land and resources, as well as narratives that frame Indigenous peoples as a threat to the public and settler-state. While the DAPL coverage in *The Bismarck Tribune* upheld journalistic norms of balance through an effort to "present both sides," the dominant framing of risk was strongly skewed toward pro-pipeline and pro-police sentiment, and generally deficient with regard to ecological risks and threats to Indigenous life-ways and treaty rights.

This framing contributes to colonial ecological violence in two important ways. First, this framing maintains narrative norms that erase or mischaracterize Indigenous connections to place, and the legal rights which Native peoples have retained to their territories. Second, these media frames add to the conception of Indigenous peoples and their allies as threats, and may be priming the public to accept aggressive militarized responses to protest activity.

In the case of framing as a contributor to erasure / mischaracterization of Indigenous relationships to place, most remarkable was the limited engagement in questions of treaty law –of the 706 articles in the final data set only 65 contained the term treaty at all—despite the fact that numerous tribal officials were quoted in the coverage. Quotes taken from these same officials but published in Indigenous news sources reflect deeper and more consistent attention to the way DAPL violated / or

posed a risk to Indigenous peoples' treaty rights. These mentions in Indigenous news media begin as early as April 2016. By comparison, direct engagement with treaty rights in *The Bismarck Tribune* only begins in August 2016, and the most extensive engagements with the issue occurs in the form of a letters to the editor suggesting that though treaties may be of interest to the public, they are not a major part of the official conversation (Siyaka 2016; Omdahl 2016; Gipp 2016).

Since Indigenous claims against the pipeline pivot on treaty-reserved rights, the sparse coverage containing treaty references is alarming. More alarming, is that this gap in coverage and the resulting knowledge gap fuels later depictions of the No DAPL movement as disorganized or unfocused, as if the Standing Rock people and their allies don't understand the stakes of the conflict, or their own political relationship to the state. For example, when the encampment moved into unceded land from the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, Sherriff Kirchmeier was quoted as stating "That [the treaty dispute] cannot be worked out in Morton County," he said. "That has to be worked out with the federal government" (Grueskin 2016c). While this is factual, the suggestion was that the encampment was illegal and should be disbanded until the federal government made a decision, instead of an acceptance of the fact that county-level legal claims would not supersede a dispute between sovereign nations.

With regard to mischaracterization of Indigenous peoples and their allies as threats to public safety and the environment, it is important to consider the wider trends in protest policing which are at play in the DAPL case. Although protest has long been a core element of the democratic state, one protected by national law, it is now assessed by both police and increasingly by media as a threat to the state. Police response to protest activity via a "threat assessment" model which categorizes disparate activities such as protest, organized crime, and terrorism as necessitating a

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similar tactical response (Wood:126). In the case of the resistance to DAPL, one must

situate the attempts to invalidate Native claims within the broader history of colonial

narratives and policies that have shaped the United States and North Dakota. This

includes the cultural as well as the legal and political drives of the settler-colonial

structure which rely on the legitimation of settler claims to place, and on the

continuing depiction of Indigenous peoples and their sovereignty as a threat to the

nation.

CHAPTER IV

"WHO HAD TO DIE SO I COULD GO CAMPING?": SETTLER COLONIALISM,

COLONIAL ECOLOGICAL VIOLENCE, AND SETTLER REFLECTIONS ON

SOLIDARITY AND PLACE

As a settler-colonial state, the United States exists through the occupation of
Indigenous territories, the suppression of Indigenous self-determination, and the
overlaying of settler narratives which erase Indigenous histories and on-going
relations. As scholars of settler colonialism have demonstrated, this system "destroys
to replace," and that destruction has taken numerous forms ranging from overt
genocide to cultural assimilation and erasure. Still, while the dominant mode of
relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples has been typified by violence,
hostility, and theft, this should scarcely be understood as the only story (Wolfe 2006
p.388; Lipsitz 2008; Grossman 2017; Land 2018).

Students of solidarity demonstrate that there is a history of productive
alliances between Indigenous peoples and non-Natives –including settlers, settler
descendants, and other groups of non-Natives living in settler States (e.g. Margaret
2010; Barker 2012; Grossman 2017; Land 2018). In the wake of the heavily
publicized Indigenous resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) there has
been renewed public attention to questions of solidarity with Indigenous peoples.[33]
Why do settlers and other non-Native people participate in solidarity? How can that
participation be problematic? How can it be useful? These questions are not new, but
rather they are part of a long-lasting inquiry about the relationship between

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[33] The resistance to No DAPL should not be understood as significantly different from numerous other
land or place-based resistance movements led by Indigenous peoples except in terms of its size and
public coverage. Grossman (2017) suggests this is the most well-known Indigenous mobilization in the
United States since the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee (p.190).

Indigenous peoples and non-Natives which has persisted in North America—acknowledged or unacknowledged—since the beginning of European contact with Indigenous peoples. Understanding efforts at solidarity is a vital part of creating a more just future, and should be undertaken alongside the long standing and ongoing projects, carried out by activists and academics, which call attention to historical and contemporary injustices.

For many Indigenous scholars, the process of creating a more just relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples is referred to as decolonization.[34] While there has been much said and written about the importance of decolonization, there is not one universally agreed upon vision of what decolonization is or what it will specifically entail. Some of the shared features across definitions however are the elimination of settler colonial dominance, increases in Indigenous self-determination, cultural resurgence, and the return of considerable –if not all—lands acquired through colonization (e.g. Alfred 2009; Tuck and Yang 2012; Whyte 2016).

Decolonization will require a clear acknowledgement of and active contention with the practices and legacies of genocide, assimilation, and erasure which shape contemporary conditions—social, political, economic, and environmental (Bradford 2002 and 2005; Regan 2010). At the same time, it is also essential that activists and scholars develop deeper analyses of inter-group solidarity within the context of decolonization. This attention should be granted to both "failed" and "successful" cases so that the unique and salient features of solidarity efforts can act as lessons for future action. A clearer and more nuanced understanding of inter-group relations

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[34] By no means does the aspiration or effort to participate in solidarity absolve or obliterate the privileges bestowed upon settlers in settler-colonial states, but a desire to engage in more just relations is central to any project for social change. Understanding why settlers participate, how they participate and what encourages them to keep attempting to act in solidarity is an important part of transforming relations.

aimed at cooperation can guide future collaborative efforts and hopefully enable more successful liberatory actions and engagements.

In this article I draw on interviews with 21 non-Native identified people who have attempted to undertake a position of solidarity with Indigenous peoples. I focus on solidarity in movements and actions aimed at promoting the ecological and cultural integrity of places. In particular, I consider the way these actors describe their relationships to place, their engagements with solidarity, and their perceptions of and participation in environmental movements.

The decision to limit my analysis to movements that might be called "environmental" is informed by the central role of land and territory in settler colonialism (Alfred 2006; Wolfe 2006; Coulthard 2014). Since occupation of the land is a fundamental feature of settler colonialism, and since numerous Indigenous thinkers point to the land as vital for decolonization and Indigenous well-being (LaDuke 1999; Simpson 2004; LaDuke 2005; Wilson 2005; Baldy 2013).how can the groups in contention over place potentially be drawn together by mutual land-based concerns?

I also question how mainstream environmentalism as a settler discourse may be informing participation in these movements. Despite a significant history of collaboration between Indigenous peoples and green movements (Grossman 2017; Land 2018), the relationship between settler environmentalism and Indigenous peoples is fraught. Some cherished institutions such as "wilderness" and National Parks are directly tied to settler mischaracterizations of place, and land theft (Spence 1996; Williams 2002; Taylor 2016).

Despite the clear colonial attitudes at the core of mainstream environmentalism, as resource conflicts in the United States become more widely evident through high-

visibility movement tactics, increases in militarized protest policing, and social media coverage of these conflicts (e.g. Keystone, DAPL, Line 3) it is likely that more non-Native people will be drawn to participating with or alongside Indigenous peoples in their movements to stop ecologically damaging projects. Evidence of this likely increase in solidarity aspirations can be seen in the sheer numbers of non-Native peoples who began talking about and sharing information on the DAPL resistance, not to mention the numbers who travelled to North Dakota in hopes of joining the opposition to Energy Transfer Partners and their state-sponsored supporters.

While some of the attraction to Indigenous resistance might be linked with inaccurate or romantic notions of Native peoples as universally "ecological" there is also an increasing practical recognition of the power of treaty law, and the importance of traditional ecological knowledge by mainstream environmentalists.[35] As this understanding increases, so too will the desire to build connections with Indigenous peoples and groups. This has been the case in Canada where First Nations, Metis and Inuit people have had higher levels of political and social visibility when compared with Native people in the United States .

This is not to say that these collaborations have always been successful or even unproblematic. Research suggests that there have been and continue to be numerous challenges and it is for these very reasons that more research is warranted. This is especially true of research which may help participants better comprehend their

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[35] Consider for example the big name environmentalists who began acknowledging the power of Indigenous thinking and political action during the No DAPL protests (e.g. Bill McKibben's comment published in *The New Yorker* September 2016). The environmental movement's interest in the utility of treaty rights to defend ecology is actually not new. Grossman's (2017) work for example demonstrates that this is a long-term trend with known roots at least as far back as the 1970's and 1980's case of The Western Federation of Outdoor Club's support of the Boldt Decision as one which provides "a new source of environmental control of value to the entire community" (p. 46). What I am suggesting here is that the No DAPL resistance has encouraged a new generation of environmentalists to come to these same realizations in a very public way.

practices and the outcomes of those practices. In this article I attend to the following questions: how do settlers who participate in solidarity with Indigenous peoples think about land and place? How do they think about the relationship between place and violence? And, does participation in settler solidarity alter perceptions of environment and environmentalism?

Inter-group movement collaboration / solidarity

Inter-group movement collaboration has long been a topic of interest in sociology. Work in the area of social movements demonstrates that collaboration takes numerous forms ranging from official organization alliances—or in extreme cases mergers—to more interpersonal alliance building between individual movement participants (e.g. Bandy and Smith 2005; Staggenborg 2010). Although very little sociological analysis in the U.S. has focused on questions of Indigenous-settler relations, there is a rich body of U.S. work looking at various collaborative and solidarity efforts across lines of race, class and gender (e.g. Van Dyke 2003; Wood 2005). As well as studies of cross-movement collaboration (e.g. This work suggests the important roles that both ideological positions as well as and resource access play in the development of inter-group and cross-movement collaborations (e.g. Zald and McCarthy 1987; Gerhard and Ruchts 1992; Klatch 1999).

In most cases of inter-group collaboration, scholars contend that differences in access to resources and power inform the alliance building and maintaining efforts (Staggenbourg 1986; Beamish and Leubbers 2009).   Such differences between groups may range widely, and embedded perceptions of appropriate interaction are informed by those power differences. Davis (2010) contends that "individuals and organizations may interact from very different concepts of relationship which embody varying power configurations" (p. 5). And these differences in both power, resources

and the resultant cultures of contention are important features of Indigenous-settler relations broadly, and figure more intensely in a collective action context (Grossman 2017).

Indigenous-settler relations and solidarity

Generally, the capacity for inter-group collaboration is informed by differences in power and access to resources, but additional significant factors exist in the context of non-Native solidarity with Indigenous peoples. The creation and maintenance of unequal and oppressive relations are at the core of settler colonialism, and this informs social relations broadly between Indigenous and settler peoples. While the material outcomes of power differences may mirror some of those commonly found in other oppressive structures –poorer health outcomes, limited access to decision-making, less wealth—there are specific features of Indigenous-settler relations which are especially salient for thinking about solidarity potential and outcomes.

Rifkin's concept of "settler states of feeling" describes how the material and social conditions of settler colonialism generate particular emotional patterns for settlers which are then utilized to justify the continued occupation of Indigenous lands, and allegiance with the settler state (Rifkin 2011). This concept can be applied across a range of Indigenous-settler relations. Mackey's (2014) analysis of anti-sovereignty movements and settler states of feeling illustrates the way settler law and cultural norms emerge from and reinforce settler states of feeling which are tied to a sense of "entitlement to know everything (and therefore be certain)" of ones' right to the land and a future on the land (p. 250).

For my project this particular set of emotions, which are unique to the settler-colonial context, are especially meaningful. If settlers, and to some extent all non-Native peoples, are conditioned to believe in the rightfulness of their claims to land

and place through an interplay of material conditions, discourse, and emotions how do these states of feeling present a barrier to solidarity, and how might this barrier be overcome in order to create better relations in the long-term and to achieve short-term movement goals?

The term "settler" itself has also been an object of analysis, especially with regard to its potential mobilizing capacity (e.g. MacDonald 2016). In his consideration of the terms Pakeha[36] and settler, MacDonald (2016) suggests that both terms as well as other descriptive constructions such as "treaty person" have significance only to the extent that they're used to "enable action, and to connect with a wider project of achieving reconciliation on Indigenous terms" (p. 659). In absence of this, the terms are likely to become "rhetorical screens for continued inaction" (p.646).

Scholars of Indigenous-settler relations also address the durability / immutability of settler identity, as well as the heterogeneity of settler identity. These concerns are salient in considerations of alliance / solidarity. There is an interest in the way settler identity is both variable, and simultaneously unaltered by this variability—especially with regard to engagement in solidarity. In their work, Barker and Pickerill (2012), who focus on the politics and practices of "anarchists in the northern bloc" which they define as Canada and the United States, note that anti-colonial anarchists, even when participating in solidarity with decolonial movement "cannot escape the identification and corresponding social privileges of being a Settler person"; at the same time both solidarity practitioners and Indigenous people must contend with a situation in which "while some Settler people may radically confront colonial power, the majority legitimate and benefit from it" (p.1708). Another aspect of variability emerges from

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[36] A Maori term which indicates a non-Maori identity.

hierarchical systems which exist within settler society (e.g. Margaret 2010; Land 2018). Beyond the divisions generated by class, gender, sexuality etc… there are also widely varied political affiliations within the settler society. Few scholars have contended with these differences, but some analyses of radical settlers suggest the importance of realigning radical settler activism toward a more relational approach that takes seriously the social practices and political aims of Indigenous peoples (Barker and Pickerill 2012; Barker 2012).

These diverse political orientations exist not only in the society at large, but also pervade environmentalism. Scholars in geography demonstrate the potential for a new environmentalism, which attends not only to threats to ecology, but threats to Indigenous cultures and sovereignty (e.g. Grossman 2001; Grossman and McNutt 2001). This possibility is posited not only for radical activists but also for rural whites in relatively conservative communities who are interested in defending their homes and livelihoods. The work of anthropologist Anna J. Willow (2010 and 2012) suggests "when environmentalists refigure the categories that guide their relationships to the places they seek to protect, they also reconfigure the power structures underpinning their alliances with the indigenous groups who call those places home." These studies suggest positive potential for Indigenous-settler coalition. Although tribes bring extensive knowledge of their traditional territories and people's histories along with moral and symbolic resources (e.g. Moore 1998; Espeland 2002; Willow 2012), given the impacts of ongoing colonial occupation, tribes often lack material resources and are outnumbered by settlers even within their territories, making solidarity with settlers a potentially powerful tactic for effecting social change (Grossman and McNutt 2001; Lipsitz 2008). In his analysis of the walleye fishing conflict that rocked Wisconsin during the late 80's and early 90's, George Lipsitz

(2008) contends that settler identities are altered in the process of solidarity. He writes, "Native Americans and their allies anticipated and attempted to preclude benevolent condescension, sympathy, or pity for native peoples from whites by asking them instead to inhabit identities in which struggling for social justice is a worthy goal for whites as a matter of self-interest and self-respect rather than an act of charity" (p.110 referencing Whaley and Bresette 1994, p. 98).

Place and identity

"[T]he struggle for our lives, our lands, and our knowledge is a common struggle" –

Waziyatawin (2004)

My interest in solidarity participants' perceptions of and relationships to place are informed by the profound relationship between identity and place which has been voiced by Indigenous peoples around the world, both inside and outside of the academy. These statements, as well as the literature produced by scholars of Indigenous Studies, express the continued significant connection between place and identity in Indigenous peoples' lives—the very term "Indigenous" being definitionally about place. Aileen Morton-Robinson (2003) calls this the "ontological relationship to land" which is "a condition of [Indigenous peoples'] embodied subjectivity". She further contends that Indigenous subjectivity "represents a dialectical unity between humans and the earth" which continues to "unsettle white Australians" (36-37). Place also figures powerfully in the cultures of Indigenous peoples, and this is also true in both the U.S. and international contexts (eg. Basso, Coté 2010; Baldy 2013). Despite the fact that this connection is widespread and articulated in cultural products as well as scholarly analyses there continues to be a lack of understanding of this connection on the part of the Western mainstream. Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou scholar Linda

Tuhiwai Smith (2012) notes that Indigenous worldviews which reflect deep connections to specific places and species are not well understood or respected by dominant groups. She writes:

> The arguments of different indigenous peoples based on spiritual relationships to the universe, to the landscape and to stones, rocks, insects and other things, seen and unseen, have been difficult arguments for Western systems of knowledge to deal with or accept. These arguments give a partial indication of the different worldviews and alternative ways of coming to know, and of being, which still endure within the indigenous world (p. 78).

One significant barrier to effective solidarity and to studies of Indigenous social life, is the dominant perception that place is not especially salient to identity. While dominant-group refusals to engage meaningfully with Indigenous values and worldviews could very well be a result of racism mixed with colonial arrogance, the refusal may also be connected to increasingly common Western perceptions that place has become less salient in modern / cosmopolitan life (Giddens 1991).

This perception, that place no longer has deep meaning in social life, has been fuelled by increasingly powerful and efficient technologies of communication and transportation, through which societies become "placeless" and social interaction "now moves through nodes in one or another network" and is not necessarily rooted in a particular place (Gieryn 2000 p.463). [37]

In the study of social life place has continued to maintain a persistent presence in the literature though has not been actively analysed (Gieryn 2000). This lack of active

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[37] Indeed, Indigenous thinkers have similarly pointed to the placeless or rootless characteristics of colonial society. Though ironically, it is the suggestion of Indigenous peoples as nomadic or rootless which has so often been mobilized as a rationalization for the theft and settlement of land (Wolfe 2006).

analysis reflects the normative decline in attention to place within Western thought, despite the fact that place continues to operate in the background. Geiryn notes, "place matters for politics and identity, history and futures, inequality and community. Is there anything sociological not touched by place? Probably not" (p. 482).

Sociological work elucidating the relationship between identity and place suggests that physical/material conditions such as geographic proximity and economic interdependence play a strong role in shaping local identities and relationships between groups (Williams 2002). Additionally, emotions, memory, and affect also figure prominently in the development of place and place-based identity (e.g. Olick 1999; Wulfhorst 2000; Rifkin 2011; Buffam 2011: Norgaard, Reed, and Bacon 2017).

Studies of place and identity demonstrate the material ways in which intangible forces (e.g. affect, imagination, emotion, memory) transform places through social interactions in space, and that "the continual engagement of people with things and in environments creates places and affects" (Park, Davidson, and Shield 2011, p. 7). In his work on race and inner-city youth Bonar Buffam (2011) demonstrates the way that inner-city racial politics reflect legacies of Canada's effort to exclude Indigenous peoples through an "imaginative geography" which rendered the land as "uninhabited earth" (p.201). The maintenance of this fiction inspired economic, political and legal structures that deprive Indigenous peoples of their land and wealth while simultaneously managing Indigenous bodies in ways that "configure Aboriginal difference as a metonym for all the disreputable, criminal activities that are thought to pervade the inner city" (p.202).

While this example demonstrates how the desires of the settler culture and government in Canada produce and maintain injustice for Indigenous people in urban

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spaces, it is connected to larger themes of the contested meaning, uses, and occupations of places that are central to settler colonialism and thus central to all forms of resistance to settler colonial projects. In particular, there are connections to the theory of colonial ecological violence which asserts that the disruption of Indigenous eco-social relations is a form of colonial aggression which occurs across a range of levels—physical/material, cultural, political, and discursive. Examples include the loss of traditional foods, the pollution and re-routing of waters, the disruption of ecological knowledge, the elimination of land tenure and usufruct rights, and the renaming or repurposing of culturally significant places (LaDuke 1999; Simpson 2004; Baldy 2013; Norgaard, Reed, Bacon 2017; Bacon 2018). Whereas non-Native peoples tend to approach spaces as generic "wilderness" or "landscape," these places –from an Indigenous perspective—are enmeshed dense layers of cultural, political, and spiritual significance. These important cultural and ideological differences in approaches to place undoubtedly play a role in the challenges of inter-group solidarity between Native and non-Native peoples.

Methods

Despite the undeniable conflicts between mainstream environmentalism and Indigenous peoples, there has also been a long history of green and Indigenous collaboration globally, and ecological issues constitute an important segment of Indigenous-led resistance projects (Land 2015; Grossman 2017). For this reason, I have opted to focus on solidarity experiences within the context of land and water defense, or other projects which have a significant "environmental" component. In order to understand the way solidarity with Indigenous peoples impacts non-Native perceptions of place and environmentalism I conducted interviews with N=21

solidarity participants. In addition to the N=21 individual semi-structured interviews lasting forty minutes to two hours, I also conducted one focus group lasting 90 minutes, and short follow-up interviews. The first round of interviews (N=12) occurred in 2012 & 2013 with student activists who had engaged in solidarity with the Winnemem Wintu tribe. I then conducted a second round of interviews (N=9) in what some of my participants called "the post-DAPL period," a label which suggests the importance of the Dakota Access Pipeline resistance in generating a cultural shift in the solidarity discourse, even among those who did not go to North Dakota, and/or had already been long-term participants in solidarity practices.

The interview questions developed for this project were kept extremely general in an effort to allow for respondents to take the lead in shaping conversation. I asked all participants to tell me about themselves, to describe their solidarity participation, and to reflect on the challenges, benefits, and requirements of solidarity participation. Interviews were transcribed and coded for themes related to place, environmentalism and/or the land.

My pool of respondents had a diverse range of participation in Indigenous solidarity ranging from only one engagement in solidarity activities at the time of their interview, to over forty years of participation. Interestingly, despite this range, over 80% had participated in at least one high-risk solidarity event, that is an event where there was a reasonable likelihood of physical confrontation or arrest. All of my respondents identified as non-Indigenous.[38] All names have been changed for the purpose of this dissertation.

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[38] My participant selection has been to some extent informed by conversations about solidarity which have proliferated outside of the academy. These conversations around how and why people should participate in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in what is called "North America" have been diverse. In activist communities, media, and public discourse settlers, Indigenous peoples, and those who do not neatly fit in either of these categories (e.g. multi-ethnic people, the descendants of enslaved peoples,

In addition to interviews, this research is also informed by my own extended participation in solidarity actions, meetings, conversations and events both in person and online. Because of my own long-term involvement in solidarity with Indigenous peoples and in environmental movements more broadly, this research project is to a certain extent an example of insider or practitioner research. While I had not personally worked with all of my interview participants, several of the original research participants were individuals I came to know during my own engagement in solidarity in Northern California. Additional respondents were gathered through snowball sampling, and through online recruitment both via my personal social media pages, and through the pages of groups with known participation in solidarity work.

I believe that my status as an insider shaped not only my ability to generate interview participation, but that it also shaped the openness with which my questions were answered. I found my participation in Indigenous solidarity was most relevant in my face-to-face interviews, and especially salient with activists whom I had been in contact with during high-risk solidarity events. These interviews on the whole tended to last slightly longer, and elicited especially rich personal reflections. Although never directly voiced, I tend to think that our shared experiences in solidarity were the basis of a deep collegial feeling between us, and that their willingness to share deeply personal and emotional stories with me was informed by their understanding of me as not only a researcher, but as a person who shared their commitments to social change.

new arrivals) have raised concerns about how identity and relationships to place inform social movement participation, particularly in movements led by Indigenous peoples. While I acknowledge that the binary of Indigenous/non-Indigenous is in some ways too simplistic and that both of these terms are contested, I focus on people who do not identify as Indigenous in order to allow for the widest selection possible while simultaneously ensuring that I would be speaking with and hearing the thoughts of individuals who had—at least in their own understanding—participated in inter-group solidarity while working with Indigenous peoples (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Land 2018).

Findings

The people I spoke with while developing this project had a great deal to say about the environment and environmentalism. Their comments related to place/environment and solidarity tend to fall into one of three discursive themes: *Genealogical and auto-biographical*, *Sites of resistance and sites of solidarity*, and *Engagement with environmentalism as practice and movement*. Each theme contained a few sub-trends which are useful for the analysis I present below, but overall the narratives demonstrate the profound way in which participation in solidarity with Indigenous movements has the capacity to transform non-Indigenous people's perceptions of place, environment and environmentalism.

Genealogy and Autobiographies of Place

One of the most persistent themes raised by the people I interviewed was the reflection on personal experiences of place, and/or family connections to particular locations. A large number of my respondents reflected on the how their personal experiences of place were shaped by settler-colonial practices of erasure. For example, a number of interviewees indicated that they had never met an Indigenous person before being recruited to participate in solidarity. They connected this lack of knowledge to the places where they lived.

One long-term solidarity participant, Eva, who identified as white, spoke about a major turning point in her life, the decision to "go back to the land." Motivated by a desire to live "lighter on the land" in a way that was fundamentally different from the dominant capitalist / consumerist culture, Eva relocated to rural California in the 1990's. In our conversation, she acknowledged that prior to that move she had not really thought about Indigenous peoples as living on their traditional lands in thriving communities. She says, "I grew up in Detroit…I had no

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idea whose land I was 'going back' to." This is partially consistent with the findings presented by Mogrensen's (2011) analysis of queer back to the land movements in settler-colonial contexts.

While moving to California brought Eva face-to-face with Indigenous peoples and their movements, other participants noted that despite living in the same region as a number of active Indigenous groups, they had no prior knowledge of what was going on around them as far as Indigenous movements were concerned. Iris, who participated in solidarity with the Winnemem Wintu during her last few years as an undergraduate, commented on her own experience of growing up just a short distance away from the Indigenous people with whom she participated in solidarity and the experience of sharing information about the Winnemem Wintu with her parents. "I showed the videos to them and you know it's powerful stuff watching, especially, you know they're from California and you know, I feel like in everyday life and conversation, tribal rights isn't brought up very often…It's so unfair." These feelings of unfairness were expressed in various ways, but it was clear that respondents felt that not only were Indigenous people being unjustly deprived of their lands and rights, but that settlers were also being deprived of a full factual account of conditions which might broadly influence them to act differently or at least in some cases promote more effective engagement in struggles for change.

Other interviewees shared insights into their own families' complicity with the projects of settler colonialism. Some shared detailed family histories, but in all cases interviewees expressed an awareness that they were intimately a part of colonial occupations. Samuel, a student activist who grew up in California and participated in a variety of solidarity events acknowledged a family history that had connections to the Gold Rush, and thus to some of the initiating acts of genocide in California. For

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him, this knowledge fueled his desire to participate in solidarity. This desire was framed not only from a social justice perspective, but also an eco-social perspective. Samuel says, "I definitely have benefited from stealing land so I feel a need to have a better relationship with the land and with the people."

Similarly, Kaya, and mixed-race Asian-American woman in her early 20's who participated in a range of solidarity events, began her self-description with the phrase "I'm from San Francisco, I'm fifth a generation Californian." This centering of both place and family history shaped our conversation. Kaya conveyed a deep understanding of her family's economic history including their property acquisition practices during a time when Chinese people were prohibited from owning properties. Kaya reflected on this history as interesting, but also as colonial. When discussing her own upbringing she said "I definitely didn't grow up in a household like a space that was hostile toward indigenous people. I think it was sort of just the standard like sympathetic settler thing of like, that [we] probably haven't thought a whole lot about what repatriation would mean to us." Like other interviewees who do not identify as white, Kaya expressed a nuanced understanding of the distinctions between race and settler identity. She told me "for me there's something weird about qualifying the identity of being a settler with oh but they're also queer, they're also Asian-American… it is like people use that qualifier as if it almost excuses or blurs the settler." She expressed a deep discomfort with that sort of practice while still acknowledging the complexity of intersecting forms of systemic power. For Kaya, her participation in solidarity was in some ways shaped by desire to, as an Asian-American, "not be as caught up in what it means to be 'American' but be caught up in what it means to be responsible to the people who first lived here."

Interviewees' reflections on their own experiences of place and their connection to the colonial project suggests one of the significant personal dynamics of settler decolonization. Acknowledgement of erasure as an influential force in shaping their understandings of places and their relationships to those places suggests one of the mechanisms through which settler states of feeling generate a settler approach to environment and place-based identity. Participation in solidarity disrupts these feeling states.

Sites of Resistance and Sites of Solidarity

Interviewees' also reflected on the way that the particular places where they participated in solidarity became especially meaningful for them, in some cases sites of resistance seem to serve as their own type of actor shaping non-Native commitments to solidarity. The people I spoke with seemed especially attentive to the the way that pre-colonial histories as well as the histories of colonial ecological violence were alive in particular places (both natural and built). Overall, findings suggest that being with/in places of contestation transforms settler thinking.

The transformative power of being in a contested place was especially pronounced in the comments of people who shared experiences of high-risk activism. In the narratives of those who participated in solidarity with the Winnemem Wintu during the H'up Chonas (also called War Dance in English) river blockade there were repeated references to how being at the dance grounds during ceremony profoundly impacted their thinking not only about the specific location (now known as the McCloud River Campground) but about occupied lands and Indigenous resistance more broadly.

Daniel, a participant who grew up in Southern Oregon, and expressed that he had virtually no pre-existing knowledge of Indigenous land conflicts prior to his participation in the blockade said, "Being there [at War Dance]…It was powerful I realized yeah, you're fighting for your life. If that dam goes up…[sacred places] will be gone...I was very moved."

Similarly, Iris commented on the experience of walking around the ceremony grounds and listening to tribal members' recollections of the place. She says

> It's a campground now…so you can see there's paved roads and listening to people tell me like 'oh this tree was planted by so-and-so's great great grandfather' and this is where we did this… you know to hear a history of this place and then to know most of the year it's just a campground for people who have no idea of the history was just really, it really put a lot of things into perspective I think. Now [when traveling] I wonder, whose land is this? Who had to die so I could go camping? Or whose family was forced to move so that we could be here?

This acknowledgement of how settler-colonialism has disrupted eco-social relations, and erased Indigenous place names, meanings and uses was widespread in interview responses.

The histories of places also impacted the solidarity practices of my respondents. Greg spoke of how working in a building that had once been a boarding school impacted his thinking and his actions. He says, "The place where we were had a long history of violence...how do you work in that place and have a positive relationship with the people around you?" Although that site had long since been

transformed, the legacy of what had happened in that building, and on that land remained a potent reminder of a specific form of colonial violence.

Similarly, James a long-time participant in solidarity with Indigenous peoples recounted his voyage across the United States as a young man saying, "I stopped at Wounded Knee to pay my respects…it wasn't direct solidarity work...but after living here [Oregon] for two years the occupation of Wounded Knee came about and I was involved with an organization...and we supported." His knowledge of a specific place-based history of colonial violence, and the reactivation of that place as a public site of contention played a role in James's mobilization.

For most of my participants, some academic knowledge of environmental inequality and/or Indigenous struggles pre-dated their engagement with solidarity. Ninety percent talked about having read books on the topics, and sixty-five percent had taken formal classes. Still, although academic knowledge may inspire participation it seems that experiences in/with place transforms both understandings and practices.

Engaging with Environmentalism: Distancing From & Changing Movements

Some of the most profound shifts in thinking voiced by participants were about environmental practices and environmentalism as a social movement. Most tellingly is the self-identification of interviewees around environmentalism. Although 70% had at some point prior to the interview identified with and participated in environmental movements, only 35% still identified as an "environmentalist." Despite this precipitous drop off in identification with the environmental movement and the environmentalist label, a full 100% of subjects interviewed indicated that they had taken some form of political action in the past year designed to protect the land or water.

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For some participants there was a desire to reframe their participation in ecologically driven practices and politics as something other than environmentalism. For example, Eva, who discussed her long-time connection with tree-sitters and ongoing solidarity with folks working toward dam removal did not identify as an environmentalist. She said, "I want to live in a healthy good world but I wouldn't call myself an environmentalist, no."

For some people, their experiences working with Indigenous people were cited as the reason for their attempted reframing. James said of environmentalism "It's kind of a box. Even the idea of environment…the more you think about it especially learning from Native people...you see it's still that disconnection...where the environment is this other thing... I don't know what the right word would be but, yeah." Similarly, Samuel found himself again working toward ecologically driven politics as a result of participation in solidarity, but hesitated to identify as an environmentalist. He said, "it wasn't until the salmon ceremony this summer where again I felt inspired in a big way to really talk to people about water and the dam and salmon …I guess I could call myself an environmentalist but it comes from a different place now." The inflections Samuel used for the word could accentuated his reluctance to take up such a label for defining his engagement with ecological concerns.

Encounters with Indigenous movements also played a role in shifting Kaya's relationship with environmentalism. She described this shift as having two major prompts, one was a changing academic trajectory. Kaya explained, "I started off in Environmental Science, coming in with a lot of concerns about ecology and really wanting to learn about that and then expanding from there... [but] race and class and gender issues were also not being addressed in Environmental Studies so I switched to

Ethnic Studies." She elaborated that this decision was prompted not only by academic disappointments but also by experiences in what she described as "weird non-profit environmentalist spaces." Kaya reflected on what she described as the "non-profit track" she felt her life had been on, and how this changed during participation in a large environmentalist gathering outside of the United States. During this event Kaya encountered Indigenous protestors and what she described as "a more holistic environmentalism" which took into account peoples' conflicts with colonialism and capitalism. It is this more holistic engagement with environmentalism which Kaya aligns herself with while expressing a nuanced critique of mainstream environmentalism.

Her critiques fit in a widespread trend in the data. Rather than simply reframe their engagement, many respondents expressed criticism of environmentalism (ranging from very open hostility to implied derision), with the bulk of this critique leveled at what they called "liberal" and/or "white" environmentalism, though also directed at more "radical" forms in some cases. Kaya's comments on environmentalism vacillated between strong distaste, and hope for the future. She said:

> I guess toward the mainstream environmental movement I'm probably wary to
> the point of being dismissive which is not very useful. Um, so I think I'm
> moving from being dismissive to… I think it's really significant, what the
> mainstream thinks about environmentalism, because… that's what's going to
> influence a lot of people's thinking, so now I really have a lot of admiration for
> people who go in there and try to change conversations … I think it is shifting.
> Especially for young people who go to these yearly conferences and stuff,

they're going to be exposed to these ideas and that's like a huge group of

people.

At the same time, Kaya noted that the people she found herself able to work with was

a much smaller group, and that she no longer thought of the environmental movement

"as a source of knowledge about the environment" and that she had "been looking a

lot more towards like what traditional knowledge exists, and what priorities for like

these communities." Thinking about this gap between what environmental

movements know about the environment versus what traditional peoples know,

Kaya's critique became more pronounced. She said "the environmental movement is

kind of like a joke to me. They're not really a joke, but really? You think you're the

ones standing up for the environment? Because these people [Indigenous peoples]

have been doing it for like 500 years so I'm gonna learn more about that rather than

gravitating toward this 'comfort zone' of liberal environmentalism."

The language of "liberal" as a term of derision was present in numerous

responses. Zo, a newcomer to the experience of solidarity with Indigenous peoples,

when asked how they related to the environmental movement, said "when I think

…'the environmental movement' I think of liberals um in which case… they're just

capitalists."

Interviewees sometimes expressed their critiques through or in connection

with family experiences of environmentalism. Iris and Rowan were two participants

who expressed their critiques in this way. These participants had profoundly different

upbringings but both came from homes where the environment was important to their

parent. These expressions of eco-centric living however were quite different. In the

case of Iris, she uses a description of her parents' environmentalism as a way to

lightly deride mainstream eco-practices. "They're pretty liberal you know, like San

Francisco liberal. They're, like, my mom keeps bees and drives a tiny car and my dad bikes everywhere and they eat organic and all that stuff. So, you know like that whole idea…my mom…she'll call me and ask me questions like about 'the revolution'. And I don't know the answers. She'll be like 'do you think when the revolution comes that I can still drive a car?' (laughter)…I don't know it's funny. They're silly people."

On the other end of the class spectrum, Rowan, a 39-year-old solidarity participant who was one of only a few participants who strongly identified as working-class, reflected on the way her upbringing influenced her ideas about the environment. She said, "My father was really big on being in the outdoors, he's a hunter, we made our living off the environment for a while with the lobster boat. Which gave me a …very interesting perspective of how things get affected environmentally…we saw huge changes start to take place in the ocean." The experience of making a living from interaction with the natural world shaped not only Rowan's perspective on the environment, but also on the environmental movement. When asked if she identified as an environmentalist she replied with a tone of disgust, "Ugh…um I am an environmentalist, I'd describe myself as an environmentalist, um but I don't really consider myself part of the environmental movement." Her reasoning for this revolved mostly around a sense that environmental movements were ego-driven and out of touch with the problems and needs of people who live on and off of the land.

Some critiques were also levelled at more radical forms of environmentalism, but these critiques were often paired with an ongoing interest in continuing to transform environmental movements. That is to say they seemed to be less hostile and less dismissive. Zo, at the time of our interview was living in a house with strong connections to a local radical environmental group. They expressed that they

generally had a good opinion of and good relationships with those particular people but also said, "I guess I can just get pretty frustrated with some people who are on the very radical side of environmental movements …I guess I get frustrated when people don't look at the environmental movement as an intersection of social justice."

Meg and Jay were also closely connected with radical environmental groups and were participating in organizing various events around forest protection. They each reflected on how their time participating in settler solidarity had changed their perspectives on environmentalism and inclined them to try to transform the groups they worked with. Still, this presented a number of challenges. Meg told me "I've been involved in organizing this tree sit…we've been down there since June yet we have yet to even talk with any of the Indigenous leaders around there and so thats kind of a moment of like, not doing it right. We're fucking it up you know like that's a moment where I'm just like yeah well once again a white environmental group is not doing it right." She expressed a desire to change her group's practices:

> I'm trying to figure out how we can maybe plan for these things better …you know before we put up a tree-sit or organize an action camp or something there's always a checklist you have to go through. 'Do we have this? Do we have that? Do we have propane? …Who are the medics? … and I feel like part of that checklist needs to be 'Ok so who has talked to the tribes of that area? Have we talked to them yet? Have we gotten their consent to be there?' I feel like that's not really something that we put on the checklist yet and that needs to be added to the checklist like…500 years ago

Jay's primary political identity was as an environmentalist, and his reflections suggested a deep concern with how his own environmental thinking, practices, and

identity had been informed by settler colonialism, as well as how this was also a significant feature of mainstream and radical environmentalism writ-large. In transforming his own environmental practice, he thought about the idea of home, and questioned how appropriate this idea was for him as a settler. He said, "for young environmentalists one of the ways they describe a connection to wild places is to say they feel at home…[to start questioning this] is a necessary and painful step." Beyond challenging these roots of his environmental feelings, Jay also expressed a commitment to organizing with his peers to transform their engagement with Indigenous peoples.

Analysis

The responses I gathered from solidarity participants suggest the ways that engagement with Indigenous-led movements can fundamentally alter settler perceptions of land, place, and environmentalism. These altered perceptions may include a different sense of place, one which is unsettled and informed by increased understanding of the historical processes which have played a role in place-making, and the continuing cultural norms which promote ongoing occupation. This study also suggests that solidarity participation may focus participant attention on ongoing conflicts over place meaning and use well beyond the specifics of their solidarity experiences. At the same time these transformations appear to eliminate or at least radically alter participant relationships with the environmental movement—though clearly not with practices aimed at ensuring ecological integrity.

This shift raises questions: Can solidarity participants become bridges between environmental movements and Indigenous movements? What are the challenges to such bridging? Can solidarity participants change the focus of the environmental

movements and organization they had pre-existing relationships with? How? At what costs?

The distancing moves which typified a number of responses raise some concern about the capacity for solidarity participants to act as bridges to the larger environmental movement, and might suggest instead what Saunders (2008) calls a "double-edged sword" effect. In her research on collective identity and solidarity, Saunders indicates that strong collective identity "leads to the construction of a 'we-them' dichotomy between organizations within the same movement, increasing the chances of hostility between organizations and factions within the movement" (p. 227). Although other research suggests the strict limits of collective identity formation across the Indigenous-settler divide (Bacon 2017) this research suggests that there is a type of solidarity participant collectivity which inclines participants toward moving away from the environmental movements—or at the very least away from the language of environmentalism / environmentalist. Do those who redefine or express hostility toward the environmental movement ultimately avoid participation alongside members of that group? Or do they manage these new identity boundaries and accompanying emotions in ways that allow them to engage effectively with new would-be allies who identify with environmentalism?

In the case of those who maintain their identification with the environmental movement, and express a desire to work for change within those movements there is a pronounced pattern of negative emotions in their reflections on this work. The frustration and pain expressed by participants like Meg and Jay fits neatly with the findings in research on settler solidarity.This research indicates that confronting colonialism is difficult. Work by Margraret (2010) suggests that coalition is often a site of pain. This is echoed in numerous sources, including Barker (2010) who asserts

that there is a profound need for settler decolonization, and that discomfort is inherent in that work.

Respondents who did not strongly identify with the environmental movement either before or after participation in solidarity did raise concerns about the tensions between broad social justice interests, sovereignty, and environment especially with regard to the way these issues are engaged by solidarity participants. Erin, a person whose solidarity work has been largely focused on social justice for Indigenous peoples in an urban setting, but who had participated in environmental actions as well, noted that: "On one hand…strategically, tribal sovereignty as a means of re-appropriating land is amazing [yet] I also think Native people and their connection to land gets romanticized sometimes…I think it's a work in progress. I think it's hard, and confusing."

For other participants, the challenges of balancing multiple concerns in their own priorities and actions were a topic of reflection. Ben, a white man who described himself as relatively new to both environmental activism and Indigenous settler solidarity raised this issue a number of times during our conversation. While reflecting on his experiences in the No DAPL resistance camps, Ben said, "you can't agree with everybody…in every community people disagree with each other...and there's a certain point where you do have to choose...you have to be clear about what you're doing, and why you're interested...I struggle with it." Ultimately, a number of respondents echoed these concerns about the challenges of balancing priorities, and the impossibility of being a perfect ally.

For some participants there was no distinction between the environmental protection and sovereignty supporting aspects of their solidarity. Rowan said simply, "I'm…there to try and help the McCloud River and the salmon... I'm there as a voice

for that just as much as I am for anything else." While this articulation was unique, it seemed to closely align with the actions of participants like James and Eve who have largely adopted perspectives about environment and sovereignty that see the two as tightly entwined, echoing the assertions of many Indigenous activist and indigenist scholars (e.g. LaDuke 1999; Simpson 2004; Wilson 2005).

Very few of my respondents were living close to sites of active contestation at the time of their interviews, though many had during their initial solidarity mobilization. This raises additional questions about the long-term engagement and efficacy of these solidarity practices given the studies which suggest the critical importance of strong bonds to local landscape and commitment to place as central in successful alliances (Grossman 2017; Wallace et. al. 2010). For nearly all of my respondents, political affinity—or the perception of political affinity—was the starting point of solidarity rather than a shared concern for a contested place, something Barker and Pickerill (2012) actually suggest can be a detriment to solidarity organizing. While some of my respondents have developed strong connections to place, many remain outside of that place-based affinity in most of their solidarity practices, traveling sometimes long distances to provide physical or material support for movements they wish to support.

Conclusion

Dakota scholar Waziyatawin (2012) writes, "[o]ne of the most pernicious aspects of every colonial power is its capacity to shape perceptions of reality" (p. 76). In this study there's clear evidence of the way this perception work—at least to the extent that it shapes the thinking of non-Indigenous peoples—can be altered through collaboration with Indigenous-led place-based movements. These shifts in perception

require confrontation with how prior thinking had been deeply informed by settler states of feeling (Rifkin 2011).

Participants in this study demonstrate what Regan (2010) calls a need to "understand history both intellectually and emotionally as an embodied place of connectivity" (p. 19). More than just more fully understanding history, participants in solidarity seem primed to make a deeper commitment to Indigenous self-determination over land and "resources". This is compatible with what Waziyatawin (2009) contends is essential to true reconciliation, that is " a commitment to support Indigenous life, lands, and ways of being…a reworking of the existing social order"(p 194).

Still, questions remain about the way non-Native peoples' experiences of confrontation with settler colonialism and the resultant unsettling around place shape both ecological perceptions and practices in the long term, or how they inform future engagements / confrontations with settler-colonial culture, society, and politics. My research suggests that altered perceptions of place and environmentalism occur fairly early in solidarity engagement. This trend can be seen in the responses of people who had limited engagement with solidarity, yet still displayed a sense that their ideas about land and ecology had shifted away from mainstream conceptions. Do these shifts last? What types of engagement generate the most profound shifts? Are these shifts dependent upon other biographical factors? Longitudinal studies with solidarity practitioners could perhaps provide a clearer picture of how engagement in anti-colonial and decolonial work influences non-Indigenous peoples over the life course. More critically, how do the Indigenous people who work alongside solidarity participants understand the actions of non-Native participants? What is useful from an Indigenous perspective? What needs to change? Studies attending to the particular

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challenges and outcomes of solidarity with Indigenous peoples and movements could generate useful information which might inform lasting alliances and transformed eco-social relations within the United States.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Attempts to develop a clear image of the cultural, social and political conditions that contribute to ecological crises and environmental injustice have been undertaken in numerous activist communities and across a wide range of academic disciplines. Within sociology, the sub-field of environmental sociology provides clear and compelling insights into the roles of capitalism, global trade, and technology (e.g. Foster 1999; York 2006). The sub-field has also increasingly attended to analyses of the ways discourses of property, wilderness, and environmentalism have informed social action with respect to the ecological world (e.g. Taylor 2016; Pellow 2016).

This dissertation calls attention to a related yet distinct eco-social structure which has been strikingly absent from these conversations; settler colonialism. Understanding settler colonialism as an eco-social structure is important because settler colonialism is a political, cultural, and social project which has occupied substantial swaths of Indigenously lands and asserted "rightful" control of those lands as settler states with substantial commercial and political power. These states have profoundly influenced global trade, migration, and resource use for centuries. Even if looking only at the United States, the enormity of this influence is clear. Consider the ecological footprint of the U.S. and by any metric it is remarkable. The United States comprises approximately 5 percent of the global population but accounts for 25 percent of the fossil fuel resource use (Chasek 2018). The U.S. utilizes about 18% of world total primary energy consumption, and in 2017, the United States consumed a total of 7.26 billion barrels of petroleum products, an average of about 19.88 million barrels per day according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. At the same time, U.S. reluctance to commit to international agreements aimed at improving

environmental conditions or at least slowing the predicted damage, has all but assured that emissions will continue to rise, and resources will continue to be voraciously consumed.

So how exactly has settler colonialism structured eco-social ideas and practices within the United States? At a most basic level, the very existence of the United States as a political and social entity has been generated and maintained through the processes of settler colonialism. Without the appropriation and occupation of Indigenous lands by non-Indigenous peoples, the United States would not exist. But the taking of lands is not the only feature of settler colonialism which has a lasting influence on eco-social relations. Through law, policy, and cultural and social processes, non-Indigenous peoples assert and attempt to make manifest their rightful ownership of their ecological and physical surroundings and then overlay this ecology with settler interpretations, narratives, and meanings. These processes inform settler ideas of space, place, and environment in significant ways; they also have lasting impacts on Indigenous peoples and communities.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrated how violence is a core element of settler colonialism's eco-social structuring and introduced the concept of colonial ecological violence as a framework for analyzing the full range of settler-colonial impacts on Indigenous peoples, places, and communities. This chapter pays close attention to the discourses and cultural norms of the environmental movement in an effort to demonstrate how settler colonialism is not only a driving force for extraction, but a structure that informs settler narratives and practices for ecological protection.

In Chapter Three, I turned my attention to the way settler-colonial narratives and discourses contribute to colonial ecological violence. Through a case study of the local print media framing of the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Indigenous-led

resistance to DAPL, I illustrated how media mobilizes discourses of risk in ways that minimize attention to and concern about industrial impacts on land and people, while maximizing public perceptions of Indigenous resistance as hazardous to the nation and public safety. These discourses draw on culturally embedded and widely available tropes of technology as progressive and positive, as well as tropes that assert Indigenous peoples as threatening or savage.

Finally, in Chapter Four, through analysis of interviews with non-Indigenous-identified people who have acted in solidarity with Indigenous-led movements I discussed how solidarity generates non-Indigenous peoples' acknowledgement of settler-colonial eco-social structuring and increases their awareness of the impacts of colonial ecological violence. This increased knowledge can transform non-Native peoples' perceptions of place and their engagement with mainstream environmental movements and identity.

Throughout the dissertation I have suggested that there is much more academic work to be done with regard to settler colonialism and its impacts on eco-social relations. The possibilities for connections are many, and I hope that my suggestions will draw other students into this conversation so that our understandings might improve, and our movements for ecological health and just social relations might flourish.

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