

FEMINISM AND ENVIRONMENTALISM:

Perspectives on Gender in the BC Environmental Movement during the 1990s

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INTRODUCTION

IN THE LATE 1960s, environmentalism emerged as a potent political force in British Columbia. Increased participation in outdoor recreation, higher levels of education, and economic security translated into demands for wilderness protection and improved forestry practices. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the province's old-growth forests became sites of intense conflict between environmentalists, First Nations, forestry corporations, and the provincial government (Hoberg 1996; Marchak 1995; Ratner, Carroll, and Woolford 2003; Willems-Braun 1996-97; Wilson 1998; Wynn 2004). While gender was not the focal point of this environmental movement, ecofeminist ideas and practices were integrated into campaigns to protect old-growth forests in British Columbia. In this article, we ask: How were discourses of ecofeminism taken up and interpreted by environmental activists in British Columbia during the 1990s?

We attempt to answer this question through a qualitative analysis of the relationship between gender, feminism, and environmentalism in British Columbia. Our analysis is based on telephone interviews with sixty-two "rank-and-file" members and face-to-face interviews with thirty-four "core" members of BC environmental organizations. The interviews were conducted by David Tindall between 1992 and 1998. While our data are now relatively old, the 1990s were a particularly active period of environmental movement mobilization in British Columbia. As such, this remains a significant period upon which to focus in order to understand the intersection of gender and environmental movement participation.¹

¹ While our data are "historic" in the sense that they are from a certain time period, we do not attempt to provide a historical analysis. We are not setting out to provide an idiographic analysis but, rather, to adopt a narrower scope of inquiry by focusing on a few key themes.

The relationship between gender and environmentalism has been studied, theorized, and debated throughout the history of environmental sociology. There is a wealth of “environmental values” literature that seeks to determine whether women or men are more likely to hold environmental values or to engage in pro-environmental behaviour (Blake, Guppy, and Urmetzer 1996-97; Dietz, Kalof, and Stern 2002; Eisler, Eisler, and Yoshida 2003; Kalof et al. 2002; Ozanne, Humphrey, and Smith 1999; Stern, Dietz, and Kalof 1993; Tarrant and Cordell 2002; Tindall, Davies, and Mauboulés 2003; Zelezny, Chua, and Aldrich 2000). The general picture that emerges is that women tend to be more environmentally concerned than are men, though this difference is not necessarily reflected in levels of environmental activism.

Qualitative interviews with environmental movement participants in British Columbia allow us to add depth to a quantitative description of gender and environmental values. Drawing on interviews with environmentalists, we explore how movement participants interpreted the relationship between gender, feminism, and environmentalism during a particularly intense period of environmental conflict over British Columbia’s old-growth forests.

FORESTRY, PROTEST, AND GENDER IN BRITISH COLUMBIA DURING THE 1990S

Environmental social movements are an important avenue for concerned citizens in British Columbia to engage in political action beyond the formal structures of party politics and electoral democracy. In Ulrich Beck’s (1992) terms, environmentalism is a meaningful realm of “sub-politics,” wherein traditionally non-political social spheres are opened up to democratization and political action (see also Castells 2004). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Carmanah Valley, Walbran Valley, Slocan Valley, and Clayoquot Sound became sites of recurrent logging road blockades, civil disobedience, and “direct action” (ranging from physically occupying old-growth trees to episodes of eco-sabotage). Environmentalists’ political claims focused on the need to protect the province’s remaining old-growth rainforests from clear-cut logging (Wilson 1998). Interactions between environmentalists and forestry workers were intense, and arrests of protesters were common. Forestry protest in British Columbia peaked during the Clayoquot Sound protests of the early 1990s, which became a defining period in BC eco-politics (Barman 2007; Magnusson and Shaw 2002; May 2006). Unlike

the regionalized conflicts over the Walbran and Carmanah valleys, opposition to old-growth logging in this region of Vancouver Island expanded to become an international political issue. Environmentalist tours of Europe, in addition to well-publicized visits from American senator Robert Kennedy Jr. and rock band Midnight Oil, produced an “upward scale shift” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007). These events helped transform Clayoquot from a local struggle into the “‘poster child’ of the international environmental movement” (Barman 2007, 358). Conflict over Clayoquot Sound earned British Columbia the nickname “Brazil of the North” and resulted in the largest mass arrests (over eight hundred people, two-thirds of whom were female) in provincial history (Gibbons 1994; Hatch 1994; Stefanick 2001).

These environmental protests occurred during a shift in the “political opportunity structure” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007) of British Columbia. Prior to the 1991 election, the conservative Social Credit government had been resistant to environmentalist claims. By contrast, Premier Mike Harcourt and the New Democratic Party (NDP) attempted (often with great difficulty) to balance the interests of their supporters in organized labour and the environmental movement (Carroll and Ratner 2005; Cashore et al. 2001; Wilson 1998). The combination of intense social movement protest and the electoral success of the NDP resulted in several substantive changes to forestry and land use policy. The Forest Practices Code set more stringent regulations for the forest industry, while protected areas in the province were increased to 12 percent of the provincial land base. In Clayoquot Sound, a “Scientific Panel” was created to suggest changes to forestry practices in the region. Much of the general public saw these changes as a solution to the “war in the woods” (a term used repeatedly in mass media coverage of forestry conflict in the 1990s; see Hayter 2003). Many environmentalists, however, were disappointed that NDP policy reforms did not go further and were particularly bitter that Clayoquot Sound had not been protected in its entirety. Environmentalists’ disappointment with the NDP was heightened following the 1996 election of NDP premier Glen Clark, who was perceived to be more sympathetic to the forest industry than to the environmental movement.

Before the 1990s cycle of environmental protest began to wane, environmentalists’ focus shifted from Vancouver Island (the site of the Clayoquot Sound conflict) to the central coast of Mainland British Columbia. The Forest Action Network and Greenpeace mobilized and sought the protection of a large region of old-growth rainforest that they

termed the “Great Bear Rainforest” (Hipwell 2009; Page 2009; Rossiter 2004; Shaw 2004). Environmentalists initially adopted the same protest tactics that had been successful at Clayoquot Sound: civil disobedience and direct action. Because of tensions with local First Nations communities and the logistical difficulty of transporting large numbers of people to this remote area, these tactics were eventually replaced by a market campaign. The market campaign was innovative in that it bypassed an increasingly unsympathetic provincial government and instead directly targeted corporate consumers of BC forest products.

Environmental protest in the 1990s did not articulate political claims that were specifically oriented around gender. The political agendas of environmental organizations were often not explicitly defined as feminist or ecofeminist. However, women were highly visible as key figures within the environmental movement in British Columbia during the 1990s. As Wilson (1998, 50) writes:²

Although men continue to hold a disproportionate share of leadership positions in the movement, women are well represented at the activist level. Indeed, with some women such as Colleen McCrory, Vicki Husband, Tzaporah Berman, Sharon Chow, Rosemary Fox, Valerie Langer and Adrienne Carr exerting a strong influence on the movement’s priorities and strategies, it seems fair to say that women are closer to attaining equality here than they are in political parties or most other interest groups.

A cursory discourse analysis of fifty-six articles published from 1992 to 1998 in the *Globe and Mail*, which cite the key activists listed by Wilson, demonstrates an interesting pattern.³ In *Globe and Mail* accounts of forestry conflict, environmentalist news sources rarely draw explicit connections between forestry issues and ecofeminist politics. Female environmentalists do appear as organization leaders and protest organizers. They also typically appear as the only female news sources in these texts. While female forest industry news sources appear a few times, female environmentalists generally inhabit a male-dominated textual world of forestry corporations and politicians. While women were not necessarily equally represented among the ranks of

² Another highly visible female environmental activist, not listed below, is Betty Krawczyk (1996, 2002). Krawczyk is from an older generation of activists, and her initial activist experience was in the American Civil Rights Movement.

³ The observations described here are the result of an informal discourse analysis of *Globe and Mail* coverage of forestry conflict in British Columbia. We did not conduct a formal textual analysis; rather, we performed a keyword search for the key female activists listed in Wilson (1998) and published between 1992 and 1998.

BC environmentalists in the 1990s, news coverage of this cycle of protest supports the idea that environmentalism was a particularly “open” sphere for women’s leadership and political engagement, especially in comparison with the political parties and forestry corporations with which this movement engaged.

While female news sources rarely attempted to speak from an explicitly ecofeminist standpoint, feminist ideas did inform environmentalist practice during the intense forestry conflicts of the 1990s. This was particularly the case during the Clayoquot Sound campaign. The Clayoquot Peace Camp – a large campsite where protests were coordinated – was modelled after the women’s anti-nuclear peace camp at Greenham Common, United Kingdom (May 2006; Moore 2008; Wine 1993). The protests were organized according to rules of non-violence and consensus decision making that were variously described as “feminist” or “Ghandian.” As Elizabeth May (2006, 28) writes in her primer for environmental activists:

[Valerie] Langer and company set up a peace camp, based on the model of the women’s peace protest at Greenham Common ... They set up rules for peaceful coexistence. They fed and housed thousands of people in a clear-cut. They had music: Australian rock band Midnight Oil, and children’s performer and eco-troubadour Raffi. They maintained an impressive level of self-discipline.

Echoing the Greenham Common inspiration for the Clayoquot Camp, the campaign of civil disobedience and mass arrests included a “Women’s Blockade.” As Sherry Merk (2008, 96) writes in her personal recollections of Clayoquot:

Those early mornings on the blockades were the most meaningful and fulfilling moments of my life. I was part of this cause and I stood there with my whole heart bursting, especially as part of the Women’s Blockade. Proud, joyous, strong, we sang and spiral-danced around the roadway, feeling our power, sharing smiles.

Shelly Wine’s (1993) film, *Fury for the Sound*, also describes women’s experiences as activists in Clayoquot Sound. As the film notes, women accounted for two-thirds of those arrested for civil disobedience and direct action during the Clayoquot conflict. The film repeatedly positions male forestry workers and police officers against women protesters who are engaged in blockades (blocking logging roads to prevent forestry crews from going to work) or in tree-sits (occupying

platforms suspended from trees so that they cannot be felled without risking protesters' lives). During the film, Clayoquot protest organizer Tzeporah Berman further describes how socialization into nurturing and care-taking work sensitizes women to environmental degradation. The film also locates Clayoquot Sound within a history of women's activism that incorporates the Indian Chipko movement and the North American suffrage movement. As such, *Fury for the Sound* explicitly articulates a connection between feminist and environmentalist political identities. Given the visibility of women within the BC environmental movement during the 1990s, as well as the ways in which feminist ideas were incorporated into episodes of forestry conflict, participants' interpretations of the relationship between environmentalist and feminist discourses deserve closer examination.⁴

ECOFEMINISM, GENDER, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The relationship between gender and environmentalism has been explored most fully in ecofeminist theory and research. One of ecofeminism's main claims is that gender inequality and the domination of nature are connected and that they should be addressed as components of the same system of oppression and privilege (Sturgeon 1997). Beyond this premise, there are a diversity of theoretical explanations of the link between women and nature. Theoretical debates have focused on whether links between women and nature are biologically based or socially constructed, and on whether these connections are rooted in a patriarchal interest in controlling women or in an anthropocentric desire to dominate nature. Many prominent ecofeminist accounts describe how women have historically been defined as closer to "nature." Male-dominated systems of scientific knowledge and economic production have simultaneously devalued women and nature (Merchant 1995; Mies and Shiva 1993; Plumwood 1993; Shiva 1988; Warren 1987). At the risk of collapsing distinctions between ecofeminist models of how this process works, we might refer to the presumed connection between the degradation of nature and the subordination of women within patriarchal social structures as ecofeminism's "dual subjugation thesis."

⁴ While we do not deal with the issue in this article, campaigns to protect old-growth forests in British Columbia during the 1990s were also racialized. Environmentalists' constructions of these forests as untouched "wilderness" places were in tension with First Nations political claims to these same landscapes (e.g., see Hipwell 2009; Torgerson 1999; Willems-Braun 1996-97; 1997).

Another recurring theme in ecofeminist theory is that women become more attuned to the dynamics of nature than do men due to their social experience as mothers (e.g., Diamond 1994). From this perspective, women's socialization into caregiving roles helps explain why women are more likely than men to hold environmental values. Ecofeminism draws on an "ecomaternalist" discourse to ascribe to women a valorized role as "nature protectors," thereby inverting the devaluation of women and nature described by the dual subjugation thesis (MacGregor 2006; Reed 2003). As Plumwood (1993, 8) writes: "One essential feature of all ecological feminist positions is that they give positive value to a connection of women with nature which was previously, in the west, given negative cultural value and which was the main ground of women's devaluation and oppression." Ecofeminist concepts of the dual subjugation of nature and women, as well as ecomaternalism as a basis for environmental concern and activism, resonate with the "standpoint epistemologies" articulated in feminist theory more broadly during the 1990s. Dorothy Smith (1990, 1999), for example, asserts that women's experience of their daily lives provides a unique standpoint for the production of knowledge about power relations.

Several theoretical debates were at play in feminist theory more broadly during the 1990s. One point of tension centred on the relative importance of economic and cultural dimensions of social inequality and privilege (Fraser 1997; McRobbie 1999). Another point of tension focused on the presumed unity of "women" as a social category and identity. By accounting for the ways in which different women's experiences are given shape by sexual orientation, class, and ethnicity, feminist theory increasingly turned towards concepts like "intersectionality" to understand gender (hooks 1990). From a poststructuralist perspective, authors like Butler (1990) and Haraway (1991) similarly argued for understanding gender as a performance or relational process rather than as an essential trait or attribute. As Haraway (1997, 228) writes:

Gender is always a relationship, not a preformed category of beings or a possession that one can have. Gender does not pertain more to women than to men. Gender is the relation between variously constructed categories of men and women (and variously arrayed tropes), differentiated by nation, generation, class, lineage, color, and much else.

Echoing this broader shift in feminist theory, several ecofeminist authors argue that ecomaternalism and the dual subjugation thesis

rest on problematic assumptions about gender and nature (MacGregor 2006; Nightingale 2006; Reed 2003; Sandilands 1999). Sandilands (1999) highlights two potential problems with ecofeminist theory. First, ecofeminism tends to promote a personalized identity politics that attributes an untenable unity of female identity, which reifies differences between men and women. It tends towards a personal, depoliticized approach to environmental politics that neglects the importance of social movement activism within the political sphere. Second, ecofeminist theory tends to promote essentialized constructions of nature and womanhood wherein both are linked as victims in subjugation.

Reed draws on interviews with women in forestry communities to examine their “anti-environmental” activism and the challenge it poses to ecofeminist theory. She is critical of the ecofeminist discourse that perpetuates a dichotomy between pro-environmental/progressive and anti-environmental/conservative political positions (Reed 2003). Reed shows how forestry women’s activism incorporates concerns about home, community, economy, and environment. From her analysis, she suggests the need for an alternative vision of “feminist environmentalism” that does not essentialize women as inherently environmentalist; instead, she focuses on the “broader feminist insight that both the environment and gender are historical, mutable sets of forms and patterns that alter one another” (13).

Finally, as MacGregor notes (2006), ecomaternalist assumptions about motherhood and environmental concern raise several important questions about women’s engagement in political action. She writes:

I question whether care – as in earthcare – is a wise choice of metaphor around which to create a feminist political project for social and ecological change. How can societal expectations that women be caring and the exploitation of women’s unpaid caring labour under capitalism be challenged at the same time as women’s caring stance towards the environment is held up as an answer to the ecological crisis? What does it mean, moreover, for women to enter the realm of the political through a window of care and maternal virtue? How is this *feminist*? *And how, if at all, is it political?* (MacGregor 2006, 58; emphasis in original)

Echoing the insights of poststructuralism, Sandilands, Reed, and MacGregor focus on how social interaction constructs gendered identities. This model of human-environment interaction does not take gender as a preformed category but, rather, treats it as something that is constructed

and performed through engagement with what Nightingale (2006) calls a “gender-environment nexus.” These authors are critical of ecofeminist discourses of ecomaternalism and the dual subjugation of women and nature. They question the political utility of essentialized constructions of women as either victims or (Earth) Mothers.

While essentialized notions of women and nature may be politically limiting, they may also be used “strategically” by environmentalists as a mobilization tool to construct “a strategic political identification between ‘women’ and ‘nature’” (Moeckli and Braun 2001; Moore 2008; Sturgeon 1997, 59). In our analysis, we explore how women and men within the BC environmental movement of the 1990s interpret these notions of ecomaternalism and the dual subjugation of women and nature as they discuss gender, feminist politics, and environmental activism. As ecofeminist ideas circulated through the Clayoquot Sound protests and other sites of forestry conflict, these concepts were likely familiar to many environmental activists during the 1990s (Moore 2008; Wine 1993).

METHODOLOGY

The data for this analysis come from two sources: interviews with leaders (or “core members” as we refer to them) of several environmental organizations and with rank-and-file members of a subset of the same organizations. First, we interviewed thirty-four core members of seven BC environmental groups.⁵ David Tindall conducted these interviews between 1992 and 1997. In contrast to rank-and-file members of the movement (described below), core members are group leaders (such as elected board members) or staff members. Interview participants included members of larger formal organizations with a significant membership base (including the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, the BC chapter of the Sierra Club, and Greenpeace) as well as members of smaller, less formal organizations that often adopt a more “radical” political stance than do the larger groups.

A structured interview schedule was used, consisting primarily of open-ended questions (Kvale 1996; Rubin and Rubin 1995). Topics

⁵ For the formal environmental organization, the leaders, or core members, were either elected board members or paid staff members. Thus, they were active in the environmental organization on a daily basis and, in most cases, were much more involved in the movement than were the rank-and-file members of the second sample. The core members of the informal organizations were classified as such based on David Tindall’s knowledge of the organizations (gained through field research) and his analysis of media and other available documents. The informal organizations tended to be smaller than the formal organizations and displayed less distinction between rank-and-file members and core members.

included: how participants become involved in the movement; their ongoing movement activities; and their interpersonal connections with government, forestry companies, loggers, First Nations, and other environmentalists. The connections between gender and activism were not the focus of these interviews; however, one question was asked of all respondents regarding the connection between environmental issues and other social issues (such as support for feminism as well as several other social issues). This question was asked of both male and female respondents. In addition, several female participants were asked specifically about the gender dynamics of environmental activism, while other respondents raised the issue on their own.

Second, we conducted telephone interviews with sixty-two rank-and-file members of the BC environmental movement in 1998. Rank-and-file members were official members of environmental organizations in 1992, when they were first contacted for an earlier survey. The rank-and-file members vary from those who are nominal, or “paper” members (e.g., they pay dues but do little or nothing else), to those who are moderately active in the movements (e.g., they attend some meetings or demonstrations and perform a few other activities), to those who participate in a wide variety of activities.⁶ These interview participants were selected for the study through probability sampling from four different formal environmental groups based in Victoria, British Columbia. These include: the Western Canada Wilderness Committee, the Sierra Club of Western Canada, the Carmanah Forestry Society, and the Environmental Youth Alliance (see Tindall 2004).⁷ All four groups were active in forestry conflicts on Vancouver Island throughout the late 1980s and 1990s.

The telephone interview participants (rank-and-file members) had previously taken part in a self-administered mail survey (conducted by David Tindall in 1992) and had agreed to participate in a second wave of research (see Tindall 2002). The telephone interviews consisted of a mix of close-ended questions (which were used for quantitative analysis) and open-ended questions. The interviews covered a range of topics related to environmental values and behaviours, and included several questions about gender, feminism, and the environment. These questions were asked systematically of both male and female respondents.

⁶ Our quantitative survey data show a normal distribution for participation in the movement among rank-and-file members (see Tindall 2002, 2004).

⁷ For more information on the sampling procedures, contact David Tindall.

Thus, an important distinction should be made between the two sets of qualitative data. Whereas rank-and-file members were systematically asked about gender, core members tended to bring it up themselves. This would seem to indicate that, for the latter, gender was salient enough to their activist experience to have them raise it in the interviews. As a qualification, because we did not systematically ask core members about gender and their activist experience, it is difficult to make general observations about ecofeminist discourse for the core members of the BC environmental movement. However, the “insider accounts” given by core members provide valuable insight into the gendered dynamics of movement participation – something that we could not have obtained solely from the accounts of rank-and-file members. And, indeed, perspectives on these issues from these two groups are linked in that core members are key in framing (Benford and Snow 2000) movement issues that are then picked up by the news media and diffused more generally throughout the movement and the general public.

It should be noted that, while the data were collected from the two sources at two different points in time, the involvement of the members of the two categories of respondents overlapped in time. More specifically, as they had participated in an earlier survey in 1992, all of the rank-and-file members were part of the movement at the time we started conducting the interviews of the core members. Further, all of the formal environmental organizations included in the core members’ interviews were also included in the rank-and-file members’ survey. Thus, we are dealing with people who were involved in the movement during the same time period and most of whom were active in the same groups.⁸ For this reason, it makes sense to compare and contrast these two data sources in the same analysis.⁹

The interview recordings were transcribed and imported to NVivo7 qualitative analysis software for coding and analysis.¹⁰ We developed a semi-structured coding scheme, based on the interview schedule used with the rank-and-file members (Mason 2002; Silverman 2001; Wolcott 1994).¹¹ Coding categories focused on participants’ views about the feminist movement, the types of feminist and ecofeminist discourses articulated by participants (e.g., radical feminist, liberal feminist, eco-maternalist, the dual subjugation of women and nature), and how gender

⁸ Though, admittedly, it is possible that the views of rank-and-file members may have evolved between 1992 and the time at which we interviewed them (1998).

⁹ Generally, we distinguish between the two data sources in the qualitative analysis that follows.

¹⁰ QSR International. 2006. NVivo7. Victoria, Australia.

¹¹ A copy of the final coding scheme from NVivo7 is available from the authors upon request.

affects women's environmental movement participation. Early in the coding process, we added several coding categories to reflect emerging themes. The first wave of coding and analysis focused on eighteen of the core members' interviews. Each paragraph of the transcript was coded for all the relevant categories. After this wave, the coding scheme was revised and restructured.

The second wave of coding focused on the interviews with the rank-and-file members. Half of the transcripts were systematically coded, with each paragraph of the transcript being coded to all relevant categories. We applied this in-depth approach to three interviews with Environmental Youth Alliance members, ten interviews with Sierra Club members, and ten interviews with Western Canada Wilderness Committee members. New categories were added wherever themes appeared outside the established coding scheme. Thus, we retained a degree of flexibility within the coding process.

After the second wave of coding, we reviewed each of the categories and wrote memos to describe the main themes that were emerging from the interviews. Once again, we evaluated and restructured the coding scheme to reflect our emergent results. A third wave of coding adopted a more focused approach to the interview transcripts. Throughout the coding process we wrote, elaborated upon, and refined our descriptive memos and annotations to arrive at our conclusions.

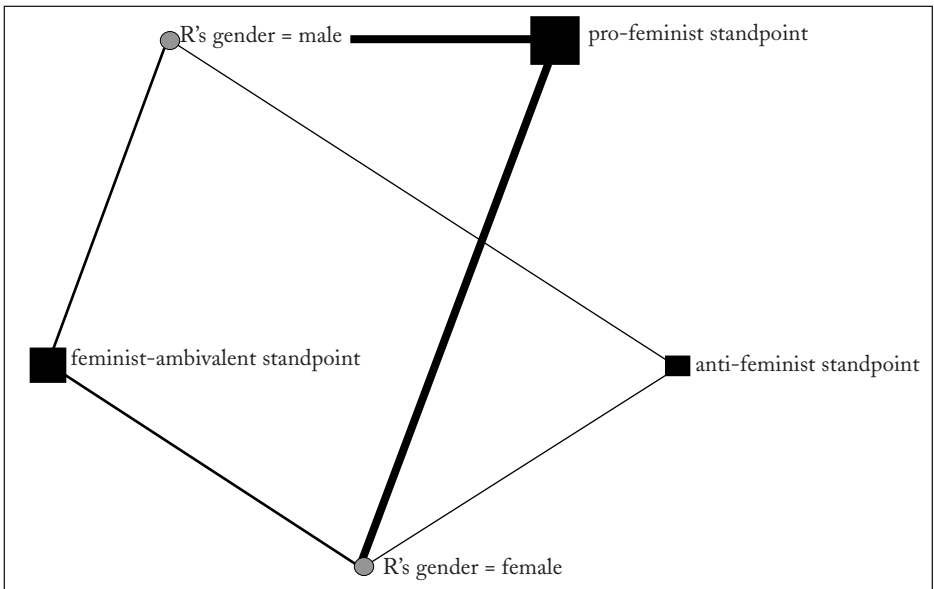
Drawing inspiration from social network analysis, our analysis also involved "quantizing" qualitative themes and mapping them as elements within "discourse networks" (see Mische 2003, 2008; Mohr 1998). Our analysis may be defined as an "embedded mixed-methods" approach, wherein quantitative network analysis plays a secondary, supporting role to a primarily qualitative research design (Plano Clark et al. 2008; Teddlie, Tashakkori, and Johnson 2008). Figure 1 and Figure 2 are two-mode discourse network diagrams that link the prevalence of themes with subgroups of participants, separated by gender. Circular nodes represent subgroups of participants, separated by gender, while square nodes represent the qualitative themes. The size of square nodes reflects the relative importance of each discursive theme, based on the number of respondents who invoke it. Line thickness reflects the strength of the connection between subgroups and discursive themes. This embedded mixed-methods approach allows us to visualize the relationships between discursive themes and groups of respondents without losing the substance or integrity of our qualitative data.

RESULTS

Environmentalists' perceptions of feminism

Ecofeminist theory suggests an intellectual affinity between environmental movements and feminist politics (even if this affinity is not always realized in social movement practice). Consequently, our examination of environmental movement participants' interpretations of ecofeminist discourse included questions about the feminist movement more broadly. We asked participants whether they considered the feminist movement a positive or a negative force in women's lives. We also asked whether they self-identified as feminists and what this identity meant to them. Participants' responses may be categorized into three different standpoints: pro-feminist, anti-feminist, and ambivalent. When asked to describe their feelings about the feminist movement, most interview participants expressed a pro-feminist standpoint. Female and male participants generally voiced support for equal access to political and economic opportunities as well as for pay equity for men and women. Participants often asserted that there are no meaningful differences between men and women. Anything men can do, women can also do. As Figure 1 illustrates, most participants – both female and male – adopt a pro-feminist standpoint. Only a few participants adopt an explicitly anti-feminist standpoint, while several participants (both male and female) are ambivalent about the impact of the feminist movement.

FIGURE 1:
Participants' perceptions of feminism



As an illustrative example, a pro-feminist standpoint was invoked by a female member of the Sierra Club, who told us that she would identify herself as a feminist. When asked to describe what this meant to her, she replied:

Well it just means that as an employer you do not discriminate. You offer women the same opportunities as men. As a parent, you have exactly the same expectations of your daughter's future as you do of your son's. You encourage sports for girls just as much as you do for boys. Financially, you sort of, um, encourage, you know, funding for girls' sports and ... I have two teenagers, a girl and boy. So for me, feminism is very much on the school level right now, and how to create independent, strong girls and women. (98SCWC35, female)

This respondent defines feminism in terms of equal employment opportunities and equal treatment of women and men within different social spheres. These are recurrent themes among participants who adopt a pro-feminist standpoint.

It is not only female environmentalists who espouse a pro-feminist standpoint; a significant number of male environmental movement participants also adopt a pro-feminist perspective. For example, a male member of the Sierra Club told us he would call himself a feminist. When prompted to define what this meant for him, he replied: "Well, I guess my definition would be: Do you believe that women have been disadvantaged and discriminated against in the past? Yes. Do you believe that that's a bad thing and that social structures should be changed towards greater equality? Then my answer is yes. So that's how I would define my brand of feminism" (98SCWC110, male). The version of feminism articulated by male respondents is generally similar to that invoked by our female interviewees – that is, it focuses on equal opportunity within Canadian economic and political structures.¹²

Few participants, whether male or female, adopted an explicitly anti-feminist standpoint. From this perspective, the feminist movement is accused of "taking things too far" and trying to reverse patterns of gender inequality. A female member of the Sierra Club stated that the feminist movement has been a negative influence in women's lives. When

¹² Unfortunately, we do not know whether male participants have adopted a pro-feminist standpoint because of their environmental movement participation. However, the number of male participants who adopt a pro-feminist position in interviews recalls Connell's (1990, 2005) findings, based on Australian research, that the environmental movement may work as a site in which men encounter feminist ideas that challenge them to rethink taken-for-granted conceptions of masculinity.

asked to explain further, she stated: “Well, I think they put it out of proportion. I don’t know, they expect too much from the government ... I don’t like when women become very aggressive like that ... But I just think they could do a lot more for society without being so totally aggressive and so against men, and everything like that” (98SCWC145, female).

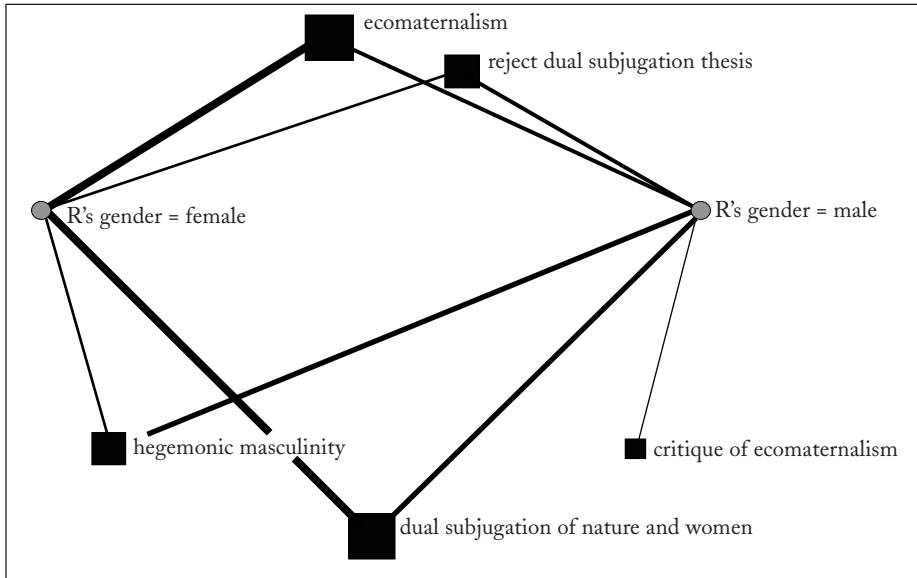
Finally, several respondents adopted an ambivalent stance towards feminism. In this interpretive framework, discomfort with the organized feminist movement accompanies support for gender equality and an otherwise pro-feminist stance. For example, when asked whether the feminist movement is a positive or a negative force in women’s lives, a female member of the Carmanah Forestry Society replied: “Well, mostly it’s a positive force. There are some that go really overboard and make it very negative for all women, I think. But mostly, I think it’s a positive force. Women should be fighting for their equality, which they should have” (98CFS34, female). From this perspective, the feminist movement is seen as having been historically necessary and important but as now having become “too extreme.” It is seen as “pushing too far” by treating men and women as adversaries.

Ecofeminism suggests an affinity between environmentalism and a feminist political standpoint. During the 1990s, ecofeminist ideas were incorporated into campaigns to protect BC old-growth forests from clear-cut logging. This was most apparent at Clayoquot Sound, home to the most contentious episode in BC forestry conflict (May 2006; Merk 2008; Moore 2008; Wine 1993). While there is some ambivalence about the perceived excesses of the feminist movement, our interview participants support the notion that, in British Columbia, pro-environmentalism and pro-feminism were often shared political values during the 1990s.

Discourses of ecofeminism

During the forestry conflicts of the 1990s, female environmentalists like Vicki Husband, Tzeporah Berman, Colleen McCrory, and Valerie Langer were highly visible in the mass media as news sources, group leaders, and protest organizers (Wilson 1998). Ecofeminist ideas also informed environmentalist practice, particularly at Clayoquot Sound (Moore 2008; Wine 1993). During our interviews, we asked rank-and-file environmental movement participants several questions about the relationship between gender, ecofeminism, and environmentalism.

FIGURE 2:
Participants' use of ecofeminist discourses



We asked whether they agreed or disagreed that women were especially prominent within the BC environmental movement. We also asked whether women were more concerned with the environment than were men. Finally, we asked whether participants believed that there is a connection between gender inequality and mistreatment of the environment. When asking these questions, we prompted participants to explain their answers in detail. In their interviews, participants drew on a range of themes that both echoed and challenged ecofeminist discourse. These are illustrated in Figure 2, which treats discursive themes as nodes in a two-mode network and relates them to subgroups of interview participants divided by gender. As Figure 2 shows, ecomaternalism and the dual subjugation of women and nature are prominent discursive themes, though they are invoked more by female participants than by male participants. The notion of “hegemonic masculinity” is also used, though less frequently, to discuss gender and environmentalism (Connell 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). While several participants explicitly reject the notion of dual subjugation, critiques of ecomaternalism are marginal to this discourse network (and are invoked only by a few male participants).

The discourse of ecomaternalism, which connects women's social roles as mothers and caregivers with environmental concern and activism, was often invoked to explain the belief that women are more concerned about the environment than are men. For example, a female Sierra Club member agreed that women were particularly visible as environmental movement leaders in British Columbia. She drew on ecomaternalist notions of child rearing as a basis for activism to explain why this is the case:

Because I think they're [i.e., women] natural leaders ... in many cases I think they're better than men because they're more in harmony with children, the environment, everything to do with the earth. The basic things of life that are really important, I think. That they're more down to earth than a lot of men. They realize the importance of trying to protect our environment for the future, for our children, and for the future. (98SCWC145, female)

Female participants frequently drew on ecomaternalist themes to interpret women's environmental activism. Male participants also used this discourse to explain why women might be more concerned about the environment. For example, a male member of the Carmanah Forestry Society stated that women are predominant in environmental movement leadership "because they're more sensitive." The interviewer prompted him, asking, "More sensitive to what?" He replied, "More sensitive to nature" because "it's part of their nurturing role" (98CFS21, male).

A large proportion of respondents – both male and female – supported the notion that the subordination of women within patriarchal societies is linked to the domination of nature. For example, a male Sierra Club member agreed with the ecofeminist notion of the dual subjugation of women and nature. When prompted to explain why he agreed, he replied: "In the sense that if men are raised in a culture in which they can treat other people, i.e. women, as objects; then it's quite natural that they would also think they can treat nature as an object. It's there for the purpose of exploitation and gratification" (98SCWC110, male).

The dual subjugation perspective is invoked by rank-and-file members more frequently than is any other ecofeminist discourse. It is also used by core activists to describe the relationship between gender and environmentalism. However, when core activists draw on the notion of dual subjugation, it often assumes a more "radical" form than it does when drawn upon by rank-and-file members. In this interpretive framework, both male domination of women and human domination of

nature should be seen as part of a broad network of social and ecological problems, which requires fundamental social change. A female core member of a small, radical environmental group addressed the notion of dual subjugation by stating:

I think that they're all linked. Yeah, it's connected like all forms of oppression are the same in a lot of ways you know like racism or, and sexism and homophobia ... I think it's all interconnected and it all has to be worked with at the same time and it's all part of changing the social structure necessary to try to save this wilderness. (NC15, female)

While the dual subjugation thesis is invoked by several core members, these people are primarily men and women who are involved with smaller, more radical groups at the margins of the BC environmental movement. While it is noteworthy that these core members articulate a more radical version of ecofeminism than do rank-and-file members, we cannot say that this difference applies to the environmental movement in British Columbia as a whole.

Most participants draw on the dual subjugation thesis to describe environmental degradation and gendered power inequalities as linked systems of privilege and oppression. However, a few participants interpret the notion of the dual subjugation of women and nature in ways likely unanticipated by ecofeminists. In these instances, the concept of dual subjugation is located in a social/historical continuum, where more developed countries, or privileged classes within Canada, are presumed to place higher value on gender equity as well as on environmental well-being. The connection between gender inequality and environmental degradation becomes a characteristic of working-class social groups or "less developed" cultures. For example, a female Sierra Club member stated: "I would say that the people who are down on women are generally not environmentalists. You know, they're rednecks, and are inclined to chop down every tree and beat their wives, I suppose. That may be stereotyping, I don't know" (98SCWC31, female). In this passage, the notion of dual subjugation does cultural boundary work that defines forestry workers as a misogynistic "other" in contrast to an environmentalist in-group that is perceived to be sensitive to gender equality and environmental concerns (see Reed 2003 for a thorough examination of the class dynamics of ecofeminism and forestry in British Columbia). Though this theme is articulated only by a few participants, it illustrates how dual subjugation's lack of attention to class dynamics

may be amplified as the concept is diffused beyond ecofeminist theory and is incorporated into the interpretive frameworks of activists.

Participants frequently expressed support for the dual subjugation thesis. However, this concept is also rejected by significant numbers of male and female respondents, even though the same respondents often support environmentalism and feminism as separate issues. A male Carmanah Forestry Society member rejected the idea that the exploitation of nature and gender inequality are connected by saying, "I think it's a red herring." When prompted to explain further, he continued: "It's two separate issues and I agree with both of them, but it's so easy to confuse the two just because there seems to be an analogy. And it's a metaphorical analogy. Leave it at that. You know? There's no real connection there" (98CFS46, male). The dual subjugation of nature and women is invoked by a greater number of interview participants than is ecomaternalist discourse; however, the former concept is critiqued and rejected by a large proportion of interviewees. By contrast, only one interview participant rejected the ecomaternalist argument that links women's domestic caregiving work with their environmental concern and activism.

Female participants use ecomaternalism and the notion of dual subjugation as discursive resources to interpret the relationship between gender, ecological degradation, and environmental activism. By contrast, male participants often invoke social norms associated with masculinity to explain why women appear to have greater levels of environmental concern. This theme echoes Connell's (2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) work on hegemonic masculinity, where certain behaviours and social values – such as individualism, competitiveness, and breadwinning – are attributed to masculinity and valorized. Hegemonic masculinity, for Connell, helps to solidify a "gender order" that devalues femininity and marginalizes other forms of masculinity. According to many of our interview participants, men's socialization into dominant forms of masculinity creates gendered barriers to environmental awareness and action. For example, after agreeing that women are more concerned about the environment than are men, a male Sierra Club member described the role he believes culture and socialization play in limiting environmental awareness among men:

I think that's where your culture comes in, where men have been, the macho young guy, who wouldn't stand up and say he's an environmentalist, because he'd be looked down as being, you know, a weak male. That's one of the things you run into at high school, when you're

teaching: you've got this macho image that these young guys have to live up to. And it's not good. It's terrible. And they can't show themselves to be caring or concerned about much. And it's a culturization that we have to change. (98SCWC44, male)

Male participants often described the cultural norms associated with masculinity as barriers to environmental concern and movement participation for men in general. However, these participants did not talk about how hegemonic masculinity might have limited their own participation or how, through their environmental activism, they see themselves as adopting a different mode of masculinity (these issues are explored in the context of Australian environmentalism by Connell 1990, 2005). While hegemonic masculinity is invoked to describe the lack of environmental concern among many men, we do not see how these cultural norms were navigated by men who did become involved in the BC environmental movement in the 1990s.

While female participants are more likely to discuss gender and environmentalism in terms of ecomaternalism and dual subjugation than are male participants, several also describe how gendered social norms limit men's ability to recognize and act upon environmental issues. When asked about gender and environmental movement leadership, a female Sierra Club member responded that women seem to be more visible because, "I suppose the average man is keen on business." She evoked dominant norms of masculinity that define success in financial terms rather than in terms of caring for others. However, she qualified this, adding, "But I know a number of men in the environmental movement and ... possibly because some of the women who – take Vicki Husband. You know, they are free and able to do it, whereas a man is supporting his family" (98SCWC56, female). According to this participant, some men may be interested in environmental activism, but expectations that men act as primary breadwinners for their families may be a barrier to their activism.

For these environmentalists, there are two sides to the relationship between gender and environmentalism. Ecomaternalism and the dual subjugation of women and nature are used as discursive resources to interpret women's presumed greater environmental awareness and concern. At the same time, dominant norms of masculinity are invoked as cultural barriers that may work against men's environmental awareness and concern. The discourse of hegemonic masculinity highlights a point of tension within the feminist and ecofeminist discourses that are used by participants to make sense of gender and environmen-

talism. Many participants adopted a “liberal feminist” view of equality of opportunity within existing social structures. However, many of these social structures reinforce norms of hegemonic masculinity and perpetuate environmental degradation and gendered power inequalities (as described by the dual subjugation thesis).

CONCLUSION

Gender was not central to the political claims of the BC environmental movement in the 1990s. However, ecofeminist ideas did circulate through environmentalist campaigns to protect the old-growth forests of the province. A significant body of research literature supports the notion that women are more likely than men to adopt pro-environmental beliefs and attitudes. However, this research tells us little about how environmentalists interpret the relationship between gender, feminism, and environmental politics. Qualitative interviews with environmental movement participants provide insight into the ways in which ecofeminist discourses were taken up and used by environmentalists during a particularly intense period of forestry conflict. As we have illustrated, ecomaternalism, the dual subjugation of women and nature, and notions of hegemonic masculinity were used by environmental movement members in the 1990s to make sense of the gender dynamics of environmental politics.

A large proportion of our interview participants – both male and female – adopted a pro-feminist standpoint. Ecofeminist notions of ecomaternalism and the dual subjugation of women and nature were also repeatedly used as discursive resources to interpret connections between gender and environmentalism. These findings are consistent with the notion that there is an affinity between feminism and environmentalism as values and political identities (e.g., see Connell 1990; Norgaard and York 2005; Sturgeon 1997; Zelezny and Bailey 2006). Ecofeminist ideas shaped environmental activism at Clayoquot Sound to a greater degree than they did in other campaigns to protect old-growth forests (Moore 2008; Wine 1993). Our findings suggest that ecofeminist discourse resonated with BC environmentalists beyond this particular episode of environmental conflict. Further longitudinal research would allow us to see whether the affinity between feminism and environmentalism is particular to the 1990s, as a unique historical period in BC ecopolitics, or whether it has persisted and deepened.

Sandilands (1999), Reed (2003), and MacGregor (2006) each argues that ecomaternalism and the dual subjugation position risk essentializing women as well as non-human nature. These ecofeminist concepts are limiting for a politics of gender equality and ecological sustainability as they define women's environmental activism in terms of socially under-valued caregiving work. Moore (2008) and Sturgeon (1997), by contrast, see political value in using "strategic essentialism" as a means of mobilizing activists or of drawing attention to the connections between gendered power relations and the exploitation of non-human nature. Within environmentalist practice, as Sturgeon notes (1997, 169), "moments of essentialism are almost always strategic, unstable, and contested." Based on our interviews, ecofeminist concepts of ecomaternalism and dual subjugation were useful discursive resources for environmentalists in the 1990s. This suggests that strategic essentialism is a pragmatic means of bridging feminist and environmentalist political standpoints within the broader environmental movement. In our interviews, a small number of participants used the notion of dual subjugation to do cultural boundary work between a privileged pro-environmental "us" and an anti-environmental working-class "them." This use of the dual subjugation thesis cautions that the strategic use of essentialism depends upon a "participatory democratic context in which different voices [can] be heard" (Sturgeon 1997, 169).

Finally, several interview participants evoke cultural norms and values associated with masculinity to interpret the relationship between gender, ecological degradation, and environmental politics. Ecomaternalism explains women's greater environmental awareness and activism through their social roles as mothers and caregivers. By contrast, notions of "hegemonic masculinity" are used to redirect the question of gender and environmentalism so that it focuses on men's relative lack of environmental concern. From this perspective, environmental awareness and transformation is impeded by dominant forms of masculinity, which emphasize individuality, competitiveness, and financial success. Beyond Connell's (1990, 2005) research, little attention has been paid to how hegemonic masculinity shapes environmental movement participation. Our findings suggest that this would be a productive avenue for further research.

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